

7/1 Air Cav Vinh long July 3

D Troop 3/5 looking for a company of VC 20 Miles south of CA Mau yesterday killed 4 VC.

Loch Pilots found fresh signs of Viet Cong activity while making low passes

over suspected enemy area , but no large group. The scouts <sup>Killed</sup> caught one VC in a sampan moving out of the area.

Cpt Gordon Tingle of Chattanooga Tennessee, <sup>MISSION COMMANDER.</sup> " We decided to let the loches fly low when we left the AO to refule." The loches Drew fire on the way out and, "Caught three VC running for the tree line for cover." The Guns, "War-Wagons," were called in and Killed all three with rockets before they reached cover.

7/1 Air Cav VINH LONG 3 JULY

D troop 7/1 Air Cav Yesterday working 6 miles west of Vinh Long destroy bunkers and wound VC.

While out , "bunker busting," Members of Powder Vally working with the 9th Arvn Division spotted three VC some distance to their front , said SSG Jahmny law, from Alice, Texas , <sup>They</sup> ~~we~~ Exchanged fire and moved up looking for some KIA'S. Instead they found Blood trails and one pack left buy chuck. The trails led D Troop to a new bunker complex filled with Booby traps, and still no bodies. After Blowing the bunkers and following the blood trail another 50 meter s

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7/1

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS 7TH AIRBORNE DIVISION 1ST AIR CAVALRY  
APO SF 96357

8 September 1970

AVRAGE-JIO

SUBJECT: Information Release

TO: Commanding Officer  
164th Aviation Group (Obt)  
ATTN: AVRAGE-JIO  
APO SF 96357

1. An Air Cavalry killed enemy soldiers in a ground  
engagement during the 7 month period of military operations.  
The kill is credited to Capt David Ruffalo pilot of an OH-6A.

2. ~~Commanding General~~ ~~1st Air Cavalry~~ ~~1st Air Cavalry~~ ~~1st Air Cavalry~~  
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VINH LONG, VIETNAM - 8 Sep 70 - B Troop 1/3 Air Cavalry striking 6 miles West  
of Vinh found and killed three tax collectors.

Capt Andy McJohnston, a Light Horse Cobra pilot from Phoenix, Arizona, spotted  
3 individuals emerge from a tree line and make their way toward a health care  
area across a clearing, while circling overhead. When the three realized they  
were in sight of Capt McJohnston and his cobra they broke for the tree line and  
cover, but were to late since they were already in the sights of the cobra.

Information received from Viet Cong prisoners captured in the same area proved  
the three Light Horse kills to be part of a Viet Cong finance team collecting  
taxes in the area.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

JERRY G. JONES  
CPT, AD  
Adjutant

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## TWO - ONE! YOU'RE ON FIRE!

By Johnny Hutcherson

Longknife Door Gunner. Those were the Last words I heard before we crashed. I was a Door Gunner on a UH -1 D Huey Helicopter, Tail number 66-00936 in Vietnam. The date was September 26, 1968. I had been in Country for about three months at the time. I was assigned to D Troop, 3rd Squadron of the 5th Cavalry attached to the 9th Infantry Division. Our base was located at Dong Tam in the Mekong River Delta. My aircraft commander was Lt. Jim Clary. He was great guy that taught me officers were just regular guys too. On the ground it was "Jim", but in the air it was, "Yes sir, or no sir". We knew who the boss was. My Crewchief was Charles Roberts. He was older than most of the guys in the Troop and he really knew his helicopters. We usually had different co-pilots, also called "Peter Pilots" or just "Petes" from day to day. This day our Pete was WO-1 Mike Chapas and as I said, I was the Door Gunner. Just a young 20 year old from a small town in the panhandle of Texas.

That morning we had been flying a "Sniffer" mission without much luck locating any VC. So our Troop Air Mission Commander (AMC), who was also the unit Executive Officer or XO, Cpt. Whitworth, ordered us to support some ground troops from the 9th Div. This usually meant we had to circle at 1,000 ft. and wait, which was pretty boring. But as soon as we got to the area of operation there was a call for a Medevac. Lt. Clary never hesitated a second when a ground commander asked for a Medevac. He was on the radio answering the call, "This is Longknjfe two-one, we have it".

As we got closer to the LZ, Lt. Clary told me enemy fire would be on my side of the helicopter and the LZ was very hot. As I looked down I could see a helicopter with a big red cross on it turned over on its side. I knew we were going to take a lot of fire. As soon as we started down and I could see the tree line I stated firing my M60 machine gun. We hit the LZ and the ground troops headed to our aircraft with a guy that was hit bad, he had a chest wound. No fire was received so I jumped out to help lift him into our copter. We hovered over to another area and this one was hot too. We were getting a lot of fire, A Staff Sergeant with a neck wound jumped on and then I heard one of our pilots say, "I'm hit! You Got it"! We took off and were movng pretty fast but we weren't climbing. Then I heard someone say on the radio "TWO-ONE! YOU'RE ON FIRE"! A second later I saw the sky, then rice paddy, and then the helicopter fly right over me. I was sure it was falling on top of me. I had not yet buckled my seat belt and was thrown out of the ship. The next thing I remember is seeing our helicopter turned upside down and burning. I was about 100ft from it. Then the fire just went out. I raised up and received fire, before I could get back down I took a hit in lower right part of my chicken plate (bullet proof vest) that turned me, then I felt a burn in my back. I thought for sure I was the only one alive and now I was hit. After some time I heard Lt. Clary call my name, "Hutch"! I answered with, "I'm here"! Are you OK"? "Yes sir". "Then get over here". The sound of Lt. Clary's voice came from the other side of the chopper so I started to crawl toward our downed ship. About 25' on my side of the chopper I found a black soldier with a chest wound. I thought, "This isn 't the guy I helped lift in the ship! Where did this guy come

from? He must have been loaded on from Roberts side". I asked if he could move and he didn't say a word, then he just took hold of my arm and said "Help me". I started pulling him along with me but he realized he had to help himself some. This guy was over 200 Lbs and I was around 140 Lbs. We finally made to Lt. Clary's location.

I looked at everyone and could see Roberts was in shock, Mr. Chapas was in pretty good shape but he took some metal in his leg. Lt. Clary had a very bad foot and leg wound and there was the other man with the chest wound. He was talking and I could tell he was hurting. The SSG with the neck wound looked O.K. but he wasn't helping the other guys too much. Maybe he was in shock? Lt. Clary asked if I was O.K. again and I said, "I'm fine but I was hit in the back." He lifted my shirt and looked my wound and said "I don't think it's too bad Hutch". I couldn't feel anything but some burning. Then Jim said, "O.K. guys we need to get away from this chopper, so let's start moving back". (We were still receiving some fire from the tree line about 200ft. to our front.) "There is a Hooch over there so let's go that way". About halfway to the hooch Mike Chapas asked Jim if he had the Emergency radio? Jim said, "No!" Mike said, "I'll go back and get it." I told Jim I'd better go too and get one of the M-60's. Mike and I got back to the chopper and as I stood up to get the M-60, we started to take a lot of ground fire, but we were able to get the radio and the gun. I also grabbed a grenade. After we re-joined the group, Jim took the grenade and rolled it into the hooch. This was a good way of making sure there weren't any VC waiting for us inside. I set the gun up but soon realized that it wouldn't fire because of damage it received during the crash. I was hoping to get off a few rounds just to let the VC know we had some fire power. Maybe keep them off our backs for a while. Only a few months before one of our Loach's was shot down and before the Troop could get the pilot and gunner out they had been overrun and killed by the enemy. The V.C. took no P.O.W., they murdered many a flight crew. I knew this could happen to us.

Jim made Radio contact and soon I saw the C&C ship start to come in to get us, but they pulled up. Later I heard they had taken hits and were forced to land in a rice paddy not too far from us. I saw one Loach fly by but it also left the area. I then realized it was too hot for any of our guys to get in and get us out. That was when I started to worry. When our Loach pilots, like Ace Cozzalio stayed out of the area, it was Hot! Ace had been put in for the Medal of Honor which was down graded to the D.S.C. for some reason. I can say Ace was the bravest man I ever knew.

It was late in the day and I knew if we didn't get picked up by night fall we didn't have much of a chance. The VC would wait till dark then make their move on us. All we had for weapons were four pistols, two 45's and two 38's, which wasn't much defense. The two guys with chest wounds couldn't last much longer.

Jim told us he used the Emergency radio to call in an air strike. It was on its way! Soon, I watched this Air Force jet drop his load. We were so close I could see the pilot inside the cockpit. I was told later he dropped two 500 pounders but that one was a dud. What ever he dropped it did the trick and none to soon. It was now sunset. Jim told us to get ready, that a chopper was on it's way to pick us up and we needed to load fast. This would be our only chance. I heard the chopper coming in and so did the VC. Just as the chopper

landed the VCs started shooting. Mr. Lake was flying UH-ID -66- 00938 with two of my buddies. Crewchief Mike McGuire and door Gunner Jim Driver were there to pick us up. We loaded fast as Mike and Jim covered us with their M-60s firing away. I even started firing my 38 into the tree line. We had been saved from a death sentence, thanks to the men of D Troop.

I will never forget my days as a Door Gunner for the Long Knives in D Troop 3/5 Air Cav. When I arrived in country we had five UH-ID (Hueys). Four of them were sister ships 66-00936, -937, -938, -939 and 66- 16480. All were lost due to combat damage or on a combat mission within nine months. 66-00937 Crashed Aug 1968 due to tail rotor failure while on a Sniffer mission. 66-00936 Shot down Sep. 26, 1968 on a medivac, the chopper I was on. 16480 Shot down Oct. 18, 1968 while on a medivac, pinning Mike Poanessa under the helicopter. Mike lived through hell that night only to die of fuel burns. 00938 Blew up from a Grenade in the fuel tank Mar. 1969 I'm not sure what happen to 00939.

I ETS from the Army in Dec. 1969 and went to work for Bell Helicopter Co. in Amarillo, Texas. Amarillo was Bell's overhaul factory. One Morning I was walking up the line and for some reason I stopped and looked at the data plate on this ship. I read the number 66-00938. This was Mike McGuire's old ship. The ship that had been used to save my life.

A few notes:

I do feel I used the word I too often in my story and want to make it very clear, I am not a hero. I refused a medal for my actions on Sept. 26, 1968 because what I did by returning to the helicopter to get my M-60 was just my job. All others in my flight crew received a medal and I'm happy for them. However, I was just a young kid of 20 years old and full of fear. I did served with many Heros in Vietnam and at times I wonder why GOD put me in D Troop 3rd of the 5th Air-Cavalry, as D troop was made up of many of the bravest men on earth. My job as a Door gunner was to protect the helicopter and support the Infantry. I only wished I would of did a better job.

Today I live in Floresville Texas with my wife of 36 years. I feel my wife Theresa, is a Vietnam Veteran also. We were married before I went into the Army. She has lived with the effects and deep feelings that the Vietnam War left with me. She has suffered greatly because of me. However she stayed with me and fought for me. I once heard her ask a V.A. doctor this. "Can you give me back that sweet boy I married before he was sent to Vietnam"?