

TROOP F, 17TH CAVALRY

UNIT HISTORY

September 1965 – December 1966



Troop F, 17th Armored Cavalry was activated on 15 September 1965 at Fort Devens, Massachusetts as part of the newly formed 196th Light Infantry Brigade (Separate). At its inception, the Troop consisted of a training cadre composed of selected officers and noncommissioned officers under the command of Captain Clyde W. Roan. This cadre was charged with the mission of making Cavalry Troopers out of ninety raw recruits. The task was great, the goals were high, but the cadre was willing.

Basic Combat Training (BCT) which started on 15 October 1965, was the first test for both the cadre and the recruits. Although difficulties were encountered, the steadfast and unfailing dedication of the cadre combined with the high morale and eager enthusiasm of the recruits produced rewarding results. The award as best platoon was garnered by the Second Platoon with the First and Third Platoons in close pursuit. By 7 December, after taking the recruits through the usual rigorous schedule of BCT subjects, the Troop emerged with a group of new soldiers ready to embark upon intensified reconnaissance training in the coming Advanced Individual Training (AIT) program.

Advanced Individual Training began for the new soldiers on 5 January 1966. Strong emphasis was placed on all areas of reconnaissance training as the troops competed for their MOS's, (Military Occupation Specialties), AIT was highlighted by a three and one-half week stay at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts during the month of February. The rugged boondocks became the scene of intensified training. Jeeps were trapped in high snow banks, bumpers were dented and smashed, sweat was exuded even in the bitter cold, but the Troop emerged with a strong nucleus of fine drivers so vital to its reconnaissance missions. Camp Edwards also saw the firing of the 81mm mortar service round for the first time. Hours of classroom practice and dry rehearsals paid off in very accurate firing. Back at Fort Devens in the closing weeks of AIT, the troops took part in the running of the Viet Cong Village training facility. Acting as aggressor for the rest of the Brigade, the troops mastered many guerilla techniques and tactics by employing them in realistic situations. By graduation time, 26 February 1966, the new soldiers had become trained Cavalry Troopers. They were ready to take their places side by side, task by task with the cadre. The distinction between cadre and trainee was no more; everyone now was a cavalryman of Troop F.

On 28 February the Basic Unit Training phase of training commenced. For the first time the separate skills of the Scout Section, 106mm Recoilless Rifle Section, Infantry Squad and Mortar Squad were joined together to form a reconnaissance platoon. They meshed harmoniously as the later Army Training Tests at Camp Drum, New York were to prove.

The Troop arrived at Camp Drum, New York with all its TO&E equipment and personnel on 31 March 1966 for a six week encampment. The first two weeks saw much area and route reconnaissance training and live fire exercises in preparation for the ATT's, (Advanced Tactical Training), twenty-four hour overnight problems stressing route, area, and zone reconnaissance, night patrolling, eagle flights and dismounted operations. The platoon ATT's led nicely into the troop ATT consisting of reconnaissance operations, saturation patrolling, and eagle flights.

As in BCT the Second Platoon took first place with a score of 91.4 with the First and Third Platoons once again in close pursuit. The Troop in total scored 91.5 on its ATT, rewarding all with a feeling of accomplishment after the many long hours of hard, strenuous and demanding training in bitter cold weather. The final week at Camp Drum saw the Troop supporting the Brigade FTX, (Field Training Exercise), "Redcon Ready". The Troop had many security operations and convoy escort missions. With the conclusion of AUT, (Advanced Unit Training), the Troop returned to Fort Devens on 16 May 1966.

The original mission had been accomplished. Troop F had trained and developed the reconnaissance eyes of the 196th Brigade.

The first part of June saw Troop F, 17th Cavalry alerted for overseas deployment as part of its parent unit, the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. Their destination was expected to be the Dominican Republic, but on 1 July word was received that deployment would be to the Republic of Viet Nam.

After long days of training and packing, the Troop departed Boston Army Terminal on 15 July aboard the USNS Darby for the long sea voyage of 12,000 miles.

On 14 August, the Troop arrived at the port of Vung Tau, RVN to find the Brigade had been attached to the 25th Infantry Division and would take up residence at the city of Tay Ninh approximately 60 miles Northwest of Saigon.

A perimeter was established and the construction of base camp was begun in what had been fertile tapioca fields.

Combat operations commenced without delay, and for the Troop, consisted primarily of route reconnaissance, convoy security and escort, day and night ambush patrols, and FSB Security.

Although operationally active since arrival in the country, it was on 9 October that the Troop engaged in its "baptism of fire". While in support of an ARVN CIDG assault on Nui Ba Den, known to all as "Black Virgin Mountain", the Troop was engaged by an enemy 57mm Recoilless Rifle and small arms fire. The Troop's immediate reaction in returning fire, coupled with the expertise of the 106mm Recoilless Rifle crews, accounted for 4 VC KIA (BC) and the destruction of the enemy 57mm Recoilless Rifle. Unfortunately Sp4 McCollum, a mechanic with the 3rd Platoon, became the Troop's first casualty during this action, being severely wounded by an enemy claymore mine. A Dustoff aircraft was called by the Troop for the first time and Sp4 McCollum was quickly evacuated. Again that day, when engaged by small arms and mortar fire, the violent reaction of the Troop resulted in the destruction of the enemy mortar and its crew. The Troop had been tested and found more than equal to the task.

During Operation ATTLEBORO, the Troop provided valuable service to the Brigade by clearing and securing key routes of resupply leading to forward base areas, and providing convoy security and escort along these routes. The road were frequently mined and on many occasions combat necessity required convoys to be on the roads well after darkness had settled, thereby offering a more favorable target for the enemy. It was in support of Operation ATTLEBORO that the Troop suffered its first deaths by hostile action when on 15 November the 1st Platoon lost Staff Sergeant Walter E. Daniels, Specialist Four Thomas Shaw, and PFC Thomas C. Mitchell when their ¼ ton was destroyed by a Viet Cong mine. The successful accomplishment of the Troop's mission is testified to by the fact that only one vehicle for which the Troop had escort responsibility was damaged by hostile action.

Despite continuous commitment in support of the Brigade, vertical and horizontal construction of the Troop area continued with the culmination being the grand opening of the Fort Courage NCO-EM Club on Christmas Eve to usher in the Holiday Truce. Also of note in the construction field was the erection of the only bamboo wall and gate in Viet Nam in emulation of a frontier post. Taking the idea from the TV series "F TROOP", an elaborate gate was erected at the entrance to the Motor Pool with the sign "FORT COURAGE" suspended overhead. The valuable asset of humor was still present despite the rigors of war.

From its time of arrival in-country the Troop has been constantly busy fulfilling their role as an economy of force unit and engaging the enemy with a violence that has earned F Troop, 17th Cavalry the respect and admiration of all those with whom it's served.

Forged in Massachusetts and tempered in Viet Nam, Troop F, 17th Cavalry looks to 1967 as a year in which to add to its heritage and to further improve the excellence of its already impressive combat record.

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KEY PERSONNEL ROSTER

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	-	<u>TO</u>
Commanding Officer	CPT Clyde W. Roan	15 Sep 65	-	31 Dec 66
Executive Officer	1Lt Bradley P. Bruggmen	15 Sep 65	-	01 Mar 66
Executive Officer	1Lt John E. Secor	02 Mar 66	-	31 Dec 66
First Sergeant	1/Sgt Walton J. Walton	15 Sep 65	-	31 Jan 66
First Sergeant	1/Sgt Billy B. Crowder	01 Feb 66	-	31 Dec 66
1 st Plt Leader	1Lt William H. Campbell III	15 Sep 65	-	06 Jan 66
1 st Plt Leader	1Lt Gerald J. DeRoberto	20 Apr 66	-	31 Dec 66
1 st Plt Sergeant	SSG William E. Kachelmeyer	15 Sep 65	-	09 Oct 65
1 st Plt Sergeant	PSG Richard E. Lamphiere	10 Oct 65	-	31 Dec 66
2 nd Plt Leader	1Lt Arthur W. Dahl Jr.	15 Sep 65	-	31 Dec 66
2 nd Plt Sergeant	PSG Hal H. Turner	15 Sep 65	-	31 Dec 66
3 rd Plt Leader	1Lt John E. Secor	15 Sep 65	-	01 Mar 66
3 rd Plt Leader	1Lt Ronald B. Mattioli	24 Apr 66	-	31 Dec 66
3 rd Plt Sergeant	PSG Richard E. Miller	15 Sep 65	-	31 Dec 66
Motor Sergeant	SFC Richard A. Nolan	15 Sep 65	-	31 Dec 66
Mess Steward	SSG Joseph A. Outing	15 Sep 65	-	09 Oct 66
Supply Sergeant	SSG Melton E. Shaw	15 Sep 65	-	03 Dec 65
Supply Sergeant	SGT Charles C. Bearden	04 Dec 65	-	01 Jun 66
Supply Sergeant	SSG Edward S. Stewart	02 Jun 66	-	31 Dec 66
Commo Chief	SGT John Hargett Jr.	15 Sep 65	-	31 Dec 66

AWARDS & DECORATIONS

Bronze Star w/"V":

CPT Clyde W. Roan
SP4 Robert A. Sroka

Army Commendation Medal w/"V":

1Lt Ronald B. Mattioli

Army Commendation Medal (Meritorious Service):

SSG Ronald C. Knott

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****Transcriber's Note:**

The above document is a transcription of the original "Unit History" produced by F Troop, 17th Cavalry personnel in Viet Nam covering the unit's origin and it's first year in RVN. The source document, (and a great deal of other F Troop historical records), have become available to us through the fine research and reproduction work done by Bruce Flaherty, (Delta Company, 4th/3rd Infantry, 11th Light Infantry Brigade, 1969-1969), while in the process of copying Americal Division records at the National Archives in College Park, MD. Our deepest thanks to Bruce for his effort on our behalf and he needs to be recognized as a true friend and Brother of F Troop Veterans. Bruce has spent a great deal of time and labor in the archives over the past years copying Americal Division records to assist Les Hines, the American Division Veterans Association, (ADVA), Historian. The ADVA website can be accessed at:

<http://www.americal.org>

Although a true transcription, certain additions have been included, in particular explanations of acronyms contained in the text. This is done to impart clarity for a future reader not familiar with military jargon and acronyms. These additions appear within parentheses, "()" where applicable.

Any mistakes or errors may be reported to the F/17 Historian through the F Troop website's Webmaster, Bob Decker, at:

<http://www.ftrp17cav196.com/>