



A Tale of Two Truck Tours

**My Time in Army Trucking
Vietnam, 1966-1970**

**by LTC John M. Horvath
(US Army, Ret.)**

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Published by John M. Horvath
2748 Peppermint Drive
Tucker, GA 30084

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Introduction

This is a recounting of the deployment to Vietnam and actions there of the US Army's 64th tractor-trailer truck company and of my service there with the truckers. The basis for this project is a telephone interview with me by Richard Killblane, Ft. Eustis Historian, on 28 May 2002. The original interview was expanded and updated as of 1 June 2004.

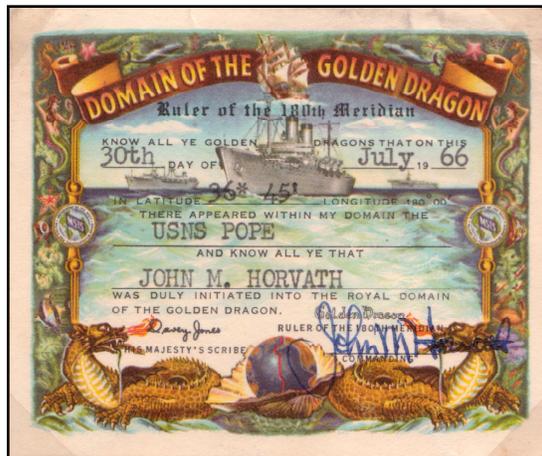
Preparing the 64th to Deploy

In 1965, as a US Army Captain (CPT), I was a transportation officer in charge of household goods in Germany. Because of the draw down of troops there, from the middle of 1965 onward, nearly everyone was going to Vietnam. I reported to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, on Memorial Day, 1966 and assumed command of the 64th Medium Truck Company, which had been ordered to deploy to Vietnam. I was excited to receive a company command and happy to go to Vietnam. I believed that we planned to win the war.



CPT John M. Horvath

I deployed with the 64th Company to Vietnam in July 1966. After eighteen days aboard the USNS General John Pope and passing the International Date Line on 30 July 1966, the unit arrived in Vietnam on 11 August. Our parent battalion would not deploy with us since the 64th's Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) was designed for the company to act independently. The 64th had its own personnel specialist, a finance specialist, a property book, a maintenance section, and a mess section. We followed the procedures according to the Army



Certificate received after crossing the International Date Line

Regulations for deployment and eventually moved with a full complement of 60 task tractors, 120 task trailers, and 186 officers and men. The movement included a number of steps: the company advance party went by air to Vietnam, the vehicles

were shipped via Charleston with a company escort party, and the main body flew by air charter from Pope Air Force Base (AFB) to McChord AFB, near Ft. Lewis, Washington, then went by bus to the Tacoma Outport. The 64th became a part of



Army band and other well wishers see soldiers off at Tacoma Outport

those deploying with the 4th Infantry Division from Ft. Lewis aboard the USNS Pope.

I was able to set up a high-school style yearbook for distribution to the original 64th personnel. Many of the photos here are

taken from this yearbook. I also made arrangements for the company mascot, a German Shepherd named Huntz, complete with dogtags, shot record and company orders, to accompany the unit. In the middle of 1967, when the tour of duty in Vietnam was almost over, a collection was taken up, and the dog returned via commercial air to Ft. Bragg to eventually live with one of the company mechanics. Huntz remained with his master, Sam Hovey and his family, until Huntz passed away in 1975.

The deployment from Ft. Bragg was truly a period of challenges. Soon after the company was alerted for Vietnam, the post mysteriously took away our motor pool buildings and asphalt vehicle parking area, and we had to move the parts, supplies, maintenance equipment, 60 task tractors, 120 task trailers, and 20 headquarters



Our open field at Ft. Bragg

vehicles to an open sandy field surrounded by barbed wire. We were beginning to feel paranoid. The 64th's mission at Ft. Bragg had been an important one: the "cattle car" bus service for all of the thousands of reservists and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) students. The post personnel notified us that they were going to keep our task tractors, and that we would draw new tractors in Vietnam. Our maintenance warrant officer, Chief

Warrant Officer (CWO) George Sebeny Sr., had just finished a tour in Vietnam with an aviation unit, and he emphasized that the supply system in Vietnam was nonoperational and that we must take the best



care of ourselves that we could. We then muscled all of the best tires off of the tractors and put the tires onto the trailers to take with us. At just about the time when we finished changing the tires, Department of the Army found out about the strange post policy concerning the tractors, and notified us that we would be taking the tractors with us. You guessed it: we then began to return all of the best tires to the tractors.

Changing good tires from tractors to trailers

I had been through the airborne parachute training at Ft. Benning, GA, and had always felt that physical training was a unifying element for an organization and a

builder of confidence for an individual. Beginning on 1 June before our deployment, we did early morning calisthenics and a road run around our garrison area. This was unheard of for a service support transportation unit, but it got us into a solid mindset. Our men knew that we were near a quartermaster parachute rigging company barracks area, and we



especially enjoyed doing the road run past these airborne quartermasters in the morning and doing the loud running chants while the riggers were on their way to breakfast.

Changing good tires back from trailers to tractors

Among the many preventive maintenance services which we did, we did a quarterly maintenance on every vehicle. This meant pulling every bearing race on every axel, cleaning it, and coating it with heavyweight grease before reinstalling the bearing. In the hot summer, the open, sandy field was gruesome to work in for such servicing,

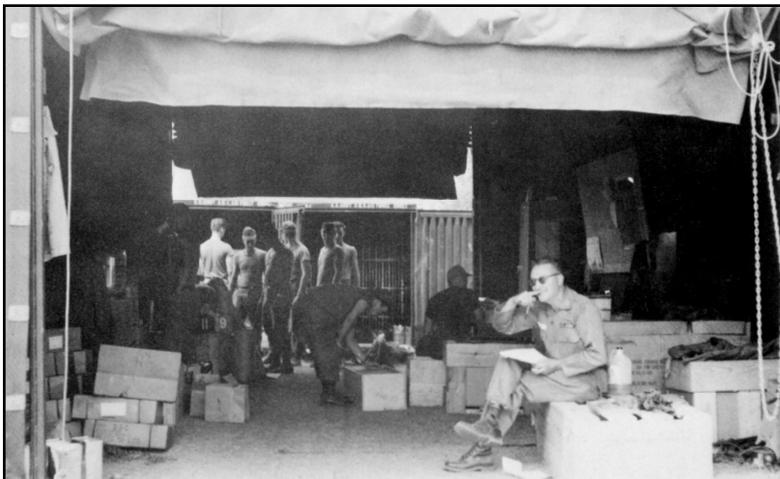


1LT Moore supervises loading

but we literally gritted our teeth and did the work. We later had better maintenance working conditions in Vietnam. We obtained a great deal of 2x4 lumber and we nailed a double flooring of solid lumber to the bed of every one of our 120 trailers for later removal and use in building a company area.

Since we had heard that the large metal tarpaulin boxes on the 120 trailers were having the locks broken off and contents pilfered during the voyage to Vietnam, we loaded our tarp boxes with maintenance supplies and tarps. We then used our company welding tools to weld the tarp boxes shut and later to open them in Vietnam. There would be no pilfering of our supplies on the way to Vietnam.

At about the same time that the 64th was alerted, a nearby Military Intelligence Battalion was taken off of alert. They had twenty-three large Container Express (CONEX) steel boxes for their movement, and now their area was cluttered with the



CWO Sebeny wonders if it will ever be packed

unneded CONEXes. We graciously offered to use our property book to sign for the CONEXes, and to use our tractors, trailers, and wrecker hoist for the movement, and we quickly moved the CONEXes to our sandy field. The post was having a large number of units alerted for Vietnam, and they had a shortage of CONEXes, thus

each company-sized unit would be getting only three CONEXes. We promptly headed to the transportation office and picked up our three CONEXes and also moved them to our sandy field. In accordance with CWO Sebeny's informed guidance, we loaded the twenty-six containers with several purchased Skil rotary

saws, eight refrigerators from the disposal yard, purchased bags of cement, sheets of plywood, parts, and supplies.

We were told that we would be flying to the West Coast by commercial air and that we must prepare our weapons to move as cargo. We picked up dozens of wooden crates, tubs of Cosmoline 90-weight grease, and rolls of heavy waxed paper, and grimly worked our way through the nasty job of greasing and packing the 200 weapons. At just about the time we finished with the grease job, we were notified that we would be flying by charter air, and that we were to carry our weapons into the passenger compartment. We were now indeed convinced that being paranoid was

going to be pretty well justified. We settled down to the job of cleaning all of the weapons. When the cleaning was finished, we had a 2-1/2-ton truckload of greasy paper and greasy wooden boxes for the dump. At this time, we had driven all of our own vehicles to Charleston, and we were using borrowed vehicles for the few



remaining weeks until our own departure. The supply truck driver and his helper backed up to the cliff-like dumping point, and shoved out all of the greased trash which flowed down the hill. So far, so good, but there was a trash fire burning at the bottom of the hill. The fire quickly climbed up our stream of trash, into the truck, and burned off all of the paint, the wooden bows, the canvas cushions, the tarpaulin and the canvas cab cover, and singed the instrument panel. We were able to fix everything but the instrument panel. The paperwork demanding \$1,200 reimbursement for the instrument panel followed us to Vietnam, where finally our tortured reply ended the matter.

Departure from Pope AFB near Ft. Bragg

On the convoy from Ft. Bragg to Charleston we lost one tractor in a rear-ender accident and lost one as an engine locked up. Both were replaced by the Ft. Bragg supply office. Greyhound busses brought us back to Ft. Bragg from Charleston.

The company flew on an American Flyer charter flight from Pope Airfield at Ft. Bragg to McChord AFB near Tacoma. One of the drivers had a slight stomach ulcer. He made himself cough until he coughed up blood, thus he was turned over to the medical personnel at McChord AFB. About six weeks later he showed up at the Qui Nhon personnel center for assignment to the 64th. He had only delayed the beginning of his twelve-month tour.

Getting Settled in Country



At Qui Nhon Red Beach
waiting for busses

Our original destination was supposed to be Cam Ranh Bay, but when we arrived by ship at Qui Nhon, CWO Sebeny, who had flown to Vietnam about three weeks earlier as the head of the advance party, came aboard and informed us that we had to get off at Qui Nhon. This caught us by surprise since we had not prepared our equipment for offloading. Our destination had changed before we arrived. Our two containers full of company equipment were bottom-stowed on the ship since we were supposed to get off at the last stop, not the first stop. The two containers went on to Cam Ranh Bay with our company escorts, and in a few days the escorts and the containers came back to the 64th through Qui Nhon port aboard a Landing Ship Tank (LST). Our company area was on the west side of Highway 1, in the Phu Tai Valley, about 10 miles from the coast at Qui Nhon.

This change generated another interesting series of events. As a separate company, we were authorized to receive a WABTOC package (When Authorized By The Overseas Commander). This consisted of about sixty pallet-loads of construction

materials, items which were “worth their weight in gold.” After about a month, I found out that the 64th’s WABTOC package had been coded for the destination of Cam Ranh Bay, gone to Cam Ranh Bay, and disappeared. I was able to order another WABTOC package, and, you guessed it, after about a month it also wound up coded for and delivered to Cam Ranh Bay. I sent two NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers) on company orders to Cam Ranh Bay to take charge of this second batch of materials before the materials could disappear again. After a month-long struggle to get the building materials out of the hands of those who had “disappeared” the first shipment, the second WABTOC package and the two NCOs finally arrived at Qui Nhon via LST. The WABTOC package was supposed to contain refrigerators for the mess hall, but they never arrived. If we had not brought refrigerators with us from the Ft. Bragg disposal yard, we would not have had refrigeration.

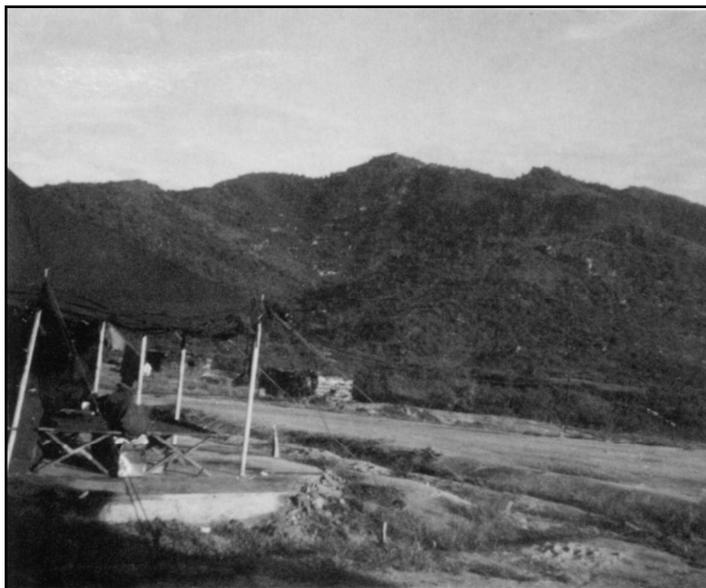
The 64th Company was assigned to the 27th Battalion at Qui Nhon. The other companies included the 2nd Medium Truck Cargo (12-ton), 541st Light Truck (2-1/2-ton), 359th Medium Truck Petroleum (12-ton), and 597th Medium Truck Cargo (12-ton). The 563rd Medium Truck Cargo (12-ton) came in soon after the 64th arrived. Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Leo T. McMahon was the commander of the 27th

Battalion. He had a daily command and staff meeting every evening at 1900 hours. He changed the times of his commanders’ meeting so his officers could not go to Mass at the airfield hanger when Archbishop Cardinal Spellman of the Catholic Military Ordinariate visited Qui Nhon. He did the same thing when Bob Hope visited and put on a show at the hanger of the Qui Nhon airfield. He was not popular.

About two months after our arrival

in country, the members of the 64th had a nasty surprise, which had nothing to do with the enemy.

The Qui Nhon Support Command, led by Brigadier General (BG) “Monk” Meyer, conducted a peacetime Annual General Inspection on the unit. They sent down twenty-two inspectors and the company only had eighteen officers and NCOs to



Company area at
Phu Tai Valley
when we arrived

escort them. The daily run of as many tractors as possible continued throughout the pre-inspection and inspection period. I felt that it was entirely unrealistic to inspect a company by peacetime standards when trucks were on the road every day in a 100% effort which never went below a 100% effort, and when absolutely nothing else was operated according to peacetime standards. The company passed the inspection and the inspectors went back to their desks at the Qui Nhon Support Command headquarters.

Our primary daily convoy route ran from Qui Nhon, 110 miles west on Route 19, past the 1st Air Cavalry Division at An Khe, to Pleiku where the 4th Infantry Division and 173rd Airborne Brigade were stationed. There was one ice truck run north each day to the Bong Song area, and occasionally we received a tasking to haul several trailers north up Route 1 to the Air Base at Phu Cat near Bong Song.

Two Million Miles of Bad Road

I shared the convoy commander responsibility with the three, later two, and finally one, platoon leaders of the company. When on the convoy duty, I woke up at 0200,



LT "Combat" Johnson
in convoy commander jeep

then went to the company operations office to learn how many of the sixty tractors I had available and which NCO was on the duty roster for the day for assistant convoy commander. I then reported to battalion operations at 0230. The operations sergeant would brief the taskings on hand for the

day. Company representatives would report the number of trucks which they had available and would receive their assignments. The 64th's officer would be the medium tractor/flatbed trailer convoy commander every day, and the other tractor/flatbed trailer companies sent a sergeant to control their vehicles.

The men woke up at 0330 and at 0400 ate breakfast in our company mess. At about 0420, I would stand up and announce which trucks had to pick up trailers at the different supply depots or at the port of Qui Nhon. Depots were broken down by classes of supply. Our 64th Company did not have any drivers to act as assistant drivers since we had to put fifteen men and an NCO on guard duty each day, plus

group detail, plus battalion detail, plus company detail to build our facilities. After breakfast, the drivers drove their tractors to the depots to pick up their trailers. This was the point of origin. If their assigned trailer was not ready, then they would drive to the trailer transfer point in the Cha Rang Valley near the beginning of Highway 19, near the departure point marshalling area, and pick up an incidental load trailer.

At 0630, the tractors with loaded trailers assembled at the marshalling area at Cha Rang Valley along the right side of Highway 19 beyond the 54th Battalion area and before the first bridge. On the average,

each convoy had about 110 vehicles, half from the 64th and the other half from the other two medium cargo companies in the 27th Battalion.

At 0645, the convoy commander would give the outbound briefing and make a list of vehicles by bumper number in the convoy. I lined up the trucks by companies with the 64th in the lead. I had my assistant convoy commander ride up front while I lined up as the last vehicle. Since the trucks had no radios, this was the only way I would discover any problems. I kept the 5-ton “bobtail” recovery tractor with a mechanic doing the driving, and a spare bobtail tractor, at the trail of the convoy to fix or pull any mechanical problems. During the day’s run, I would move up and down the convoy, and sometimes have the assistant convoy commander at the rear of the convoy.

At 0700, the convoy departed.

By 0915 we arrived at An Khe, the home of the 1st Air Cavalry Division. The slow low range first gear grind drive up the An Khe pass and later the Mang Yang pass usually took the convoys almost an hour each to drive. We would marshal at An Khe to filter out stray traffic and to



Our Thunder Road in open highlands country



Halted at An Khe MP checkpoint

see if we had any maintenance problems. There were usually two to three other Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) or US convoys ahead of us waiting at the An Khe checkpoint. The MPs (Military Police) would release one convoy and then wait for a given amount of time before releasing the next convoy. There was no designated schedule for convoys. All the bridges had been blown and the Bailey



1LT Tom Moore
as Convoy Commander

bridge metal engineer bypasses reduced traffic to a single lane at each bridge, with the loaded westbound convoys having the priority at each bridge. At about 0945, our convoy would depart from the An Khe checkpoint.

At about 1200 we arrived at the Pleiku marshalling area. The tractors would disperse to their designated depots to drop off their loaded trailers and pick up an empty trailer. Pleiku had depots and a trailer transfer point and the 4th Infantry Division base camp. We would line up in the marshalling area waiting to depart on the homeward convoy at around 1400. As I waited, I would check to see what we were missing. Sometimes a tractor would have to remain at Pleiku overnight because its trailer had not been emptied. If so, the drivers had to sleep in the cabs, as there were no billets set up for them. At one

engineer depot, the cadre became known for not unloading the fifty-five-gallon drums of asphalt and causing the driver to stay overnight. On one occasion, near the end of the waiting period, the driver and I cut the securing metal bands, the driver made a series of tight turns, and the drums were unloaded across the entire storage area. The depot cadre then found that they were able to unload quickly on future deliveries.

In the early days of the Pleiku route, with loads originating from the Cha Rang Valley trailer transfer point, we found that our drivers were given some loads which were loosely secured on the beds of the flatbed trailers. These loose loads became a problem and we did not want to pull them because they fell off on the run and delayed the trail party who had to try to fix things. However, the trailer transfer point folks were determined to have us pull them to get them out of the yard. We soon realized that it could be to our advantage to pull loose loads of lumber. We had our company supply truck run at the trail of the convoy. With a few wiggles early in

the trip by our tractor hauling the load, the lumber would fall off. Our supply truck was there to pick up what we could carry to haul back home to build up our company area, and the locals could have the rest.

The 4th Infantry Division unfortunately became known for holding as many as fifty loaded trailers for over sixty days and more, and at the same time imperiously demanding more supplies. They called our trailers “mobile storage” and refused to unload them. The 8th Group Commander eventually instituted a policy



which said that we would not take any loaded trailers up to the 4th Infantry Division unless they had released an equal number of empty trailers the previous day. The problem became less severe, but never did disappear.

Highway 19 looking west to An Khe Pass

At 1400 we would depart from Pleiku on our return run. If we delayed too long then the MPs would not let us leave because they had the responsibility of closing down the whole road before nightfall. Although there was not much danger during this era before the ambushes from September 1967 to September 1968, the MPs did not want any convoys out at night. The Republic of Korea soldiers outside Qui Nhon would close down their portion of the road at dusk each evening and not let any vehicles pass.



By 1800, the convoy rolled back into the Cha Rang Valley area. The marshalling area was the release point.

The drivers knew exactly what they had to do and where they had to go. They scattered to their respective company areas. After dropping off their empty trailers, usually by 1830, they returned to the company area for maintenance.

64th Maintenance Shop in Phu Tai Valley

I had organized what I called “three-ring circuit maintenance.” The 1st platoon would check and replace the tires, the 2nd platoon would wash the trucks with the water from a well we had dug, and the 3rd platoon would pull after-operations maintenance with each driver. For any problems which they could not fix by 2130, they would



MAJ Horvath
with Heavy Lifter
10-ton tractor on
second tour in 1970

drive the tractor to the company maintenance shop where the “night owls” worked all night. Our group and battalion commanders would allow no scheduled maintenance down time or preventive maintenance for the tractors. Every available tractor drove every day. This was a difficult policy, because all procedures as then taught at the transportation school called for 75% of the vehicles to be on the road, 15% in for company maintenance, and 10% involved with ordnance maintenance. We actually did our scheduled maintenance when a tractor broke down and came into the shop for repair. The maintenance section was divided into two shifts, with mechanics performing repairs at night and during the day. Tractors which would run the next day were returned to the platoons that night for use on the morning convoy. What could be fixed by company maintenance was set up for repair during the day. What needed support maintenance was prepared for turn-in to ordnance. After they had finished working on their tractors, the drivers would eat dinner and go to bed.

At 0230 the next morning the next convoy commander would report to the company operations office to see what tractors were available and the process would repeat all over again.

Drivers were dedicated. They knew what they had to do. One only had to tell them where to pick up their loads. At line up, I only had to wait for them to show up at the marshalling area so I could get a list of the bumper numbers.



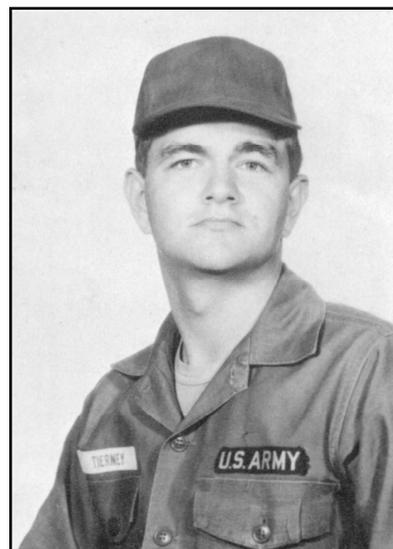
The “heavy lifter” drivers were the most independent. These 20-ton tractor and “low boy” trailers were pulled from engineer units and consolidated into a squad of about eight or ten. Their task was to go to Pleiku and pick up “broken” tanks or M113 Armored Personnel Carriers and bring them back to Qui Nhon. These rigs were so slow that they could not keep up with the convoys. They drove Route 19 alone with a 1-1/2 ton truck for assistance and escort.

I was happiest when out with a convoy. The other companies were “too beat up” to have enough officers to lead convoys. They had either lost officers due to rotations back to the United States or the officers had been pulled up to staff slots at the headquarters. When I noted the mileage on the odometer of my M151 jeep after ten months, I had logged 20,000 miles. All of this convoy escort time meant that, to this day, when in hectic highway traffic, I will slide in behind a tractor-trailer rig and feel perfectly comfortable.

When the reports were in for the first ten months in country, the 64th's Mighty Mack Diesels had rung up two million task miles, a milestone which became known as “Two Million Miles of Bad Road.”

Trouble on the Road

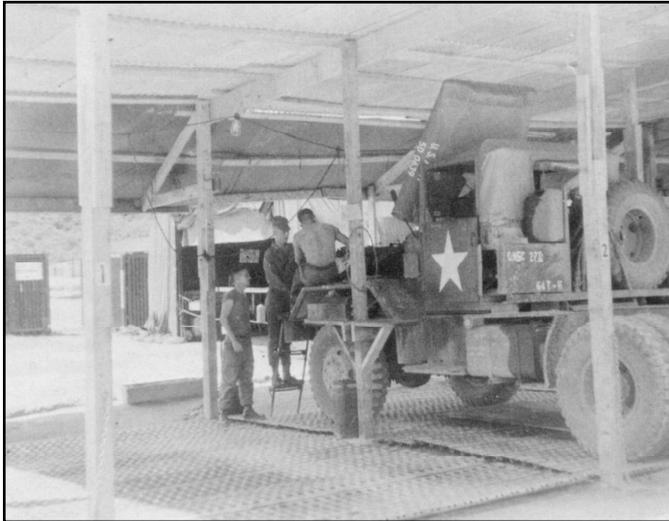
The 64th suffered its only fatality of the first year in the dark of an early August morning when driver Kenneth Tierney was crushed between two trucks in the trailer transfer point. The unbelievably rough roads, unruly civilian traffic, high mileage, and fatigue made accidents a constant problem. Thanksgiving Day became known as “Black Thursday” when three tractors were lost in accidents. The tractors bounced high over the potholes, the fenders came loose, were welded, came loose again, then were chained through holes and flapped along.



PFC Kenneth Tierney

On one occasion, the 8th Group Commander and the Qui Nhon Support Command Commander, BG Meyer, together with the Qui Nhon Support Command photographer, came upon a 64th tractor which had run off of the end of a narrow metal engineer bridge, and was upside down in the roadside gully. The tractor had not only turned over, it had smashed the large fuel pipeline which ran from Qui Nhon to An Khe, and petroleum was gushing freely around the scene. The surprise picture was not any prettier later that same day when I was presented with a glossy 8x12 photo and asked to explain why my truck driver drove that way. Actually,

there was a reason. The driver had taken both hands off of the steering wheel. He had reached down through the steering wheel with one hand to the high/low range lever, and reached at the same time with the other hand to the gearshift lever, and did both functions at the same time with one clutch pedal throw. This was known as a “split-shift” and every driver did it dozens of times every day. The arm through the steering wheel was supposed to keep the steering under control, but this time the sensitive power steering and the narrow bridge did not allow the customary shortcut to be successful. On another occasion, a 64th driver and the 64th company chain of



64th's Maintenance in Phu Tai Valley
Steel plank floor was later concrete.

command were required to formally march in front of BG Meyer’s desk and explain why my tractor driver had had a rear-end collision. I watched the driver calmly explain that he was hungry, that he had dropped his can of peanuts down on the floor of the cab, and that when he reached down to pick up his can of peanuts, the collision was unavoidable. These incidents are comical now, but there was nothing funny about them at the time.

On one of my convoy commander runs we arrived at the An Khe MP checkpoint halt and found out about a special problem. One of our trailers was loaded with extra long concrete power poles which extended far beyond the back of the trailer. The severe and varied stresses of pulling the turns and grades of the An Khe pass had caused the securing bands to loosen. The trail ends of the poles had shifted to the right so that they now extended out about eight feet from the side of the tractor-trailer. Since the driver at this time did not have a right side mirror, he had been unknowingly driving along the busy roadway on the way into An Khe as normal, but he had been knocking the local riders off of their bicycles and motorbikes, from the rear, one after another, just like hitting a long row of bowling pins. After we reported it to the MPs and secured the load, the damages thankfully turned out to be not my problem, but some young and eager Civil Affairs officer soon certainly had a busy time on what now had become the “restitution trail”.

Both the An Khe pass and the Mang Yang pass were a long series of sharp turns and a continuous steep grade. One turn in the An Khe pass was so tight that it was called the “Devil’s Hairpin.” During one slow, hot and dusty drive up the An Khe pass, I spotted one of my drivers who was driving while “frozen” sound asleep at the wheel,

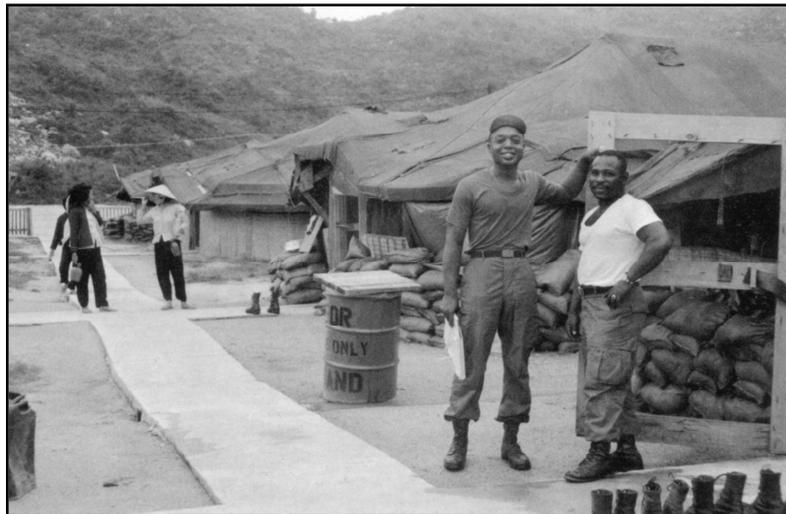
with his hands, wrists, and arms locked into place. I loosened my canteen, got out of my jeep, ran alongside of the tractor, jumped up on the running board, grabbed the steering wheel, and splashed some water into the face of the driver. The severity of the conditions, without any break, was impossible to explain to anyone who had not experienced the trials of “the road.”

There were no safety class materials available in the Qui Nhon Support Command, so I managed to purchase an excellent color movie of a big rig safety program from the Ohio Highway Patrol. I also mounted a smashed vehicle on top of a CONEX container at the company front gate as a reminder of the potential consequences of unsafe driving.

Life at the 64th's Base Camp

When not escorting a convoy, I performed my regular company commander duties. The paperwork did not stop on account of the war. Since my unit had just arrived in country, I spent a lot of time scrounging for building materials for the company. I also visited the depots to learn how they did business and see what we could do to

reduce the time my drivers had to wait to pick up their loads. Most of this could be accomplished by just making friends with the depot personnel. At one time my supply efforts moved to the Qui Nhon harbor. I was called upon to meet the commander of the inbound 563rd Medium Truck Company out on the ship,



and brief him for the actions in leaving the ship and getting set up ashore. I took out two pairs of tropical boots for trading with the ship's Navy Quartermaster officer. I exchanged the boots for one hundred sets of silverware for the mess hall, a great trade.

In the 64th's Cha Rang company area after improvement. Note concrete sidewalks.

Coming in and pulling maintenance until late at night did not give the drivers much time off for relaxation or sleep. They slept whenever they could, waiting for line up in Qui Nhon or waiting in the marshalling area at Pleiku. They took naps in the cabs of their trucks. If their tractor would run, the drivers were on the road. Guard duty or detail duty were the only times when they received a break from

driving. During the twenty-four-hour guard day they had two hours on guard and four off throughout the day.

I issued my men C rations for the road. The other companies did not. If a company drew an issue of C rations from the Quartermaster depot at Qui Nhon, then the C rations reduced the A rations for the mess hall. I had discovered that the Quartermaster depot in Pleiku would issue me a pallet of C rations without charging it against our A rations account which was kept in Qui Nhon. This was at least some small repayment for having to suffer through two dusty dry seasons and two rainy monsoon seasons all in the same year, one climate daily in Qui Nhon and another climate daily in Pleiku. A monsoon season meant about a month of light rain becoming heavier, one month of heavy rain never stopping, and one month of heavy rain becoming lighter. In the heavy rain, it would come down so hard that even on a slope the water would build up to over an inch deep and stay there on the slope because it could not run down fast enough. It had to be seen to be believed. The red mud or red dust of Pleiku left a solid red stain on everything. During the dry season, many drivers used disposable surgical masks from the clinics to fight the choking convoy dust.

One of the drivers had an alcohol problem. When he had several beers, he would load his rifle and threaten others in the company area. I made formal and informal efforts to have him moved out of the company on any basis. The military police, Judge Advocate General, Qui Nhon Support Command personnel office, and the battalion personnel office could not or would not do anything. I kept the man under twenty-four-hour guard in the company area in a CONEX container with a cot. After several days, the man promised that he would do his job. I made him the number two truck in the convoy, behind a sergeant who was the lead truck driver. As the convoy commander, I moved up and down the convoy. The man had smuggled some beer into the cab of his tractor. When the outbound convoy moved into the open country beyond the Mang Yang pass, the man sped past the lead truck and took off driving too fast for safety. He rounded a tight curve and rolled the tractor and trailer into a gully. At long last he finally left the area permanently on a medical evacuation helicopter with a crushed chest.

The latrines were cleaned by a Vietnamese Civilian Personnel Office (CPO) employee who was paid in piasters. The material fell into one-third of a fifty-five-gallon barrel. Once a day the "s***burner" used a long metal rod with a claw to drag these cans out of the latrine shed and about fifteen yards away. He then would mix in a large dose of diesel fuel and fire the cans up. The result was a very efficient and nasally memorable way of handling the problem. Urine was dealt with using six-

foot-long aluminum rocket packing tubes sunk into draining gravel pits, but these never seemed to work as well as the burner drums. About eight CPO Vietnamese men were employed in building the compound and as truck mechanics. Several even made the transfer to Pleiku when the unit moved. About eight CPO Vietnamese ladies worked in the mess hall. Other Vietnamese ladies and young ladies (mamasans and babysans) were employed by the members of each tent and were paid in piasters to clean their boots and wash their clothes. We came to realize that the washing really meant rinsing in a river and hanging on a bush to dry, but somehow the laundry was always nicely pressed when returned, and also a little damp.

We kept up a good appearance with our own barber tent and a Vietnamese barber paid in piasters by each soldier. There was a concrete basketball court for use when it was not raining or baking in the sun. There was a Vietnamese Catholic Church built in the French style just outside the gate, so Catholic soldiers could attend Mass when they were in the company area on Sunday. Our favorite hymn was "Amazing Grace." Our favorite song was "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." I wrote and mailed a quick letter home to my wife, Pat, in Cleveland, OH, every single day. She also wrote a daily letter to me about her efforts on the home front. We followed this plan during my second tour in 1969-1970. Rest and Recuperation flights to Hawaii began in December of 1966 and I was able to meet my wife for five days there during both tours.

The diesel fuel came through the quartermaster supply system and somehow the diesel managed to contain a significant amount of sand. Replacement fuel filters were not available in this early time frame. This caused the sad sight of a used



CPT Horvath (right)
with Huntz

fuel filter sitting on a piece of cardboard and oozing sand out of the bottom like a child's castle at the beach at the end of the day. The only fix found at the time was to flush the used filters thoroughly with clean fuel and put them back into place. Rear-view mirrors on the tractors were also a concern. As the miles piled up, mirrors became broken and could not be replaced. Eventually each driver fixed a single mirror to the driver side with quick release screws and took the mirror with him when he left his tractor.

Because of the long hours, I ran our award-winning mess hall 24-hours a day. The men could drop in at any time and find something substantial to eat and drink. On one fortunate night I was able to bring a case of frozen lobster back to the mess hall from the Pleiku quartermaster depot. The resulting buttered lobster and fresh biscuits at midnight were a wonderful meal which was not to be forgotten. White wine was



Manager Crow
at our club

also available for purchase at the Pleiku air base US Air Force Exchange. I established a company club, which was named the “Crow’s Nest” because the manager’s name was “Crow.” Specialist Crow bought pallets of soda and beer from the post exchange and then sold them to the members of our company. The profits went into an official incidental fund for purchase of supplies from the local economy. I was able to have my wife send me items which were needed but which were not available from the so-called supply system such as hairnets for the Vietnamese ladies who worked in the mess hall (demanded by the Inspector General (IG) team), salt-shakers, sugar-shakers, checkered tablecloths, and toilet seats for the obvious use over the plywood holes. For a shower we built wooden sides around a concrete pad, roofed it, used a tank-like set of two Navy cubes set on

top of CONEXEs, filled the cubes daily from a water tanker, and had a gasoline heater from the mess hall equipment rigged into a fifty-five-gallon barrel for warm water. The light tar penepime, which was often spread as a dust control on the company roads, caused a bitter lesson to be learned. If you accidentally tried to walk across it during the night in your flip-flops towards the shower, you lost the flip-flops and had to remove the tar from your feet with gasoline. One such exercise was always enough to cause you to remember to wear your boots on the way to the shower. The rain-or-dry movie theater was a white plywood screen, benches, and a projection booth. During the pouring rain of the monsoon season, we sat on the benches under our helmet liners and ponchos as though we were in individual teepees.

Our company members had received an issue of rubber galoshes and arctic sleeping bags from the logistic office of Ft. Bragg before we deployed for Vietnam. I thought that was strange, until I settled down in our area of operations. The nights in the Central Highlands were cold when our drivers had to remain overnight away from Qui Nhon. The monsoon rains turned the company area and all other locations into a sea of mud, so the overshoes proved valuable in the mud and the arctic sleeping bags

were a comfort in the clammy cold. The company lived in general purpose medium tents which were later reinforced with lumber, bamboo screening, and wire screening. The mess hall was a tropical wooden building which had been built by the previous company, a unit which had since been moved to another location. At the back of the mess hall, next to the maintenance bays, there was a large kitchen drainage sump pit which was about fifteen feet square and six feet deep, and covered with tarpaulins over a lumber frame. Although the drainage pool was kept sprinkled with lime, the slop was grotesque stuff. Sure enough, in the middle of one dark night, a new driver drove a tractor straight into the pit pool and at dawn the nasty tractor had to be pulled out of the muck by our wrecker. Our wrecker was always being called out alone far onto the highway to pick up breakdowns, and the operator felt justifiably nervous about being so isolated. I solved the problem by mounting a radio and a machine gun on the wrecker.

The arms room was a tent lined with cyclone fence with interior access to a locked CONEX container. Weapons were issued for the road and secured for the camp.

The perimeter of the company area was protected by a spread of barbed wire and concertina wire. There was a regular foliage control service provided by the 359th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)(Petroleum). A tractor and tanker with a rear hose attachment drove slowly along the fence line while one man walked behind and sprayed the fence line with diesel fuel. One tragic day, somehow a warning flare in the fence line was tripped, and the nozzle man was killed in the instant inferno.



Company Training meeting in our mess hall

The 64th shared its base camp area with the signal company which provided telephone support to the Phu Tai Valley military units. Three large generators, alternating on the line, were the heart and soul of this operation, and the signal company had been in this location for over a year. The local village was located just outside the front side of our shared barbed wire compound. The signal company operators could not understand why their generators eventually became unable to keep up with the power demand, so at one time they published a notice that the military telephone system would shut down for 24 hours to do a complete

maintenance on the generators. Surprise! The generators were shut down at midnight, and at that very same time most of the lights in the village went out too. It seems that signal company members had girlfriends in the village, and, over time, had tunneled small electric lines out under the fence line. These lines themselves became spliced to more users, and the load became an overload.

The 64th Company had superdependable Mack diesel-powered M52A1s. They had much more horsepower for hauling heavy loads uphill than the gasoline-powered M52s of the 2nd and 597th Companies. Those trucks were old and beat up and underpowered as well.

In the spring of 1967, the medium companies began to receive the undependable and underpowered turbo-charged M52A2s and diesel International Loadstar tractors as replacements. The so-called multifuel M52A2s had much less horsepower than the diesel M52A1s. Bad choice. The Loadstars were civilian-use tractors with single axels which were designed for local use only. In fact, the brakes would overload when coming down a steep grade. Another bad choice. The Tank Automotive Command (TACOM) in Detroit had pulled them out of assignment to local use in Transportation Motor Pools in the United States and sent them to Vietnam to run heavy line hauls because TACOM had no military tractor procurement program. However, the Loadstars could not pull heavy loads and were eventually given only light loads. An M52A1 diesel of the 64th often had to drive up to the trailer in front and push the slower rig on the climbs up the passes. The matter of the poor road performance of the new M52A2 multifuel tractor was not just a matter of driver loyalty. The M52A2 was turbo powered with narrow tolerances and a terrible maintenance performance. Compared to the M52 gasser and to the M52A1 diesel, it was clearly underpowered.

M52	600 CID and 224 hp at 2800 rpm
M52A1	672 CID and 211 hp at 2100 rpm
M52A2	475 CID and 175 hp at 2800 rpm

(CID=Cubic Inch Displacement)

After Vietnam, the Army retrofitted the M52, M52A1 and M52A2 tractors with a 300 horsepower Cummings engine and called this the “800 Series” tractor. Here at last was the real pulling power which we had needed so desperately but which we had never received.

Each medium truck company had 120 trailers, model M124C. Upon arrival at Qui Nhon, I was directed to turn our trailers over to the trailer transfer detachment. Although they remained on my property book, I officially never saw the trailers again. This created a problem in that I had no item control over the trailers and could

not perform maintenance on them. With the four medium cargo companies (2nd, 64th, 563rd and 597th), 480 trailers were turned over to the control of the trailer transfer point at the Cha Rang Valley.

There were no loading docks for the rough terrain forklifts to use to drive onto the trailers. Instead, the forklift drivers would lift up the sideboards from their fittings and then drop them on the ground and load from the sides. Unfortunately the forklift drivers would then drive on top of the sideboards, breaking them. The bent and missing boards made us look like a gypsy caravan going up the road.

The 8th Group Commander later instituted a policy whereby the sideboards and tailboards were removed from the trailers, and only the headboard remained. Loading and unloading locations were required to secure the loads with banding materials, and to cut and remove the banding for unloading. The 8th Group painted the front ten inches of the hood of each task truck a distinctive Caterpillar Corporation gloss gold for easy recognition and driver control. The maintenance and property control of the trailers was eventually solved when the 8th Group set up a consolidated trailer maintenance unit, took two mechanics from each of the medium cargo truck companies and a CWO and NCO from the 8th Group Headquarters. The trailer maintenance facility was across the road from the Cha Rang Valley trailer transfer point and the 54th Truck Battalion. This trailer maintenance unit was much appreciated as it performed all trailer services concerning property control, tires, lubrication, floorboards, headboards, brakes, lights and landing gear. Other Army units would pull an empty 8th Group trailer away from a supply site and use/abuse it for their own needs. Because of this, the tails of the trailers were painted white so that they could be recognized and pulled out of places where they had been hidden by other units and placed back into transportation service.

Keep on Trucking

In the first week in May 1967, the 64th Company became the first truck company to relocate to Pleiku. The 64th made five unit moves, one to Phu Tai in August of 1966, three in Pleiku (due to poor planning by the Pleiku Sub-Area Command), and one to Da Nang in April of 1971. The first location in Pleiku was an open field which later turned into a deep mud bog and the trucks had to be left out of the unit area and parked on the public asphalt road.

The early aim was to establish a line haul system, similar to the system used in Europe, to manage two convoys a day in each direction. There were to be two runs between Cha Rang and An Khe, and two runs between An Khe and Pleiku. With

only a portion of the daylight hours available however, there eventually proved never to be enough time in the day to complete all of the four convoy segments. The 88th Medium Truck Company later operated out of An Khe and made runs east to Qui Nhon and west to Pleiku. The 64th was able to do two runs to An Khe on an intermittent basis, but this came to an end with the beginning of the ambushes in September of 1967.

Although accidents were a concern, most of the tractor washouts were because the rough road caused broken frames. The real problem was the lack of a tractor

procurement system at TACOM. Replacement tractors were not available during this period and the number of tractors in the 64th Truck Company went from sixty to forty-five to thirty-six in late 1967, a real waste of a unit. Now they were able to see just what had happened to the 2nd Medium Truck Company and to the 597th Medium Truck Company before them. The 64th “Kings of the Road” Medium Truck Company joined the other medium truck companies in being totally used up without proper support from TACOM.



“Patmobile”
Veteran of 20,000
miles in 10 months

I had the First Sergeant set up a duty roster, and all of the base camp company personnel rotated as gunners on the convoy jeeps. Company personnel enjoyed the opportunity to see the country beyond the base camp. However, one of the cooks mentioned the practice in a letter to his mother. His mother complained to her Congressman, and the eventual administrative uproar changed the program. The cook was left off of the roster, and everyone else volunteered to stay on the roster.

In the fall of 1966, I put armor plating on the front and sides of my M151 jeep. This was the first fully armored convoy commander vehicle at Qui Nhon. I was trying to think ahead although the enemy presented no serious threat at that time and no ambush occurred during my first tour. I named the gun jeep the “Patmobile” in honor of my wife, Pat. I painted “Batman” on my side of the jeep, and “Robin” on the driver’s side. The front plate came up to nearly the top of the windshield leaving a narrow slit to look over. I mounted first a .30 caliber and then a .50 caliber

machine gun on the back. The convoys were not allowed to test fire their weapons before the ambushes began in September of 1967. At one bridge checkpoint stop at an infantry position, they gave the soldiers on the convoy control jeeps permission to fire their machine guns into a hill. The 64th Transportation Company was among several truck companies which later received a Presidential Unit Citation for their direct combat support of the US Army defenders in the December 1967 Battle of Dak To.

The performance of drivers was measured in miles driven and safety record. The company operations sergeant kept track of the number of miles each driver drove and his safety record. Beginning in 1969, after safe driving of several thousand miles, the company awarded the driver the "Line Haul" tab for wear on his shoulder above his First Logistics Command patch. They were really proud of it. It was the equivalent of a Combat Infantryman Badge to an infantryman.

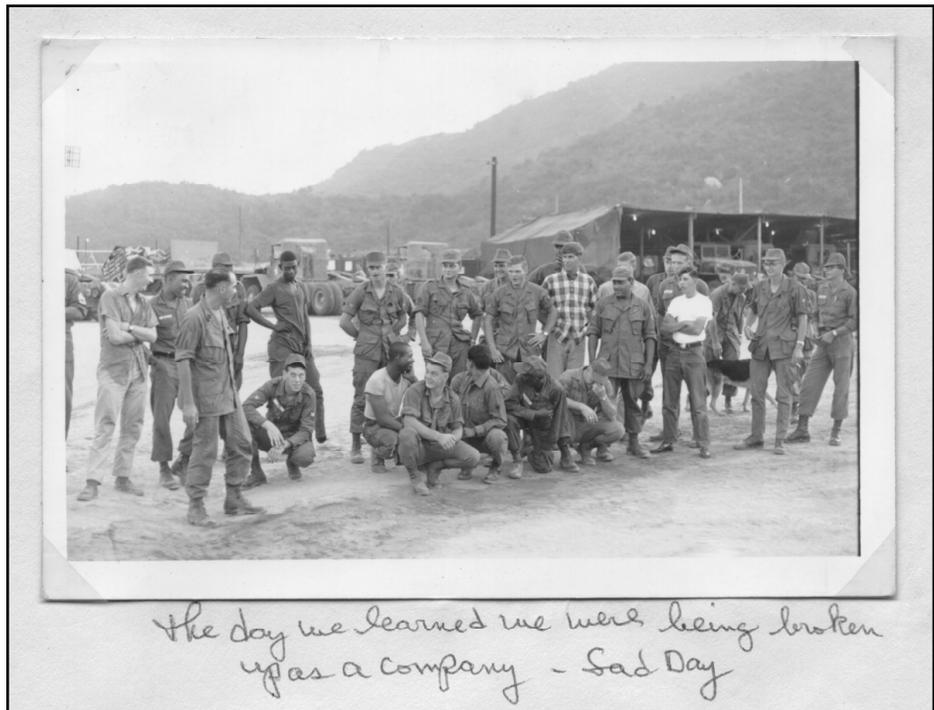
The End of Truck Tour Number One

We had a whole lingo dedicated to returning home. When a soldier had fewer than one hundred days to go on his year tour in Vietnam, he was a "double-digit midget."

When he had fewer than ten days to go, he was a "single-digit midget." When he had less than a week to go, he was into the "no-mores," as in "no more Sundays," "no more Mondays," and so forth. The recurring comment was, "If Vietnam were connected to California by land, I'd start walking!"

In May 1967, I

received a new driver. The Personnel Command broke up the 64th and sent our drivers to other companies so that all the men in the company would not rotate back to the United States at the same time. I got 2-1/2-ton truck drivers and 5-ton straight truck drivers who did not know how to drive M52 tractors. I assigned my faithful

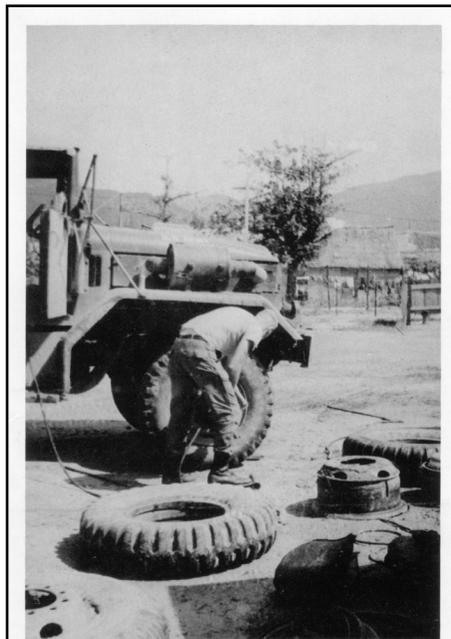


CPT Horvath standing, third from left

driver, Pharoah Manley, with whom I had covered 20,000 miles in the Patmobile, to a tractor and put one of the new drivers on my convoy command armored jeep. In the dark of the first morning for the new driver at the new company location at Pleiku, at the marshalling area, my new driver, unfamiliar with the reduced visibility caused by the windshield armor and unfamiliar with the terrain, slowly drove the jeep into a shadowed gully and the jeep rolled onto its side, breaking my leg in several places. I had to return to the United States.

First Lieutenant (1LT) David R. Wilson of the 64th was later killed in an ambush and the 124th Transportation Battalion compound in Pleiku was named Camp Wilson. He was awarded the Silver Star for his actions.

On 1 April, 1971 the 64th moved from Pleiku to the 57th Transportation Battalion in Da Nang. The 64th was deactivated on 16 June, 1971.



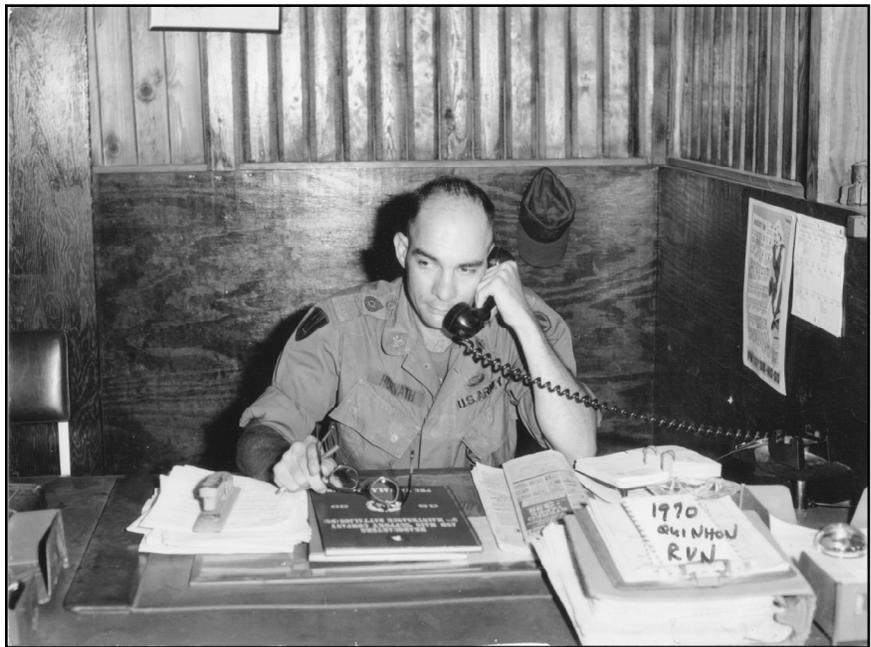
**These Pictures May Fade,
But, Our Memories Never!**

Return to Vietnam: Truck Tour Number Two

While back in the United States, I read Bernard Fall's book, *Street Without Joy*, which described the French experience in Indochina. I was especially interested in the chapter on the destruction of French Mobile Group 100 along Route 19 to Pleiku. I sent a copy of the book to Colonel (COL) Joe Bellino who commanded the 8th Transportation Group in Qui Nhon at that time. COL Bellino wrote back thanking me for the book and noting that it was in great demand among the Group staff officers. A retyping of the COL Bellino letter is included in Appendix A.

When I first went to Vietnam, I went over there to "win the war for democracy." I did not encounter any antiwar sentiment after my return. However, I was surprised

and amazed at the lack of understanding by civilians about the war. At a dinner with my relatives, someone asked me about my feelings about going back to Vietnam for my upcoming second tour. I said I did not care to be separated from my wife and two small children. Someone asked why I could not take them with me and said that the impression that the civilians had was that, even



in 1967, military personnel took their families with them to Vietnam. This was really incomprehensible since hundreds and thousands of US soldiers had been dying in Vietnam since the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley in December of 1965. As a Regular Army officer, I did not have a choice about going to Vietnam for a second tour after about twenty-four months from the end of my first tour. As a matter of fact, the Transportation Chief of Personnel was unfortunately very enthusiastic about the high percentage of Transportation Corps (TC) officers who were going to Vietnam. This was regardless of whether it was their second tour, and regardless of the fact that other service corps branches had many officers who had not yet gone to Vietnam on their first tour. Furthermore, many TC officers on their second tours were filling slots which were not even TC slots. On my second tour I had no indication of the withdrawal policy. I had not heard of Nixon's promise in 1969 to

MAJ Horvath
as XO of the
54th Transportation
Battalion

start pulling troops out. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) units invaded Cambodia while I was there. To me the Army still planned to win.

Now a Major (MAJ), I was assigned as the Executive Officer (XO) for the 54th Transportation Battalion during my second tour in Vietnam, which began in July 1969. The 54th Battalion was still located about ten miles west of Qui Nhon, in the Cha Rang Valley. The battalion was next to the trailer transfer point, and across Route 19 now there was a Post Exchange, a large convoy marshalling area, a petroleum tank farm, and the 8th Group consolidated trailer maintenance unit. My first battalion commander was LTC, later BG, William Sarber. LTC Everett Wayne Rackley was my next battalion commander.

The 54th Battalion was part of 8th Transportation Group, which now also included the 27th Battalion in the Phu Tai Valley outside of Qui Nhon, commanded by Wayne Rackley's brother Jerry, and the 124th Battalion, located in Pleiku. It is interesting to note that it was not unusual for the truck company units to move several times during the Vietnam years and to belong to different battalions at different times.

The 54th Battalion had the 512th Truck (5-ton), 523rd Truck (5-ton), and 669th Truck (5-ton) companies at Cha Rang Valley, and the 545th Truck (2-1/2-ton) at Tuy Hoa.

The 27th Battalion had the 2nd Medium Truck, the 597th Medium Truck, the 563rd Medium Truck, and the 444th Light Truck in the Phu Tai Valley, with the 88th Medium Truck at An Khe and the 505th Trailer Transfer Point Detachment at the 54th Battalion area at the Cha Rang Valley.

The 124th Battalion had my old 64th Medium Cargo Truck, 359th Medium Petroleum Truck, 541st Light Truck (2-1/2-ton) Companies, and the 520th Trailer Transfer Point Detachment at Pleiku.

Having the 124th Transportation Battalion at Pleiku provided facilities for the Qui Nhon convoy drivers that did not exist during my first tour. We now had maintenance shops to fix any problems that occurred on the road. We had a base of operations from which to serve the supply depots, the Pleiku air force base, the 4th Infantry Division base camp, the Camp Holloway aviation center, the artillery firebases, Kontum, and Dak To. In the event that the drivers had to remain overnight, they had a temporary barracks in which to sleep and the 124th Battalion's company mess halls in which to eat.

Changes in Trucking

There were a number of notable changes in the two years between 1967 and 1969. Han Jin, a Korean contract company, had expanded in Qui Nhon. Han Jin provided trucks and drivers for the direct haul route to Pleiku and for the other routes. Even though they were civilians, they were great. They lined up in the convoys like anyone else, wore their steel pots and flak jackets, and drove with professional dependability. The Han Jin company also took over a large amount of the stevedore operations in the Qui Nhon port. SeaLand vans and wheeled chassis were now regular loads for the medium tractors. The 597th Truck Company operated the 8th Group daily express van trailer run to Pleiku. This express van service was quicker than helicopter service when the chopper loading and unloading were considered. The 597th also ran the refrigerated van service to Pleiku.

The 54th managed its own compound on the south side of Route 19. It was known as Camp Addison. One routine midnight became remarkable when someone in authority found a naked Vietnamese woman in one of the barracks wall lockers. They knew what she was doing there, what they wanted to know was how she got into the compound. A detailed investigation revealed that she was being brought in and out by a mess hall crew who had hidden her in a small water trailer. Needless to say, the mess hall crews were made to give all of the water trailers a thorough flushing and cleaning.

The trailer maintenance procedure

was routine during my second tour and with the addition of the 88th Medium Truck Company at An Khe, there were now 600 trailers in the fleet. The living conditions, which had been tents during the first tour, were now wooden, screened, tropical buildings.

The 8th Group sent taskings down to the battalions by radio at night. The depots loaded trailers according to the priorities. The battalion operations offices would assign the taskings to the companies according to what trucks were available. There were always more loads than trucks available to haul. Every available truck drove the road. At night the company operations sergeant would report in to battalion and collect the taskings. The operations sergeant assigned the trucks to the locations. In



Photo Courtesy of LTC (Ret.) Ron Voightritter

Eighth Group
express van trailer

the morning each driver stopped at the company operations office to see where he had to pick up his trailer or truck. The 5-tons and 2-1/2-tons and refrigerated van trailers had night loading crews, so these convoy drivers picked up their trucks from the nearby night parking areas. The various types of vehicles formed up for their separate convoys to their assigned destinations.

Critical loads were prioritized. If the depots did not have the assigned trailer ready, then the driver took his tractor to the trailer transfer point in the Cha Rang Valley and picked up another trailer. The trailer transfer point always had dozens of loads ready.

The lines of communication out of Qui Nhon ran north along Route 1 to Bong Son and Duc Pho, south along Route 1 to Tuy Hoa Bay and west to Pleiku. Occasionally a convoy went far north to support the AMERICAL Division at Chu Lai or Tam Ky. The 2-1/2-ton trucks ran the convoys to Tuy Hoa. The Route 1 road between Qui Nhon and Tuy Hoa was so bad that only 2-1/2-ton trucks could drive it. Later roadwork made tractor-trailer runs possible. The 5-ton M54 straight trucks ran west past Pleiku and Kontum. They would travel on to firebases at Dak To and Ban Blech and beyond. The 5-ton straight trucks now had drop sides for easier loading and unloading. At one point the demand for more cargo delivery meant that 1-1/2 trailers were also loaded and pulled by every 5-ton straight truck. This effort was soon stopped because of the difficulty in loading and unloading and because of bent towing arms. The 5-tons also made excellent gun truck platforms, and gun trucks were now a normal part of everyday operations.

Gun Trucks

The North Vietnamese Army had conducted intense ambushes along Route 19

between An Khe and Pleiku from September 1967 through September 1968. Therefore the immediate unit security escort for the mission was required. The 8th Group Commander, COL Joseph Bellino, (known respectfully as “Jumping Joe” because of his enthusiasm), encouraged



Photo courtesy of James Lyles and Terry Lane

Mighty Minny
Gun Truck from
the 64th Truck
Company

mechanics and volunteer drivers to harden their trucks with armor plate and to create gun trucks by adding machine guns, other weapons, and radios. In June of 2004, the Ft. Eustis Transportation Museum dedicated a new “Bellino Building.”

In general, there was one gun truck for each ten to fifteen task vehicles. 8th Group had about five gun trucks per company in each of the twelve companies. Each one had a crew of four volunteers: a driver, two gunners and a crew chief. The crews

would name their trucks and paint logos on their sides. The 64th Medium Truck, now in the central highlands, had five known gun trucks: Highland Animals, Mighty Minny, Ho Chi’s Hearse, Death and Destruction, and Highland Raiders. Most



Photo courtesy of James Lyles and Tim Sewell

of the radios, weapons, and other equipment were not provided by the TO&E. When I returned to Vietnam in July of 1969, ambushes had declined and were no longer the everyday threat that they had been between September 1967 and September 1968. Gun trucks had seriously lessened the number of ambushes after the one year.

Highland Animals Gun Truck from the 64th Truck Company

CPT Don Voightritter was the commander of the 523rd Truck Company late in the war and he made arrangements with General Post to bring the Eve of Destruction gun truck back from Vietnam to the Ft. Eustis Transportation Corps Museum. The gun truck era will surely be looked upon as a milestone in the history of truck transportation. Two



Photo courtesy of James Lyles and Danny Cochran

books have been written about them: *Gun Trucks*, by Timothy J. Kutta (Squadron Signal Publications, 1996) and *The Hard Ride: Vietnam Gun Trucks*, by James Lyles (ISBN #971-93037-1-9).

Ho Chi's Hearse Gun Truck from the 64th Truck Company

Timothy J. Kutta, in his excellent book, *Gun Trucks*, noted on page 52 that the 8th Group statistics for an undefined period were:

Ambushes.....	36
Mining incidents.....	65
Sniper incidents.....	65
Bridges blown.....	18
Other incidents.....	39
US KIA.....	38
US WIA.....	203
Enemy KIA.....	104
Enemy WIA.....	10
Enemy POW.....	5
Vehicles damaged/destroyed	287

Full Speed Operations Continue

As a consequence of the development and success of the gun trucks, 8th Group became the “showcase” transportation unit in Vietnam. We would receive visits by generals or equivalent civilians on a regular basis. VIP briefings in the 54th Battalion area at the Cha Rang Valley had become routine. The VIPs would eat breakfast at 0600, complete with china and linen. An 8th Group command briefing with flip charts would follow which would show all of the convoy routes from the Cha Rang Valley marshalling area. The briefer would talk the visitors through the Group’s entire daily convoy activity. The visitors would then go to listen to a convoy commander’s briefing to the drivers, watch the gun trucks test fire their weapons on the hill beside the battalion compound, watch the convoys roar out onto the road, visit the trailer transfer point operations office, and visit the consolidated trailer maintenance facility. This was high visibility. The gun trucks now had a successful and widely-known reputation.

LTC Everett Wayne Rackley assumed command of the 124th Battalion in Pleiku upon giving up command of the 54th in January of 1970. He took me with him as his XO. I was able to arrange for the publishing of separate yearbooks for members of the 54th and of the 124th Battalions.

The End of Truck Tour Number Two

I finished up my second tour in the middle of 1970 with a two-week assignment as the 8th Group transportation control officer at the 4th Infantry Division forward support base for a large operation across the Vietnam border into Cambodia. With a jeep, a driver, a small tent, some pierced steel planking, and a large TC flag, I became the turnaround point for the dozens of trucks daily which brought in the

supplies for the operation. I built a field shower by mounting a mess hall water tank trailer onto the bed of a flatbed trailer. My last official act as the XO of the 124th Transportation Battalion was to gain control of a Viet Cong cargo bicycle, which I brought back in my baggage for presentation to the Ft. Eustis Transportation Corps Museum.

I retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1988. I went to work as an administrator for an insurance company, and my wife and I settled in Tucker, GA, on the east side of Atlanta. We have two daughters, one an Army Officer and the other a San Francisco Fire Department Firefighter/Paramedic.

Memorial

On 4 October, 2003, in Orlando Florida, there was a dedication ceremony for the 1st Lieutenant David R. Wilson Armed Forces Reserve Center. Dale Sindt, now a Colonel in the US Army Reserve, who was a platoon leader with David Wilson, took action to so name this Center. The Center covers 120,000 square feet and is a beautiful \$16 million assembly hall, auditorium and training facility.

The Silver Star citation for 1LT Wilson is as follows:

For gallantry in action while engaged in military operations against an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, 1LT Wilson, Transportation Corps, U.S. Army, distinguished himself on 31 January 1968 while serving as Commander of a supply convoy in the Republic of Vietnam. Wilson's convoy was subjected to fire by an enemy force. Although he was safely out of the danger zone, he unhesitatingly returned to the scene of the action to lead his men to safety. Many of the vehicles had halted in the kill zone and were subject to an intense enemy mortar and small arms fire. Passing through the ambush zone, 1LT Wilson, with complete disregard for his own safety, turned around and reentered the kill zone to insure the safe passage of the rear element of the convoy. While making this final courageous effort to insure the survival of these personnel, he was mortally wounded by an enemy mortar round falling on his vehicle. Through his extraordinary heroism and outstanding leadership ability, 1LT Wilson was able to save the lives of many of his personnel who otherwise would have been halted in the kill zone subject to the most intense enemy fire. 1LT Wilson's personal bravery and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



1LT David R. Wilson

In June of 2004, the names known thus far of members of the 64th Truck Company who were killed in Vietnam are:

David R Wilson (Silver Star)
Earnest Fowlke
Barrent O. Torgerson
Donald L. Neeley
Gary A. Best
Charles F. Gamble
Robert Warnock
Kenneth Tierney
Gerald R. Acton
Robert W. Hardesty
Donald A. Campbell
David H. Miller

According to James Lyles, author of *The Hard Ride; Vietnam Gun Trucks*, four gun truck crewmen were killed in a freak helicopter accident. Lyles said, "The entire crew of a gun truck called Mighty Minny from the 64th Transportation Company were killed in a helicopter crash. SP5 Gary A. Best, SP4 Charles F. Gamble, SP5 Donald L. Neeley and SP5 Barrent O. Torgerson were killed near Kontum on October 28th, 1969, when the helicopter they were being given a ride in crashed and burned shortly after takeoff." As of October, 2003, Lyles has catalogued the names of 368 gun trucks.

As of June, 2004, the Army Transportation Association Vietnam (ATAV) website has a memorial listing which shows the names of over 50 members of the 8th Truck Group who died in Vietnam. The website can be found at www.atav.us.

If you have any further information to add to an understanding of the efforts of the 64th, or of the 8th Truck Group, please contact John M. (Jack) Horvath, or Ralph Grambo, the ATAV webmaster (gramborw@uofs.edu).



Jack Horvath
2748 Peppermint Drive
Tucker, GA 30084

Jack and Pat
Horvath in 2002

Appendix A: Colonel Bellino's Letter, 7 February, 1968

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 8TH TRANSPORTATION GROUP
(MOTOR TRANSPORT)
APO SF 96238

AVQN-TG

7 February 1968

CPT John M. Horvath
2568 B Pratt Rd.
Fort Eustis, VA 23604

Dear Captain Horvath,

Of course I remember you from Mannheim and I am glad to know that you later commanded the 64th Trans Co. This fine company is now commanded by Captain Juan Lopez and he is doing an outstanding job. The 124th Bn, now consisting of the 64th, 563rd, 88th, and 28th (Plt) is commanded by LTC John A. Johnson, who was in COMZ when you and I were in Germany.

I'm pleased that BG Fuson has gotten the info I sent him into the hands of people who will spread the word to our young TC officers. I can't emphasize enough how unique in our history is the every day experience of the 8th Group since September 67. As one indication of this uniqueness let me cite a couple of statistics; September 1967 to date:

- 9 ambushes
- 15 convoy personnel KIA
- 63 convoy personnel WIA
- 82 known enemy KIA
- 7 known enemy WIA
- 45 vehicles destroyed or seriously damaged

In addition to the above, incident of road mines is so great that I won't attempt to tabulate the number. As an indication of the frequency, a couple of days ago each of the three battalions had a convoy in which one truck was damaged by road mines. All of this coupled with road closures due to blown bridges and heavy sniper fire has reduced considerably the ton/mile capability as you remember it. I have in front of me, on my desk, the names of fourteen men who have been approved to receive the Bronze Star Medal for Valor (two more are pending approval for the award of the Silver Star) and all these result from just two of the ambushes – 24 Nov & 4 December.

So you see John why I take such pride in being associated with the 8th Group during this period, and why Generals Westmoreland, Abrams, Rosson (IFFV), Peers (4th Inf Div), and Koster (Americal Div), have singled out the 8th Group for commendation. I feel this especially keenly because sixteen years ago, as of a member of the first TOAC to use the new Tschool, I sat in the auditorium to listen to a combat arms type from CONARC tell us how/why the technical services types were an albatross around the neck of the combat commander. Further, why he believed transportation and other such services should be performed by the combat arm in the Theater of Operations (I wonder if he was around long enough to learn how wrong he was?)

In a matter of a week my S3 and Asst S3 (Major Jasinski & Captain Williams) have read almost all your book "Street Without Joy". I intend to start it as quickly as they will let me. You are most thoughtful in sending it along to us – I had been told of the book. I will leave it to the 8th Group with your letter glued to the inside cover.

In this way all who read it will appreciate your pride in the TC and the 8th Group in particular.

Please remember me to my contemporaries there at Ft. Eustis and the best of luck to you.

Sincerely,

/signed/

JOE O. BELLINO

Colonel, TC

Commanding

Postscript:

John

At 1010 hrs this morn, 7 Feb, our convoy to Pleiku was hit 14 km east of Pleiku –

3 convoy pers. WIA

2 enemy KIA

1 vehicle & load of ammo destroyed.

/initialed/B

COMZ-Communications Zone

IFFV-I Field Force Vietnam

TOAC-Transportation Officer Advanced Course

Tschool-Transportation School

CONARC-Continental Army Command

Appendix B: 64th Truck Company Unit History for 1966

UNIT HISTORY

1 January 1966-31 December 1966

On 1 January 1966, the 64th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)(Cargo) found itself continuing its previous year's mission of Post Support at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The Commanders, 1st Lt William F Pietrowitz 1 January-5 January, 1st Lt David G. Black III 6 January-31 May, and Cpt John M Horvath 1 June-31 December were primarily concerned with the daily commitments to the John F Kennedy Center for Special Warfare and to the Division Ready Force of the 82nd Airborne Div.

On 1 April, the initial message from the Third US Army alerted the unit for deployment with the date set for 10 July. The movement order is attached as appendix 1. From its personnel strength of 145 on 1 April, the unit built up to a strength of 178 for its eventual deployment on 22 July. A roster of key personnel is attached as Appendix 2.

After a controversy which raged between 31 May and 25 June, Continental Army Command informed the elements concerned that the unit would deploy as scheduled with its M52A1 Diesel 5 ton tractors. The difficulty had centered around the deployability of this tractor at a time when the M52A2 Multifuel 5 ton tractor was considered more desirable. The unit's initial operations, covering 971,400 miles on the road from Qui Nhon to Pleiku between 20 August and 31 December proved that the decision was the right one. The diesel tractor proved itself dependable and did not present any maintenance or supply problems.

Deployment began on 22 July when American Flyer Airlines moved the unit from Pope Air Force Base, adjacent to Ft. Bragg, to McChord Air Force Base, Washington. Busses moved the 64th to the Tacoma Outport where the Military Sea Transportation Service Transport, the USNS John Pope was boarded. Sailing on 23 July, the men of the 64th saw Okinawa on 5 August, and on 10 August boarded a Landing Craft Utility for final movement to the beach of Qui Nhon, Republic of Vietnam. The unit area was located 12 miles inland, in the Phu Thanh Valley. With building materials at a premium, the 64th set about the difficult business of providing themselves with a containment area.

On 13 August, the unit vehicles and equipment, which had on 5 July departed from Charleston South Carolina Outport aboard the US Robin Hood, arrived in Qui Nhon. A measure of the 64th's effectiveness may be gained from the previously noted mileage figure, and the fact that the task vehicle availability during 30 August-31 December averaged 82 percent.

The mission, continuing since arrival in Vietnam, has been the movement of general cargo from the Qui Nhon depots west on Route 19 to Pleiku Supply Points. The close of 1966 saw the 64th well-settled in the Phu Thanh Valley, and ever mindful of the requirement to keep the supplies moving.

Appendix C: 64th Truck Company Unit History for 1967

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
64TH TRANSPORTATION COMPANY (MEDIUM TRUCK CARGO)
APO SF 09318

14 March 1968

SUBJECT: Unit Histories

Chief of Military History
Department of the Army
Washington, D. C. 20315

In accordance with AR 870-5 and USASUPCOM Regulation 870-1, the annual supplement to the history of the 64th Transportation Company (Medium Truck Cargo) is submitted:

UNIT HISTORY-1967

1. The transition into 1967 was relatively smooth for the 64th Transportation Company. For the first three months of the year all operations continued as before. An average of thirty to forty trucks a day were dispatched on the Qui Nhon-An Khe-Pleiku Main Supply Route of Highway 19, hauling semi-trailers of general cargo in convoy. Approximately two tractors were committed daily for the run to Bong Song north on Highway 1, usually hauling refrigerator vans of ice.
2. Notable during the period were the accomplishments of SGT John L. Newby and the mess section. The 64th's mess hall was selected for both January and February as the Best Mess in the 8th Transportation Group. This was followed by designation as the best mess in the 27th Transportation Battalion for the month of March. In recognition of these outstanding achievements, SGT Newby was promoted to Sergeant E-6 on 22 February.
3. Major personnel changes during this first quarter involved mainly officer and NCOs. Losses included 1LTs Thomas H. Romoda in February and Mason C. Johnson in March. LTs Romoda and Johnson had been with the unit at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and had seen it through the move to Southeast Asia.
4. Incoming personnel included 2LT William Eichenberg, 05 713 313 and SSG Orville D. Sifers, RA 52 385 238. Lt Eichenberg was assigned to the second platoon with SSG Sifers as his platoon Sergeant. SGT Matthew L. Hearon arrived late in March as was assigned to supply as assistant supply sergeant. This still left the unit short one officer-the third platoon leader.

5. April of 1967 began the personnel shuffle. The normal rotation date for the majority of the unit's personnel would be in July. Thus on 14 April word was officially received from Qui Nhon Support Command to begin transferring approximately 70% of assigned personnel. Key personnel changes in this shuffle included the loss of SFC Robert Watson, the 64th's Maintenance Sergeant, who was transferred to Qui Nhon Support Command upon being appointed to Warrant Officer. Also transferred was SSG Jose P.A. Mireles, the third platoon sergeant, who went to the 54th Transportation Battalion in exchange for SSG Hector J. Feliciano and SGT Charles M. Russell.
6. As was expected, these personnel moves put the unit in a considerable state of confusion. This confusion was heightened when the unit received notice that it would move to Pleiku and be operational in that location by 14 May. As soon as this notification was received the unit started making plans and began packing. An advance party was dispatched on 1 May under the leadership of 1LT Thomas E. Moore and SFC Charlie Brewster. The fourteen men selected for the advance party included the company carpenters and electrician.
7. Pleiku Sub-Area Command selected a site slightly to the north of Artillery Hill in Pleiku for the 64th's base camp. In contrast to the old Phu Thanh location, this terrain was hard-packed dirt with low scrub brush sparsely covering the area.
8. The advance party worked hard and the area was ready for occupancy by 10 May. However, an unexpected tragedy struck on 9 May. The company commander, CPT John M. Horvath had come up from Qui Nhon the day before to inspect the new company area. On the afternoon of the 9th he had driven out to CP 88 in Pleiku to check on the convoy forming up for the return to Qui Nhon. As he was pulling the jeep in behind a line of trucks he hit a small ditch and vehicle flipped over, pinning CPT Horvath's right leg under the jeep and breaking it in two places. CPT Horvath was taken to the 18th Surgical Hospital, where it was determined that he would be evacuated to a hospital in Japan.
9. This was a blow to the entire company. CPT Horvath had been with the unit at Ft. Bragg, N.C., and had seen it through the preparations for the move to Vietnam, the long journey by ship and the first 10 months in country, wherein the 64th's drivers had amassed over two and a half million miles—driven over the longest and roughest Main Supply Route in Vietnam.
10. 1LT Thomas E. Moore, the first platoon leader, assumed command on 10 May and greeted the main body of the company when they arrived in the new area. This move was made using the unit's own organic equipment—5 ton tractors and 12 ton stake and platform trailers. During the preparations for and the actual move there was only a slight lessening of the operational commitment. Thus the 64th was close to being 100% operational in spite of the unit move.

11. A week after the move was completed the 64th was assigned the additional mission of operating the Pleiku Truck Terminal. 1LT Eichenberg was assigned as Officer-In-Charge, with SSGs Sifers and Feliciano to assist him. In all, 12 people were involved in this operation.
12. The company's primary mission had also changed in that the unit was now to provide line-haul between Pleiku and An-Khe and also provide local shuttle of semi-trailers for the Pleiku area. These functions were to be carried out under the operational control of the 27th Transportation Battalion in Qui Nhon. As can be imagined, operations were somewhat hampered by poor communications between Pleiku and Qui-Nhon.
13. Additional support for the mission was furnished by the 8th Transportation Group in Qui Nhon. On 23 May the second platoon of the 563rd Transportation Company was transferred to the operational control of the 64th. Under the platoon sergeant, SSG Wallace Keyes, this addition increased the 64th's fleet by 20 tractors.
14. The unit was brought up to strength officer-wise on 4 June when CPT Charles A. Gray assumed command. CPT Gray was formerly the S-4 of the 27th Transportation Battalion. He brought with him 2Lt Stephen R. Bathon of the 444th Transportation Company to be the third platoon leader. Lt Bathon's primary duty was as convoy commander on the An Khe run.
15. With the onset of the monsoon season at the end of May operations were severely complicated. Heavy rains turned the company area and especially the motor pool into a sea of mud. In spite of continued efforts to firm up the area (such as dumping 12 truckloads of crushed rock into the motor pool) the mud was getting worse and worse. Finally the company's tractors had to be parked on the main road in front of the company because of the length of time it took to maneuver out of the motor pool for the morning convoy.
16. However, the mud was a minor problem compared to the events of the night of 8 June, and the weeks that followed. At approximately 0130 on the morning of 9 June the company was awakened by explosions of incoming mortar rounds, followed by a long eerie, shrill cry of Artillery Hill's alert siren. The mortars were followed by a long exchange of small arms and automatic weapons fire. Fortunately the perimeter was not penetrated and no damage was incurred. However, SP4 Richard Gagnon was shot in the right leg as he was guarding the vehicles parked on the road in front of the company. Several of these trucks were hit by apparently stray rounds. SP4 Gagnon was rushed to the 18th Surgical Hospital and from there evacuated to Qui Nhon.
17. Later that morning the company commander, CPT Gray, was called to meet with COL Fitzpatrick, Commanding Officer of the 52nd Artillery Group on Artillery

- Hill. At this meeting CPT Gray was informed that the 64th would have to relocate to the East side of Artillery Hill. As a result of the previous night's attack, COL Fitzpatrick had decided that the 64th was blocking the artillery's field of fire to the north, and furthermore, the company was in the line of fire of the 62nd Maintenance Battalion, located to the West.
18. Again the 64th packed its equipment and made ready to move. However, this time there was no date specified for completion of the move, and the distance was slight, so more time could be spent in developing the area before the actual move. The company was completely moved into the new area by 20 June, having had the good fortune to have a week free of the rain in which to pour cement floors for the orderly room and mess hall.
 19. This new area proved to be far superior to the old location, not only as concerned security, but also because it was a hard-packed and rocked area on a slope, which allowed the monsoon rains to run off. With this escape from the mud, living conditions for the men were considerably improved.
 20. The month of July was spent making two trips a day to An Khe and in building up the company area. Much effort was also spent in fighting the monsoons and the slick and hazardous roads it produced. On 26 July operations were substantially changed with the arrival of the 124th Transportation Battalion from Fort Devens, Mass. Control of the 64th then passed from the 27th Battalion to the 124th. This control also extended to the Pleiku Truck Terminal.
 21. The monsoon season continued on through September. During this period the company deadline rate rose to a high of 40%. Many vehicles were washed out by ordnance for cracked frames and the number of tractors on hand went down to 45.
 22. Major personnel changes during this period included the departure of 1LT Thomas E. Moore in late July and the arrival of 2LT Dale H. Sindt. 1LT Stephen R. Bathon rotated in middle of August and was replaced by 2LT David R. Wilson. CW4 J.B. Virgil came in to replace the departing CW2 George J. Sebeny as the company's Maintenance Officer. The major personnel shuffle was completed with the rotation of CPT Charles A. Gray. He was succeeded by CPT Juan R. Lopez, former S-4 of the 124th Transportation Battalion. CPT Lopez assumed command on 1 August, thereby becoming the 4th commanding officer for the 64th in less than a year.
 23. On 2 September, for the first time in over a year, there was a major ambush of a truck convoy on Highway 19. Fortunately there were no 64th Transportation Company personnel involved, but the attack was of such magnitude that the security forces guarding the road ordered an earlier closing time for departing traffic, reducing the closing hour from 1700 to 1500. This move cut down the

- number of round trips to An Khe from two a day to just one, and insured the 64th's drivers of a much-needed shorter day and fewer miles.
24. The 64th continued on the An Khe run exclusively until November when the Battle of Dak To erupted. Then the major emphasis was shifted to the movement of cargo north on Highway 14 to Kontum and Dak To. During these trying days the drivers of the 64th performed admirably—delivering much needed ammunition and supplies to embattled elements of the 4th Division and the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Appreciation for their efforts was expressed by Generals Westmoreland and Abrams, who stated that never before in a major battle have the combat troops been so well supplied.
 25. The operation at Dak To continued on into December, during which time 1SG Edward A. Simpson had returned to CONUS and 1SG Edward J. Dockery Jr had come down from Battalion to be the new First Sergeant. Also during this period, in part due to heavy operational commitments, the task vehicles in the company fell to a low of 36 tractors out of an authorized 60. Necessarily, the mileage and tonnage fell with this figure.
 26. In spite of this severe drop in operational capability, the 64th Transportation Company finished the year 1967 with an admirable record of accomplishments. Having survived two monsoon seasons—one in Qui Nhon and the other in Pleiku, plus two unit moves, a complete turnover in personnel not to mention going through four company commanders, the 64th nevertheless amassed over two million miles and directly supported the largest and most successful combat operation in the history of the Vietnam Conflict.

JUAN R. LOPEZ
CPT, TC
Commanding

COPIES FURNISHED:

CINCUSARPAC, ATT: GPOP-OT, APO 96558

Commanding General, United States Army, Vietnam, ATTN: AVHGC-DST, APO 96375

Commanding General, 1st Logistical Command, ATTN: AVCA-GC-O, APO 96348

Commanding General, US Army Support Command, ATTN: AVCA-QN-GO, APO 96238

Commanding Officer, 8th Trans Group, ATTN: Command Historian, APO 96238

Appendix D: 64th Truck Company Unit History for 1968

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
64TH TRANSPORTATION COMPANY (MEDIUM TRUCK CARGO)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96318

UNIT HISTORY 1968

The coming of 1968 found the 64th Transportation Company (Medium Truck Cargo) heavily committed to the mission of supporting the embattled elements of the 4th Infantry Division in Kontum, Vietnam, and Dak To, Vietnam. The major emphasis was on the movement of cargo north on highway QL 14 to Kontum and Dak To. There also were daily convoys on highway QL 19 to An Khe and return to Pleiku. It was on such a convoy to An Khe, that the 64th Transportation Company had its first ambush of the year. On 31 January, while returning from AnKhe to Pleiku, the 124th Transportation Battalion convoy in which 1Lt David R Wilson, a member of the 64th Transportation Company, was convoy commander, and which was made up mostly of 5 ton tractors and trailers from this company. The resulting action saw 1Lt Wilson killed when his jeep took a direct hit from a mortar round. The company also had four other personnel wounded in the ambush. 1Lt Wilson was presented the Silver Star posthumously, with "V" device for his gallant actions when he speedily went back into the kill zone to move his personnel out of the kill zone. SP4 Jimmie Tidwell was awarded the Bronze Star with "V" device for his actions in the ambush.

The primary mission of the 64th Transportation Company is to provide transportation for movement of general cargo by Motor Transportation. This mission is further broken down as follows: to provide transportation for movement of personnel, general cargo, bulk petroleum products and missiles by line haul and local haul operation within the II Corps Tactical Zone as directed. Also included is local transportation support to Headquarters, Pleiku Sub-Area Command, in excess of that unit's organic capability, as directed. Also included is providing security for convoys in line haul operation, supporting combat operations as directed, and providing security for portions of the 124th Transportation Battalion perimeter.

Due to the lack of personnel and equipment this unit had reduced capability during 1968. However, the unit averaged 30 to 35 task vehicles committed daily in local and line hauls. There were also 4 gun trucks and 2 to 3 gun jeeps with crews committed daily. During the year the unit's average shortage of personnel was thirty enlisted men and two officers. We had an average vehicle shortage of twenty multifuel tractors. Even though there was a shortage of men and equipment we amassed over a million miles and hauled 150,000 tons of cargo.

A 6.4% deadline rate was maintained throughout 1968. A high of 30.1% during the monsoon season to a low of 1% which was obtained after the unit move in August.

Appendix E: 64th Truck Company Unit History for 1969

(One page excerpt from the 1969 64th Med Trk Co Operations Report/Lessons Learned)

III. OPERATIONS AND TRAINING:

A. Each month the company has a practice alert.

B. Mandatory subject training consists of Character Guidance, CBR, Safety, Physical Training, Command Information, Military Justice, Code of Conduct, Prevention of Heat Injury, Weapons Qualification and Familiarization, Psychological Warfare, Armed Forces Censorship, Safeguarding Defense Information, and Survival, Escape and Evasion. In addition, personnel of this unit are constantly undergoing driver maintenance retraining.

C. Combat Service Operations consisted of local haul support to the Pleiku area and line haul support to Kontum, Dak To, An Khe, and Qui Nhon.

D. Combat operations started with the death of truck driver SP4 Gerald R. Acton who was killed on 8 May 1969 while waiting at the marshalling area at Ben Het for departure of the convoy.

E. On 8 June, 1969, when the 124th Transportation Battalion ran a convoy from Dak To to Ben Het, the embattled base camp, SP5 Barrent Torgerson and his gun crew on the "Mighty Minny" participated in the heaviest contact encountered all year.

F. On 14 June 1969, SP5 Ronald Taylor and his crew gave good account of themselves on the "Highland Animals" gun truck in an ambush at Pump Station 8 on QL 19.

G. On 23 August 1969, in a convoy from Pleiku to An Khe, SP5 Cliff Bottorf, NCO of the "Death and Destruction" gun truck, was wounded seriously and medevaced in an ambush at bridge #25 on QL 19.

H. On 15 November 1969, SP5 Roger Spencer and his gun crew on the "Ho Chi's Hearse" provided the base of fire in the kill zone enabling the convoy to clear an ambush at bridge #30 on QL 19. This marked the end of combat actions for this reporting year.

IV. PERSONNEL:

Throughout most of the year the company was understrength. The average strength for the company for the year was 151 personnel assigned. Particularly critical was the shortage of Squad Leaders, E5.

V. LOGISTICS:

There were several items which were difficult to obtain, including tires and tubes, hydrovacs, and regulators. In December the company began a turnover of trucks replacing the oldest vehicles with new trucks.