

# The Personal Remembrances of the Men Who Were There

## LZ 10 ALPHA

Philippe Saunier

Bravo Company 2/35<sup>th</sup>



I think 10A was probably "the" fire fight for me. My memory of the beginning of this is being gathered on a loading air strip waiting for choppers and being briefed by Col. Fier. This was a first for me. Before this any action was incidental and not very organized.

We flew into the LZ and the action started almost instantly. Contact was not non-stop but regular. I remember thinking what would happen if help could not get to us before dark. I can't remember when the choppers were shot down in the LZ, what day I mean.

I do remember the ARVN planes accidentally dropping Napalm on the command post. The medic there was a good friend of mine, but

for the life of me I can't remember his name. I remember seeing those guys strip off their clothes which were not burnt, and seeing the flesh red but not even blistered like you would have thought.

Whenever there was a pause in the fight we were sent out on a sweep to check out what was out there and almost each time someone was wounded or worse by snipers tied up in the top of trees.

I was not on the perimeter with the platoon, instead I was with the mortar squad set a little back from the east end of the line. When the choppers stopped landing and just flew over real low to drop off food and Ammo a couple of us would run out to gather what we could and distribute this to the line. I remember being scared but felt kind of a safety in numbers attitude.

I remember working with a medic on a wounded guy, I don't remember knowing him before this but I still remember exactly what he looked like, when I saw his KIA listing I couldn't believe he was only 18 yrs. old. The action was so intense at that time we were pinned down by the fire power coming in and Medivac couldn't come in for the wounded, he just bled to death and there was nothing we could do. I think this went on for at least two nights and three days, but seemed like forever. When on the third day the brought in Artillery and what seemed like hundreds of men I remember thinking, boy if this would be how we would always be with all this support it would be great.

Several months later we got to see the LZ again while on patrol and found weapons and gear that belonged to the Cong. I guess neither they or us were that interested in find every thing that was out there. I have always felt very lucky to have come home like I had been on a reg. tour of duty somewhere. I have a piece of shrapnel on my left hand that I didn't realize was

there until a few days later. I often think it could have been in one of my eyes or somewhere else and feel grateful for that.

Hope this is what you were expecting Jim, best I could do. Philippe Saunier

**Russell Miller**

**Bravo Company 2/35th**

Thanks Jim for the e-mail about LZ10A. I don't know how you got my name but I'm glad to here what happened to B 2/35th. It was a long time ago but here is what I remember.

In Hawaii in December '65 I was reassigned from B 1/14th to B 2/35th (as best as I can remember) for deployment to the central highlands of Viet Nam. I was a Spec 4 in headquarters platoon and was a Forward Observer (OF) for the 81 MM mortars assigned to 1st platoon (again, as best as I can remember ). During the first Paul Revere Operation we were on daily patrols setting up camp in a different location every night for what seemed like two weeks.

On the morning of May 28 we were choppered into an open field with only half of the company. The Hueys were to return with the rest of the company. We started to receive ground fire before setting down. This was about 9:00 AM. We were under such intense fire that the rest of the company weren't able to get in until about 3 PM. I don't remember many names but some I do are Rosalie, a rifleman, Sgt. Rodear (?), and another Miller also FOs.

At about 10:30 Rosalie was wounded after taking out a machine gun nest. Another man and myself took Rosalie to the area where the Capt. and a medic were for aid. The company was pretty spread out by this time. We were pinned down and continued receiving small arms fire. About that time I was shot in the arm and a minute or two later a grenade exploded and hit me in the leg. I started to scream "I'm hit, I'm hit." I believe I started to go into shock. The Capt. (Cpt. Maisano) looking over at me yelled "Shut up Miller, your not that bad." That shook me up and I was OK after that. For the next couple of hours or so the medic made the rounds from our position to other wounded in other areas. Around noon the Huey's returned and tried to bring in more of the company but were turned back by enemy fire. As I recall Dustoff also tried to land but couldn't. The Capt. ordered everyone to work there way back to our location to try to fortify our position. Around 3 PM the rest of the company arrived and I was medivaced out.

I later heard that we took heavy casualties but turned back a regiment of NVA regulars. I spent the next 3 months in Japan and then returned to the states for assignment to the 5th Inf. (Mech.) in Colorado Springs for the remainder of my enlistment. I would like to know more about your organization and about this article. For the record:

**Russell W. Miller**

**Spec 5 E-5**

**RA 14 884 176**

**Service dates 20 Sept.' 64 to 19 Sept.' 67**

**Charles Beauchamp**

**Bravo Company 2/35th**

I was a Squad Leader in 3rd Plt B Co. Our platoon was landed after on the 2nd try because of the fire coming out of the LZ. Upon landing we secured our sector and began taking fire from inside the perimeter.

It turned out the fire was coming from inside huge ant hills the NVA had hollowed out and using as bunkers. After trying grenades, M72 LAWS and failing to knock out the ant hills, SSG Carl Johnson organized a team of two rifles and a shotgun and went from anthill to anthill knocking them out. That resulted in a number POWs and NVA kills.

Around 4-5 PM I was looking around our sector with one of my soldiers, SP4 Otero, trying to find stuff to build our defenses when we came across an enemy AA machinegun on a tripod, we thought it would be a good idea to move it to our position. As we were trying to move it we came under sniper fire, we got behind a log and began to return fire moving along the log, I got up to fire and got hit in the chest, SGT Larsen came to see what happened and got hit in the head, later as they were trying to maneuver to get the sniper, LT Glynne was killed and SGT Stine wounded. Just before dark I was medevaced, and later it seems like we could have had Company formations at the hospital in Qui Nhon. That in general is my recollection of 10 Alfa.

We tried to land twice, the 1st Plt and Co CP were already in. The LZ was covered with water in some areas. The 50 Cals were in position inside the perimeter, When our troops initially landed they were not manned, the NVA was in the tree line (according to SLA Marshall, to get out of the rain, in "Battles in the Monsoon", according to Bisantz they had moved to defend from another direction because the prep fires hit another LZ a short distance from Alfa . I was medevaced about 1800 first day, may have been the last bird able get in and out.

**Larry Connor**

**Alpha Company 1/35th**

**My Remembrances from the Battle of 10-Alfa**

***by Larry Connor***

**Former Platoon Leader, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon**

**Company A, 1/35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Task Force, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division**

Let's see.....I'm a 21-year old infantry 2LT stationed at Ft. Ord, CA running a basic trainee company, bored out of my mind. After a year of Carmel and several dull training cycles, I broke down one afternoon and called some major at the Pentagon in charge of junior officer assignments. I begged him to send me to Vietnam before the war ended. He was happy to accommodate me.

After a very unpleasant three-week course in Panama at their Jungle Warfare School, I arrived in-country on 3 May 1966 and took over command of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon from 1LT Pat Lenz. Pat had been wounded and was now Company A's XO. The "Third Herd" was an incredible group of men. The NCOs were seasoned and solid, and the men all experienced. Great squad leaders who led great soldiers. God, they were good!

So, on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of my life as a platoon leader, Company A got a call to make a late afternoon reinforcement of Company B 2/35 they said had (mistakenly) dropped into an unsuspecting NVA regimental headquarters around LZ 10-Alfa.

As our slicks came into the LZ late on the afternoon of 28 May 1966, we could see several abandoned 12.7 mm AA guns around the LZ. Our platoon was assigned to the NE third of the LZ and dark came. There was lots of commo wire around—a sure sign to us that we were in the middle of a large enemy force. We put out an LP roughly 50-75 meters to our center front, manned by SGT Noble Hyde and a couple of guys. I think all of us expected to be hit that night, and everyone got as prepared as they could.

Around 0100, SGT Hyde called me from the LP and whispered that they could hear lots of movement to their immediate front. I told him to make his way back to our line quietly, when the NVA opened up. All but one of my men made it back to our perimeter. I remember running out with someone (SGT Hyde?), we found our wounded, missing guy and helped him back to our platoon. Somehow, we all made it. Right then, at least a company-sized force attacked our platoon front. We had decent cover, kept low, and fired non-stop artillery and mortars up and down our front.

This went on for a while, then they withdrew for a while, then you could hear whistles blowing and them shouting, and they'd rush us again. Several times they got as close as 10-15 meters from us, but we drove them back every time. We fired hundreds of artillery rounds right in front of us, and thousands of M-16 rounds. They got close enough to throw grenades in on us, but we did the same and ours worked better.

I remember crawling up and down our line with Russ Crawford (the absolute, hands-down, best damn RTO in the Central Highlands), and we came across a rifleman who had lost his helmet in the dark. I gave him mine to wear without thinking a whit about it. Sometime that night, I recall sitting (surely not?) next to one of our M-60s, watching the NVA come up the slope toward us through a clunky Starlight scope. I put that heavy glove on that came with the 60's spare barrel and walked the muzzle back and forth into the green shapes coming up the slope toward us.

After a couple of hours of this, maybe 0400 or so, they stopped attacking and it became quiet until dawn. I think one of our guys got hit in the elbow and died from shock later before dawn. Right after dawn we were ordered to pick up our line and sweep our front, collecting weapons and counting bodies. We stood up and cautiously moved down a slight, wooded slope, all in line. The slope in front of us was absolutely strewn with NVA bodies, weapons, and pieces of bodies from the artillery. We moved about 150-200 meters (not sure today) down this slope to a dry creek bed, where we found scores more bodies where our shells had caught them moving up to attack us.

At this point, for some reason, my memory begins to skip around. It's like there are blank, erased portions, interspersed with very vivid snapshots. So, I'll just write down what my remaining "pictures" look like:

- At the creek bed we found a barely alive NVA soldier who had been horribly wounded by our artillery. I asked our medic if he would make it back to our lines, and he just shook his head no.
- We turned around and began making our way back to our line. Each of us were carrying AK-47s and SKSs slung over our shoulders. As we approached where our line had been

(maybe 50-75 meters away), a burst of machine gun fire tore into us from our front and on each side. At first, we thought our own guys were firing on us as we approached the perimeter. Within a few moments, however, it became clear that after we had moved down to the creek bed, the NVA crept behind us and our line.

- My platoon sergeant, SFC George Williams(?) was shot in the neck right in front of me, and something hit me in the head and knocked me head over heels. To this day I can remember exactly what it felt like—getting hit square in the head with a baseball bat. I landed on my back and couldn't see out of my left eye because my scalp was hanging down over it bleeding. I found out later we'd been hit with one of their heavy MGs that they pulled around on two wheels. A round had hit the left side of my head and creased my skull.
- I remember crawling over to SGT Williams and laying on top of him, trying to give him some cover. The enemy machine gun that hit us was directly in front of me, maybe 15, 20 meters, in some kind of bunker that had been empty just a short time ago. They were so close I could hear them talking while they fed another belt into the gun.
- I shot my 16 and Williams' bone dry at that bunker. I fired the 8 rounds from my .45, and then had nothing left. At some point I was laying there with three empty guns watching bursts walk up and down our sides, thinking that I was getting paid something like \$3.80 an hour for this as an O-1 (second lieutenant) with over four years service. (Not bad, huh? Hey, it's what I asked for.)
- At some point, I could hear a heavy volume of fire coming in our my right side. It was LT Kelsey and his platoon. They flanked the NVA and broke through to us. They literally saved our lives that morning.
- The next thing I recall was being helped back to the LZ. The NVA kept attacking and we kept firing back. I found another M-16 and fired it so much the barrel burned out. When things seemed to have died down a bit, one or two Huey slicks came in and someone put me on one to be lifted out of there. Just as they did, they attacked again and I hopped off, thinking I wasn't hurt that bad.
- All that morning (it seems today) they kept attacking and we kept beating them back. We had lots of air support. We had 500 pound bombs, rockets, 20mm cannon, napalm, 40mm grenade launchers, everything—all "danger close" to us. We kept telling them to bring in the next run closer, 20 meters closer. I remember laying there watching a pair of A-1E Skyraiders make several runs, Huey gunships (one got hit right over us and crashed I think), and a couple of F4 Phantoms. I remember the F4s because they looked so big, and because they came in nose high, flaps down and air brakes out to slow down enough to lay their bombs in close to us. Like the arty and our Huey pilots, our air force guys were just incredible that day. I'll never forget them for it.
- Sometime later (around 1200?) I was kneeling next to a tree firing another M16 and something slammed into my left side, knocking me down. By this time, my head was numb, but this one hurt like a son of a bitch—it felt like a white hot knife in my side. (I learned later it was an AK round that first passed through three empty M16 magazines in my ammo pouch—they probably slowed the round down enough to keep it from killing me.)

- That did it for me that day. I remember being carried into another Huey and laid down on the floor. This time I stayed. It banked so steeply coming out of the LZ I remember being afraid I was going to slide out the open door on my back, helpless to move.
- The next thing I recall was coming to on a stretcher inside a MASH tent near Pleiku, laying on my back. I saw LT Pat Lenz, Company A's XO over me, and I began crying, asking him how many of my men had been hurt. I don't think he knew then, and I passed out.

I came to later at the hospital in Qui Nhon just before surgery. It was cold; I was shivering; and the next thing I knew, it was over. But, it had really just started for those of us who survived. Today, almost 36 years later, I feel like I died and was born at that clearing at the base of the Chu Pong Massif, southwest of Pleiku.

That's all I remember about that place of heroes called LZ 10-Alfa.

Larry Connor

April 23, 2002

Richard Hunter

Alpha Company 1/35th

From Richard Hunter 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, A 1/35<sup>th</sup>

We came into 10 ALFA on Huey's in the late afternoon. Probably around 4:00 pm on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1966. We came in low and fast. I could see the soldiers from the B, 2<sup>nd</sup> 35<sup>th</sup> standing alone in their positions. I've never forgotten the look on a particular soldier's face when my chopper flew over him. I could tell he was scared . . . really scared. He was alone, facing out towards the woods. At the time I didn't think too much about why these guys were in one-man positions. We didn't know they had been hit pretty hard.

We had heard it was hot, but we didn't know the situation yet. Our chopper landed and we deployed to the far side of the LZ . . . away from the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup>. My platoon, 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon was setting up positions when Major Tyson, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup> XO came by to inspect the positions. It was getting dark and it was overcast. Major Tyson came from my left and disappeared into the forest and the darkness. He was moving down the line to our right. It turned into the darkest night I ever experienced in Viet Nam. That old saying about not being able to see your hand in front of your face . . . well, at 10 ALFA it was true.

I was in a position with "Kit" Frazier and "Junior" Bonner. That night, at 1:00 pm we changed guard. It was my turn. I sat down and leaned against a tree figuring the tree would break my silhouette. A few minutes into my guard shift I heard some rustling in weeds. I turned my head and I heard the steps move out fast. I informed Sgt Frazier and he said to keep a sharp eye out. A few minutes passed, then it seemed like Hell broke loose and came running towards 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon.

We had sent an LP out a few yards into the woods. I believe the LP consisted of Sgt Noble Hyde, Richard R. Roundtree and I think a soldier named McCauley. It was dark so I was never really sure where they were. Somewhere to the front and off to my right. We were under heavy attack and the LP was breaking brush trying to get back to the perimeter. They kept yelling,

"3<sup>rd</sup> Herd! 3<sup>rd</sup> Herd!" so we would know it was them coming in. The NVA were right behind them shooting at them, and us. They were caught between the NVA and our perimeter. Some of us were holding fire until they got inside the perimeter. Some were not. They all made it back . . . sort of. Richard R. Roundtree was Company A's first KIA at 10-ALFA. He was wounded and lived until about 6:00 am. Our medic, "Doc" Ehrenzweig, was giving him mouth to mouth and trying to stop the bleeding.

After the LP had returned to our perimeter the platoon returned fire as intensely as we were receiving it. Each squad had to send someone back to the CP to get more ammo. The attack continued in waves for a few hours. Mortars were breaking in the trees overhead and all around us. Our mortars were giving it back to them. At one point the NVA broke through the line and were between our positions. Muzzle flashes were coming from all over the place. One of our machinegun positions had to withdraw to a new positions. The attack intensified. Lt. Larry Connor, Platoon Leader for 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon called in the mortars, or artillery . . . I was never sure which . . . right down on us. People were yelling to get down because the H.E. was going to come down on top of us. It pretty much did. I could feel myself being lifted off the ground . . . being bounced every time a shell hit close to us. The threat was as great from the shells hitting the trees above us as it was from hitting the ground around us.

Eventually, the shelling stopped and the NVA withdrew. All turned quite around 4 or 5 am. We were all wide-awake now.

Daylight came. It was a relief cause we knew they wouldn't attack in the daylight. Most of us were ok. Whispers came down the line that Roundtree had died. Dust Off came in right after he died.

I remember everybody standing up and looking around at each other with this look of anxiety on all our faces. It was the first time that I'd clearly seen the positions on my right and left because of the fact that we had set up the positions so late in the afternoon. I remember seeing Pace Caldwell on my right . . . Dick Snyder and Bob White on my left. We all looked around waiting for someone to give the order to "move out." Someone yelled, "Alright, move out!"

Everyone started moving out on-line . . . keeping abreast and in sight of everyone else as much as we could. We walked just a few meters and there was a shot on my right. Then another. An NVA was moving across our front . . . running from right to left. He was empty handed with no gear and running fast. He fell. Then another NVA ran out, again from right to left. Another shot . . . and another. He fell right in front of the 1<sup>st</sup> squad positions, into what turned out to be a stream bed about 75 yards out. It never occurred to us that we were being *baited* out, away from our perimeter. We proceeded outward to the streambed where we found 30 to 40 bodies scattered about. We found an NVA still alive but seriously wounded. He was dying. Within a few minutes he was gone. Then there was sporadic firing back at the LZ. 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon got the word to turn around and head back to the LZ to support the perimeter that was under probing attack. We picked up and carried some NVA mortar rounds and tubes that we had found at the streambed. We were going to take them back to the CP for the "count." It was about 8:00am on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

We did an about face and headed back towards the LZ. 3<sup>rd</sup> squad was in front and 1<sup>st</sup> squad bringing up the rear. "Junior" Bonner, Kit Frazier, Pace Caldwell, Dick Snyder, Bob White and myself were taking up the rear. Sporadic small arms fire broke out in front of the platoon. It sounded like AK's. One shot, then two, then a series of automatic fire. Most of us thought it was our own guys on the perimeter shooting at us. We were so close to our own perimeter

and this sort of thing had happened before to other units. After all, we couldn't have been more than 100 meters from the perimeter . . . only 100 meters from safety . . . from our own people.

We couldn't have been more than 30 yards from the 3<sup>rd</sup> squad, yet we couldn't see anyone. Then grenades started exploding. Someone yelled, "They're PAVNS! They're PAVNS!" Then grenade after grenade exploded . . . some of theirs, some of ours. I could hear the AK's clearly now. I could hear M16's returning fire. I could see the smoke. 1<sup>st</sup> squad dropped the NVA mortar shells, along with the tubes, and rushed forward to help. We rushed forward to see Lt. Light, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon Leader, lying on the ground, next to a small tree, with blood coming from his forehead. Lt. Light yelled at us to move up front . . . to help out. To this day I have no idea why the 1<sup>st</sup> platoon leader was out there, all alone, with 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon.

We moved forward, under fire. I could see members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> squad only 5 to 10 yards in front of us. We moved forward again, firing . . . rifles, shotguns, and grenade launchers. We moved into a position where we could support the rest of the platoon. We were all within 5 or 10 yards of each other, but because of the heavy underbrush, once we were in the prone position, we could only tell the other persons position by their voice, or screams, and by the sounds of the M-16.

I moved forward and to the right of Sgt Jesse Spencer. Pfc. Walter Wetzel, 2<sup>nd</sup> squad, was laying down behind a small tree about 12 inches in diameter. I moved forward until my helmet was almost touching his crotch. Sgt Spencer was right next to him with his right arm draped over Wetzel's left leg. All three of us were trying to get behind the same small tree. It was obvious by now that we were pinned down under heavy machine gun fire, with lighter automatic weapons and riflemen in support.

Pace Caldwell was a few feet to my left. I could see blood coming from his shoulder. Bob White moved to the right, in line with the rest of us. Dick Snyder moved to my left along with Kit Frazier and Junior Bonner. I lost sight of them after a few seconds. On my right was "Freeman," one of the machine gunners. He was shot thru the hand and the machine gun was damaged. He was saying something to me that I couldn't hear when another bullet hit his thigh. I thought it was an incendiary round because I could see smoke coming from his wound as he moaned in pain. Within seconds, Freeman was hit again. I looked at Bob White and saw his head jerk and hit the ground. I thought he was dead. Then he lifted his head and adjusted his helmet. Bob White was hit twice more in the helmet before it was over.

As Jesse Spencer, Walter Wetzel, and I, lay behind this small tree, I briefly looked up and saw bullets coming thru the tree, tearing it apart. A bullet came across Wetzel's butt. He started to get up from the intense pain of the wound on his butt. Spencer and I grabbed him and yelled at him to stay down. Thinking they had us zeroed in, Spencer and I crawled to the left of Wetzel looking for another, much bigger tree. I don't know where Sgt Spencer went, but I never found that bigger tree. There just didn't seem to be any trees big enough out there that morning.

Things stayed that way for what seemed like hours. Them firing at us . . . us firing at them. It was clear the 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon was at a serious disadvantage. It became an issue of just hanging on until help could arrive. Some of us were out of ammo. Some of us had one or two rounds left. I had three shotgun shells left. Some of the guys picked up AK's from dead PAVN's because they had run out of 5.56 ammunition. Both machine guns were out of commission. And just when we thought things couldn't get any worse someone yelled out, "They're standing up. They're getting ready to charge!" I remember thinking about having a shotgun and not having

a bayonet mount, and how I had left my .45 back at my position before we moved out to sweep the area.

Then, like something out of some Hollywood movie, I saw a soldier named Wolfgang Wagner, coming towards me in a crouch. It told me 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon had reached us. They swept in from our right and took out the machine gun and provided cover while helping us withdraw with our wounded. The battle raged on after 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon was brought back inside the perimeter.

Fighting would become so intense the mortar platoons, and even the 105 artillery units, would have to grab M-16's, and aim the 105's point blank into the woods, defending their own positions. I believe 6 helicopters were shot down by enemy ground fire. I remember, as we were defending the LZ and laying down fire, looking back over my shoulder to see one of the door gunners jump from about 20 feet up because his chopper had been hit and was in full flames. That particular chopper was carrying a supply of ammunition and exploded like a fireworks display. It wasn't a very big LZ and seeing those choppers scattered in the LZ made it look even smaller. Cloud cover gave way and A1E's were finally able to give us air support. I saw an F105 flying up and down the base of the mountain strafing the NVA positions.

As the battle progressed, more choppers arrived carrying reinforcements, which included 1<sup>st</sup>/35<sup>th</sup> battalion Recon platoon and Company "C" of the 1<sup>st</sup>/35<sup>th</sup>, plus more artillery and supplies. It was now about 3 or 4pm on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1966. All but intermittent sniper fire had stopped. The LZ had 3 rifle companies, plus a reinforced Recon Platoon on the perimeter supported by 105's and 4.2 heavy mortars. (I say 3 rifle companies, however, "A" Company 1<sup>st</sup>/35<sup>th</sup>, and "B" Company 2<sup>nd</sup>/35<sup>th</sup>, together, didn't quite make a full rifle company).

5:00pm on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1966 . . . LZ 10 ALFA was secure.

After things had calmed down we proceeded to tend to our wounded and gather up our KIA's. As we walked around, I remember seeing 3<sup>rd</sup> Plt Sgt Williams, lying there on his back, waiting for his turn to be medivac'd. He asked for a drink of water. I couldn't get my canteen out fast enough. I felt as though I couldn't do enough for him. I left my canteen with him as I walked away towards the perimeter. Plt Leader, Lt. Connor was lying next to him with a wound to his head and abdomen. He was talking to someone . . . his RTO I think. Maybe it was our Medic. There were others that I've since forgotten.

What was left of 3rd Platoon was assigned to do the "body count" because we had no NCO's and/or leadership. Out of a 42-man platoon that arrived at 10 ALFA on the evening of May 28<sup>th</sup>, we were left with 11 men on the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup>, and our ranking soldier was an E-4. We had no M-60's, no grenade launchers, no radio, and some of us were still holding onto AK's. Because of our weakened strength, and the total lack of platoon leadership, 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon didn't have to be on the perimeter the night of the 29<sup>th</sup>. The next day the replacements arrived along with new weapons.

11 days later, we walked away from 10 ALFA.

There are parts missing from this story. Parts that someone who was in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon can fill in. Maybe even someone from Command, or the 2<sup>nd</sup>/35<sup>th</sup>. Maybe one of them can shed some light on the events of the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1966. I only know what happened to my squad, and me, and what I saw at 10 ALFA. I still don't know anything about the BIG picture of what happened there on those two days. I don't even know if there WAS a big picture. After 9,000 miles and 36 years, 10 ALFA seems like such a small place.

For the people that like reference numbers and stats . . .

It's my understanding that the NVA unit was the 33<sup>rd</sup> NVA Regiment. There were 6 Huey's brought down. 8 POW's. 16 KIA and 90 WIA's . 250 + NVA killed in action.

Company A, 1<sup>st</sup>/35<sup>th</sup>, KIA at 10 ALFA:

John Barry, Thomas Campbell, Charlie Carden, Sheldon Cohen, Richard Roundtree, Billy Patrick, Wallace Pilson, Sylvester Swinford, Walter Wetzel, Everett Light. (Note Lt. Light was KIA a few days after the battle had ended - Ed)

A lot of good men died at 10 ALFA . . . *on both sides.*

FOOTNOTE:

I've deliberately left out the circumstances surrounding the KIA's. Why, I am not sure. Perhaps because the descriptions of how they died could be offensive, or disturbing, to some that might read this story. Or, perhaps because the details of their deaths need not overshadow their valiant efforts to survive. I will say this, everyone that lost his life at 10 ALFA died fighting for it.

Jim McTaggart

Alpha Company 1/35th

OK. MY remembrance of the first night of Alpha 10 was the bugles, the whistles, the claymores, the "sound of war", a sound never to be forgotten.

The squad I was in apparently took some of the brunt of the probing by the NVA. We fought from around midnight until 5 am.

At that time our squad was asked to do recon in front of our lines to see what was left behind. It was here, not twenty feet from where I fought, that I found my first NVA sleeping under a poncho. I think I had three clips, I was now down to two. A Sgt. and I moved around a rather large tree and found two NVA sleeping. The Sgt. and I each used about a clip and now I am down to one. A little further we had a sniper in a tree, high up, being conservative, I used just five rounds and made them count. By this time we were ordered to return to LZ. As we were returning, we were about 300 yards from the LZ, a large group of Vietnamese soldiers got between us and the LZ. They were as confused by our location as we were. We thought they were South Vietnamese, but they were not. We engaged them in a fire fight for what seemed like hours. My ammo is now really low and I'm out of grenades.

As the fighting wound down, I knew I had to seek medical help fast or I would bleed to death. I literally rolled around our defensive positions until I made contact with the LZ and the platoon aid man, a man called "Alphabet". He did what he could and we waited for dust off, only to see choppers shot down. Around noon, medevac did land and as we were leaving, flying very low, I knew we were going to get shot down. We didn't thanks to the expert pilots. He flew me on to Battalion aid station, then onto the 85th Medevac for a stay, then onto Clark AFB in the Philippines, then Great Lakes Naval in Chicago. By the grace of GOD I finished by tour at Ft. Lee, VA and was discharged 22 Jan 68.

Mike Kellermeyer

## HHC 1/35th Attached to Charlie Co. as FO

From Michael Kellermeyer, HHC 1/35<sup>th</sup> Inf. (Forward Observer, 4.2" Mortar Platoon), Jan 1965 to Dec 1966

### Remembering Ten Alpha

The following is a recollection of the events that took place on May 11 and 12, 1966 in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. The author admits to reliance on memories of events that occurred more than 35 years ago and may be in error as far as chronological chain. Anytime the phrase "I learned later" appears, it is because I did not personally witness an event and learned of it through "scuttlebutt" or other sources, which I will name as memory allows. I would be grateful if the piece is edited before publication to remove any outright contradictions of fact or material that might prove to be embarrassing to anyone who might read this.

Approaching my nineteenth birthday, I found myself carrying a radio for a Forward Observer for the 4.2 inch Mortar platoon. His name was Kreil and he was from Wisconsin or Minnesota or some other upper Midwest state. We were both attached to Charlie Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry which was conducting "search and destroy" missions somewhere in, or near, the Ia Drang Valley. We had been happily finding very little in the way of enemy activity in the area in which we were operating for the previous week or so and were content to patrol and search under these conditions interminably. Of course, this was not to be the case.

During a patrol on the May 10, the headquarters element was called together and told to be ready for immediate extraction by helicopter. At the same time we were told that Bravo Company was heavily engaged with an enemy force. The transport Huey's arrived soon thereafter and we scrambled onto them, knowing that we were going into a fight somewhere.

We flew into Duc Co, a Special Forces CIDG camp somewhere west of Pleiku and near the Cambodian border. On the ground was an assembly of helicopters such I had not yet seen during my tour of duty in country. I didn't count them but there must have been almost a hundred "choppers" sitting in a huge field adjacent to the SF camp. Some had their rotors spinning, some did not. There were transports, gunships and light observation helicopters (loaches).

Charlie Company was formed up into "sticks" or seven man groups and assigned to waiting helicopters. The one on which I was placed was not on and it felt peculiar to be sitting in a Huey, in full battle dress, which was not even turned on. While we waited I tuned my AN/PRC25 backpack radio onto Bravo Company's command frequency. There was much anxious chatter and the sounds of small arms and explosions could be heard in the background. I let anyone who wanted to listen do so in turn and then tuned the radio to Alpha Company's frequency only to discover that Alpha had already joined the fight. Again, there was a charge of anxiety in the transmissions and the sound of many weapons in the background. We began to wonder aloud why we were just sitting there in that field. We wanted to go in and help our Battalion.

Eventually, the knots of pilots surrounding the field broke up and, at a trot, they made their way to the ships. We watched our pilots strap in and prepare for flight with a little anxiety of our own.

Once airborne, I was awed by the sight of so many helicopters filling the sky all around me. They flew in formations of from three to six ships and the formations were in every direction I looked. Far below us Huey Gun ships (hogs) weaved just above the triple canopied jungle. In every ship I could see groups of soldiers in full combat gear, their weapons at the ready and their legs dangling from the cargo holds in anticipation of a quick exit. In the distance I saw plumes of thick gray and black smoke rising from the earth. I knew that was our destination, Landing Zone Ten Alpha. We were ten minutes out.

As we approached the battle I could see the orange flashes of explosions occurring in the forest surrounding the LZ. It seemed mostly on the south and west perimeters. We watched as several A1E Skyraider propeller driven attack planes swooped low over the wood line and dropped tumbling canisters of napalm, which boiled explosively through the forest.

Someone nudged me and pointed. Far below and to our left a Huey Hog was making a run on an enemy position. But something was wrong. Enemy ground fire had evidently caught right side rocket pods on fire and the crew chief, a very tiny figure from our viewpoint, was leaning out of the burning chopper with an even tinier fire extinguisher trying to put out the rapidly growing blaze. We watched in horror as the alloyed metals in the skin of the chopper itself became engulfed in flame. It was almost comical to watch that hapless crew chief and his valiant but futile effort to extinguish that blazing inferno with his completely ineffectual little fire extinguisher. The blazing helicopter continued to lose altitude and flared for a landing in Ten Alpha. We watched as three crewmembers raced from the brightly burning ship. One hesitated and returned to the ship. Apparently one of the pilot's doors was jammed. The heroic crewmember was able to free the jam and soon we saw all four crew members scrambling for safety.

We were on final approach, just meters above the barren treetops on the east end of the LZ. Hearts in our throats, we could feel the occasional "tug" of a bullet hitting the aircraft. The explosions on the ground were audible as well as the staccato rhythm of various automatic weapons. We edged closer to the doors to make a hasty exit when, all of a sudden, the pilots poured on the coal streaking across the LZ at sixty feet and climbing. The concern was the violently burning gunship in the LZ. Her fuel tanks had not yet exploded and no one wanted to risk more choppers on the ground in close proximity. We circled and approached twice more, each time feeling "hits" on our birds. The third time we came in hot and low, the helicopters hovering three feet off the ground for the few seconds that it took to disgorge the passengers, then dropped their noses and took off like bats out of hell.

I found myself lying in muck about twenty meters from the burning chopper. The M-60 machine guns abandoned by the burning chopper's door gunners were so hot that rounds were being "cooked" off, and I could see tracers hitting the ground and bouncing over my head. I had to wait a few moments for all the helicopters to clear the LZ before I could retreat from the burning one.

Once the choppers were clear I began to make my way across the LZ toward the sound of the fighting. The LZ was a virtual swamp. I hunkered low because there was much small arms fire from the east and occasionally a spray of water erupted where a bullet hit. It was very tough going, my boots were sucked in by the mud over my ankles and it required quite an effort to pull each step free. Ahead of me was a hole from which two guys were looking out and I scrambled into the position with them. I was immediately immersed in muddy water to my waist. I didn't recognize either guy. They must have been from either Bravo or Alpha Company. I thought they might have been part of the downed chopper crew but they had rifles

and were wearing steel pots, not flight helmets. I still don't know what they were doing in that hole in the middle of the LZ.

I knew I had to rejoin Charlie Company so I left the hole and half ran, half crawled to the tree line beyond which all the heavy fighting was taking place. I saw a stack of crates and hunkered behind them to catch my breath and prepare to enter the fighting. I glanced over my shoulder at the burning helicopter. Inexplicably, it still had not blown, even though it was thoroughly embroiled in flames. I turned my head and the stenciling on the side of the crates caught my attention. Grenades. I knew I couldn't stay here so I moved into the tree line looking for someone familiar. I wasn't twenty feet from the grenade cache when the downed helicopter finally blew. It exploded in a tremendous ball of fire that rose hundreds of feet in the air.

Someone came running by yelling that Charlie Company was to assemble on the opposite side of the LZ. Soon droves of infantry began making their way across the open LZ, slogging through the mud as quickly as they could. Sniper bullets whined through the air as we went. Near the opposite wood line the new battalion commander was directing traffic, inserting units where he wanted them inside the tree line. I thought it remarkable that he would expose himself to enemy sniper fire in such a manner. We went into the tree line and found abandoned enemy fortifications, which we occupied facing outward against a possible attack. We were shifted right and left a few times to ensure maximum perimeter coverage. During this time an occasional sniper bullet would come snapping through the tree branches reminding us that the area was extremely dangerous.

On the other side of the LZ, perhaps three hundred meters distant, the battle still raged. Artillery and aircraft continued to bombard suspected enemy positions and through the sound of explosions we could hear great volumes of automatic weapons fire, both U.S. and North Vietnamese. It seemed only a matter of time before we were involved on this side of the LZ. It was getting toward dusk and we had to hurriedly prepare our positions to withstand any assaults that might be made by the enemy during the coming darkness. The rifle squads worked out their intricate networks of fields of fire and communications were established among the line of positions.

When darkness fell, the sounds of the battle across the LZ died down except for the occasional staccato bark of an enemy AK-47 or the heavier ripping sound of a friendly M-60 machine gun's reply. We heard voices calling out but at that distance we couldn't tell what was being yelled or who was doing the yelling.

The entire night was a series of ghostly shadows cast by overhead flares and bursts of automatic weapons fire where NVA troops were probing the perimeter. No enemy activity took place on our side of the LZ that I can remember.

When dawn broke the battle seemed to be over. On the far side of the LZ Alpha and Bravo companies were running sweeps outside the perimeter to ascertain enemy intentions and casualties.

My FO and I were assigned to a five man squad that was going to patrol out to the opposite side of the LZ. We thought seven guys was a bit few in light of the obvious numerical strength of the NVA on the previous day but orders were orders so off we trudged, cautious and alert. About two hundred meters north of the LZ the forest gave way to an large field of elephant grass about as high as our eyes. We began moving through the field to enter more forest on the other side. About fifty meters into the grass we encountered a huge swath of trampled

grass. It measured about ten meters wide and wound away around the woods that surrounded Ten Alpha. The grass had been trampled by a large number of NVA troops moving through the area in great haste. The grass had been only recently trampled, perhaps during the night but we couldn't tell if it was a retreat from the battle or reinforcements arriving.

We continued our designated patrol route without further incident until we had nearly arrived back at the LZ. As we entered the woods that surrounded the north side of Ten Alpha, we paused in a thicket in order to communicate with the perimeter that we were about to return through our lines. One of the rifleman spotted movement to our left and we hunkered down into the thicket to observe. Walking toward our concealed position was a solitary NVA soldier, AK-47 at the ready. Although he was exhibiting stealth in his movements, his concentration was obviously on the activities taking place several hundred meters away within the LZ. (Helicopters were coming and going) We watched to see if he was the scout for a larger force but saw no other movement in the forest. He crept to within five meters of our position when several riflemen in the squad opened fire, killing him instantly. We hastily called in our location and situation lest the perimeter force get trigger happy and begin reconning by fire. No fire came our way and we made our way back into Ten Alpha. That concludes my eyewitness account of the battle.

### **The Rumor Mill**

The following is what I heard about the battle:

A company of the 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry walked into the LZ prior to the battle and saw nothing. They were then extracted by helicopter prior to B Co., 1/35<sup>th</sup>'s arrival.

Only one chopper was able to initially land B company troops within the LZ, the remainder being driven off by at least five enemy anti-aircraft guns.

The seven soldiers of B company stranded on the ground valiantly knocked out enough of the anti-aircraft positions to allow further insertions of troops.

The errant napalm bomb dropped by the A1E Skyraider killed or wounded over 40 B Company troops, mostly the headquarters element. This was obviously exaggerated.

When Alpha company arrived to reinforce a beleaguered Bravo company, the enemy was getting an upper hand until Alpha's company commander, Captain "Mad" Anthony Bisantz stood in front of his troops, cigar clenched in his mouth and blazing M-16s in either hand, rallied and inspired his men to counter attack effectively. In a recent email conversation with Captain Bisantz, he pooh-poohed the incident and gave credit to his NCOs and "fine' troops. I don't care what he says, I LIKE to think of him standing defiantly in the face of the enemy, guns blazing from the hips, cigar stub clenched tightly in his teeth. (I do too - Ed)

The sweeps along the south perimeter of Ten Alpha conducted on May 12<sup>th</sup> produced an enemy body count nearing 600.

**Marcos Cadriel  
Alpha Company 1/35th  
Marcos Cadriel Jr.  
Co. A 1<sup>st</sup> Bn 35<sup>th</sup> Inf 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division  
3<sup>rd</sup> Squad 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon (3<sup>rd</sup> Herd)  
Pleiku Province (Central Highlands) Vietnam**

**May 28<sup>th</sup> - May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1966  
THIS IS MY STORY**

**I've read articles about the battle of LZ10 ALFA, (May 28-29, 1966), taken from the 1/35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Web Page, and other material, provided to me by a Fellow Veteran and Friend that I've gotten to know recently over the Phone and Internet.**

**Articles written by my Company Commander, Captain Anthony Bizantz, Platoon Leader Lt. Larry Connor, Major TF Tyson, Richard Esgana and Jim McTaggart. Their Overview is right on line. I believe it's time for me to Tell My Story from my Perspective and My Point of View. I have Hid this story within me for 43 Years.**

**Operation Paul Revere (Seek and Destroy Mission), was Initiated on Early May, 1966. We had been out in the field Running Patrols, looking for Enemy Activity which we found. We found Freshly Blazed Trails, Punji Pits, Booby Traps, Concealed Foxholes dug on the side of the Banks on Dry Riverbeds. The Enemy was out there. Then A Co's turn came around to be Palace Guards. (Guarding Battalion). Guarding Battalion was easy duty. We had Hot Meals, not like the C-Rations we had to eat out in the field 2-3 times a day, and we were able to catch on much needed rest, which was to be short-lived. Companies would rotate after a week or so in the field, then come in and Guard Battalion. We still ran patrols on the outer boundaries of the perimeter daily. We were the Battalion Reserve, Reaction Force at the time.**

**May 28, 1966 (Afternoon)**

**Landing Zone (LZ) 10 ALFA**

**Word came down that B Co, 2<sup>nd</sup> BN 35<sup>th</sup> Inf, had Engaged the Enemy at a Clearing in the Jungle, named LZ 10 ALFA, and that help was needed to Secure the LZ; Anti-aircraft Guns and other Weapons that had been Seized, and also to Reinforce B Co, which had suffered casualties in fighting, North Vietnamese Army Regulars that Day.**

**Huey UH1 Helicopters were called to Battalion Headquarters to pick up my Unit Co A 1<sup>st</sup> BN 35<sup>th</sup> Inf and transfer us to LZ 10 ALFA in support of Co B. We loaded up and were on our way to LZ 10 ALFA, a clearing in the Central Highlands, close to the Cambodian Border, which is Seared in my Memory Forever. Flying in at approximately 4:00pm, I remember looking down and noting that the LZ was a little larger than most. It was the Monsoon Season, and there were Water Puddles all over the place. When we landed, as we headed out to the Edge of the Perimeter to the area we had been assigned to, we passed our Fellow Soldiers from Co B and I detected a look of Bewilderment and Sense of Loss on their faces. We also passed by the Captured Anti-Aircraft Guns. Right there and then it struck me, this was very serious. I was a member of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon (3<sup>rd</sup> Herd) and we were Assigned our Area of Defense. In my Defensive Position there were 4 of us. Myself (Cadriel), Pilson, Cohen and Wetzel. Being late, around 4:30pm, we had to make Hasty Defensive Preparations. We couldn't Dig Foxholes because of the water and it was already getting dark. We only had time to gather Logs and Big Boulders and Rocks to place in front of our Defensive Positions. We barely had time to set up our claymores mines, Trip flares, clear our fields of fire, and set up the LP (Listening Post), about 25 Meters to the front of our position. It was a very dark night. Everything was alright until around 1:00 Am in the Morning, when all Hell Broke Loose. The LP, 3 men, heard noises and were told to head back to our Perimeter, when the Firefight began. As they were coming back to our positions, the NVA started firing and our 3 men were caught in the middle. Some of us Fired, then our 3 guys started yelling, "3<sup>rd</sup> Herd! 3<sup>rd</sup> Herd!" A lot of Commotion was going on. We Ceased Fire until our 3 guys were back inside the**

**perimeter. Once inside, we opened up at Full Force. We could hear the Enemy talking to each other and their Officers Yelling Commands. They were about 65 Ft in front of us. They had their Machine Guns and Mortars Mounted on Wagons with Squeaky Wheels and were pulling them across our front. I tried to fire my Claymore Mine but nothing happened. I pulled in the Ignition Wire, and it came back unplugged. They had stolen my Claymore Mine and others during the night. Also, we had set up Trip Flares, but during the Fire Fight only one went off. They were very sly in disarming and taking some of our Trip Flares and Mines. My conclusion, they had observed us setting up our Flares, Mines, and Trip Flares that evening and knew exactly where our Defensive Positions were located. The battle went on all throughout the morning hours, very heavy at times. They would hit us, then retreat. We were able to keep the enemy at bay. We Inflicted Heavy Casualties on the Enemy. Because during the Fight we heard Moans and Screams from Wounded NVA Soldiers all through the night. Some stopped their moans and cries and we knew they had died.**

**We ran very low on Ammo several times during the fight. I Volunteered to run bank and forth to the CP (Command Post) for more ammo. But Adams, (3<sup>rd</sup> Herd member), volunteered also and took over the task. I remember when the Enemy would open fire, many of their rounds would be right above our heads, making a very Distinct Cracking Sound. Also many Grenades were thrown our way which weren't as Deadly and Potent as ours. Also the Enemies Mortar Rounds were landing behind our positions and not on top of us. We threw many Hand Grenades at the Enemy that night. Our Overwhelming Firepower is what kept them from Overrunning Our Positions and would make them retreat. That didn't deter them from making Assault after Assault. It was estimated we were hit by a Battalion (800 or more) of NVA Soldiers. A Co's 81 MM mortars and other Heavy 4.2 Mortar Crews, plus an Artillery Battery Fired Hundreds of Rounds in front of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon all night long. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Herd's area of Defense was the Hardest Hit that Night. Even though we Bore the Brunt of the Fight, we only had 1 killed and 4 Wounded during the Night Fighting. We wouldn't have Survived without help from Artillery and Mortar Crews. The fight ended around 4:30 am. Then morning came.**

**The Dawn of a New Day which was a relief, so we thought. The morning fog was very heavy and we couldn't see too far into the woods. We sat there in our Positions, contemplating what had occurred a few hours before. How Fortunate we were to be Alive. Finally the fog lifted and the order came down for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Herd to Saddle Up and do a Sweep Forward of our Position, because that's where the heavy fighting had Occurred, and to do a Body Count, which was very important. As we started the sweep, we found a few Dead NVA, not as many as we had anticipated. Sporadic fire broke out, the problem was taken care of, and we proceeded forward 600-1000 meters. We came upon a dry riverbed. Inside the Riverbed is where we found the NVA Bodies.**

**Many Bodies were scattered all along the inside of the Dry Riverbed. They had pulled their Dead and Wounded back to the river, so that we wouldn't be able to find them, and lower our moral. We searched the Bodies for Valuable Documents and found personal items including Family Pictures in their wallets which even though they were the enemy, was a little disturbing. I remember finding Syringes and White Powder in small packages, wrapped in brown paper on every body I searched. My conclusion, it was an Individual Drug Kit. Probably used when they would attack American Troops in Human Waves. After being out at the riverbed for awhile conducting a Body Count, Confiscating Weapons, Equipment, Etc, a Firefight broke out at the LZ. We were ordered to come back to defend the perimeter. We left most of the Confiscated Equipment at the Riverbed and Proceeded back. Coming back to the Perimeter, 5 of us on line about 60 feet in front of the rest of the Platoon. Croft was about 30' to my left, then myself and Cohen next to each other, then Plt Leader Connor and Plt Sgt Williams next to each other about 30' to my right. I didn't see**

**anyone else to Crofts left or anyone else to Lt Connor's right. We were the only ones way out in front. Upon Approaching the LZ, about 200 ft out, suddenly we saw Soldiers in Formation Marching right in front of us, Platoon Size. At first we thought they were our Soldiers, being that we were so close to the perimeter. But then it dawned on us that they were North Vietnamese Army Regulars. We started hollering, "NVA! NVA!" and proceeded forward to Engage the Enemy. As we proceeded forward, the Firefight Began. It was a large force. They had lured us right into their Trap, and into their Fields of Fire. They had Riflemen, Snipers in the trees and had set up 2 Machine Gun Emplacements. One right in front of our Position (Cadriel and Cohen), approximately 65' to our Front, and one to the Front and Right of Connors position. When they opened up with their Machine Guns Crisscrossing Fire in front of us, Cohen and I were fortunate and took cover behind a Tree Stump Approximately 3' Across, that would be our Defensive Position for the next 2 ½ to 3 Hours. We were Pinned Down. Croft to our left, Cohen and I, and Lt Connor, SFC Williams to our right. At the initial start of the Firefight we had some KIA's and many Wounded. It is amazing now that I recall, that most of the KIA's and Wounded were behind us. Maybe they figured us in front didn't have a chance to survive, being so close to their emplacements. The fighting ensued heavy at times Off and On, for the longest 3 hours of my life. My Weapon was an M-16 and Cohen's weapon was an M-59 Grenade Launcher. When the Enemy Machine Gun would Open Fire, we made sure to Fire Back. I also made sure to conserve my Ammo. I carried around 300 rounds of Ammo plus my Grenades and White Phosphorus Grenades. I remember when the Machine Guns would open fire, some rounds would hit right in front of us Kicking up Dirt and small Rocks and hitting our faces. At other times Cohen and I would lay Back to Back behind that Tree Stump, My Life Saver.**

**I would fire on Automatic and Cohen his Grenade Launcher, to let the Enemy know that we were there and to keep them from overtaking our positions. About an hour into the fight they opened up once again with Machine Gun Fire, and that's when Cohen was Hit. I recall him telling me, "Cadriel! I'm hit! I'm hit!" we were so close to each other, it's a miracle I wasn't hit also. After he was hit I started firing his Grenade Launcher plus my M-16 when they would open up. I knew exactly where the Machine Gun Placement was and I would fire the Grenade Launcher at trees right on top of their position, hoping some fragments would fall on top of them. I used up all of Cohens' Ammo and also his and my Hand Grenades. When they would start firing after Cohen was hit I would place my body on top of his to protect him from further harm. This happened many times while we were Pinned Down. During this time also, a Grenade was Tossed at our Position and it Blew Up on the Right Side of my Head by my Right Ear. It tore a 1" Gash on my Helmet Liner, and made a 3" curl on my Steel Pot. I was very fortunate not to have had my Head Blown Off. My Right Ear Rang and Buzzed for about 2 weeks. I also remember Praying to God to get us out of this mess, and Cohen, even though wounded asked me what I was doing. I told him I was Praying and for him to Pray also. Then the order came from Lt Connor to get ready to Charge The Machine Guns. Cohen and SFC Williams were already wounded so that left Croft, myself and Lt Connor out in front of everyone else. I passed the word on to Croft. Then Lt Connor gave the order to Move Out. I was looking at him to make sure we moved out at the same time. We were halfway up, my eyes fixed on him when a Bullet Grazed his Forehead and he made a 360 Degree turn and hit the ground. That's when I started Hollering for everyone to stay down because there were other troops to our rear, getting ready to move out also. We stayed there for about another hour, still fighting till the Second Platoon came to our rescue and took out their Machine Guns and we were able to Overtake The Enemy.**

**I truly believe we would have been overrun or would have had many more casualties, had it not been for the five of us being up in front at the Initial Detection of the Enemy. PFC Cohen was Wounded about 1 hour into the Fight, SFC Williams about 1 ½ hours into the Fight and Lt**

**Connors about 2 hours into the Firefight. That left myself (Cadriel) and Croft to Fend Off the Enemy for the remainder of the Firefight, and survived being pinned down for about 3 hours. After the firing ended, we were finally able to take our Wounded to the LZ and load them on Med E Vac Choppers. Cohen was still alive when we put him on the Chopper. That was the last time I would see him alive. God had to have been watching over me that day. A lot of things happened on that day. I remember seeing an A.I.E. Prop Airplane, piloted by South Vietnamese Pilot drop Napalm on our Troops at the end of the LZ. Also a Huey Helicopter on fire barely making it to the LZ. The crew made it out ok. The only thing that disturbed me were the two guys riding shotgun, left their M60 Machine Guns on the Chopper. They had time to get them off before the Chopper burned up. I guess they panicked. Also the prettiest sight in the world, having Air Force Jets dropping their Ordinance right on top of the Enemy, right in front of our positions.**

**The next few days, our job was to Bury the Enemy Dead. Being the Monsoon Season, Hot, Wet and Humid, the bodies were already decomposing. There are many Dead NVA Soldiers buried on the outskirts of LZ 10 ALFA. That was a gruesome task to handle and the stench was overwhelming for me The Battle of LZ 10 ALFA, and what occurred on May 28-29, 1966, is Embedded in my Mind Forever.**

**On the Evening of the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, my Defensive Position consisted of Myself (Cadriel), Pilson, Cohen, and Wetzel. On the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, Pilson, Cohen and Wetzel had been Killed In Action. Other KIA's from (3<sup>rd</sup> Herd) 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon were Campbell, Roundtree, Barry and Swinford. Also Killed In Action at 10 ALFA was Billy Ray Patrick, a close friend of mine from another platoon. The sad thing about Patrick was he should have been back at Base Camp getting ready to go home on a Hardship Discharge. He should have been back 3 days prior of the date he was Killed In Action. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Herd had a total of 10 KIA's, and a large number of Wounded. Some came stateside, while others returned to duty later on. Total Enemy Dead Awarded 250+ and many Weapons and Equipment Confiscated. We left LZ 10 ALFA about 10 days later.**

### **MY OVERVIEW**

**To me it was ironic, that being Attacked That Night by so many NVA on the 28<sup>th</sup> and the Firefight on the 29<sup>th</sup>, we didn't suffer more Casualties than we did. It goes to show that support from Mortar, Artillery Crews and Air Force, worked in our favor. Also Huey's bringing in ammo and taking out the wounded. We couldn't have achieved what we accomplished without their support. There are still many bits and pieces missing from this story. I just cannot recall all of them. So ends my story on the Battle of LZ 10 ALFA, May 28-29, 1966.**

**From Russ Crawford RTO 3d Platoon A Co 1/35th**

**It's like yesterday to me .I think of that place a dozen times a day. I can even find a small part of humor as we all can if we look for it,, so I'm going to hit on it , just a little and hope it doesn't offend any one. All hell broke after we got back inside (the perimeter). CAPT BAZANTZ, was standing behind this tree, two radios, one in one ear, one in the other. I seen this nice position earlier, in the morning , and said man they made a nice fighting hole and deep too. Well the fire fight was going good now so I hit that position, it had a good field of fire, and in it I went. After I fired a few rounds, I smelt something that took my mind off the war. I said to myself, "some one shit in this hole." I fired a few more rounds and I said "no wonder no one was in this goddamn hole , who the hell could stand it." I was about to leave it when I got company, landed in there with me. and a few seconds went by and he said "are you that scared?? "Hell no man, it isn't me" He didn't believe me. He said he would "rather to get shot**

than stay in there with me," the dirty bastard left me there. I figure I may as well go get shot too , so I left it also. After the fight was over I checked on this position and found only the exposed tree roots dripping this awful sap that smelled like a 2 week old slit trench. But I'm glad we don't have them trees here in sunny Calif. I REMEMBER YOU ALL GUYS AND THINK OF YOU ALL OFTEN.. AND I DO MISS YOU, AND HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL AGAIN SOME DAY ..  
RUSSELL CRAWFORD RTO 3RD PLATOON CO A 1/35

From Mike Tryon HHC 2/35 63-67

I was back at 11A listening to some of the radio chatter. However, it seems to me that the artillery prep for the assault on 10A was fired into the wrong place. That gave the first lift the chance to get in unopposed. The NVA on the ground were surprised because the prep went elsewhere. If I think of some more I'll try to add on.

(Note: This is one of many accounts of the wrong LZ being prepped – ED)

From Jim McQuillen HHC 2/35 63-66

The person you want to contact is Col Stanley Tyson. He took command the first afternoon and really held the the units together. Also you might want to note that the rest of the 2/35 that was at LZ 11A and providing artillery fire for 10A came under attack two nights in a row but to a much lesser extent than at 10A.

I was the BN S-2 during the fight and then took over B Co in June so any knowledge was second hand. I do know that there were a great number of individual heroes. In particular I remember stories about two of the platoon sergeants SFC Johnson and MSGT Crookham who eliminated the machine gun positions mentioned in the account. There was an SP4 from Detroit whose name I can not remember who spent the entire night by himself in a foxhole and in the morning he was alive with more than 10 dead NVA around his position. I will also never forget listening to Stan Tyson on the radio calling the forward air controller in a cool, calm voice after an A1E had just napalmed his position with I quote "Horse, we don't need any more of that here"

The sad part of the story is that we lost some good people.

Good Luck with the story

Jim McQuillen

From SFC Tom P. Lindquist (Ret.) HHC 1/35<sup>th</sup>



Hi, when I opened my e-mail this morning and saw LZ 10 A, I got a chill, a ghost from the past. First, I was not there on the LZ, I was back at BN. Commo. listening to it unfold on the radios, we monitored all the 1st 35th freqs. I had good friends out there, some of us had been together since the early 60s at Schofield. Sgt. George H. Mikal had been in BN. Commo. till his transfer to A Co. in mid. 1965 to be the Co. Commo Chief. On LZ 10 Alpha George was Alpha '6' RTO, it was hard to listen to him after a while, they were hurting. A day or so after the LZ was secured, George

sent his PRC 25 in to the Tea Plantation for a replacement radio. I took a picture of it, which I am sending, bullet hole and all. This all I can contribute.

From Ernest E. "Turk" Starniri jr C 1/35 65-67

I served with the 1st/35 C Company during the time of this battle. I can offer some details but my memory is somewhat vague and it would seem to me that I may differ with the dates. We had just ended a hump of about 13 clicks, set up a base camp, and heard distant gunfire. It became increasingly intense when our CO told us that A Company had made heavy contact with a PAVN unit. We were told to "saddle up" and as we jumped into the Hueys, I kinda figured that this might be pretty rough. We flew for some time and as the ship banked to the left, I noticed that the distant LZ was surrounded by red smoke. I figured it wasn't going to be a walk in the park. As the Hueys approached the LZ we took on some fire and obviously did not wait for it to land. When we jumped into the LZ, we assembled and began maneuvering into a perimeter position. Fortunately for us A Company had driven the enemy back and assumed fire superiority. Except for some sniper fire and an occasional mortar round (which took out one Huey), the LZ was basically secure. We discovered several enemy dead, shoveled some dirt on them and set up a base camp. I thought that we had dodged a bullet but later I learned that our outer perimeter had been hit.

We all share memories of Vietnam, and we all remember our fallen comrades. Sometimes one particular loss is difficult to understand and even harder to rationalize. HP Rogers was one such person. A deeply religious man, an excellent athlete and someone whose faith was as strong as his devotion to his fellow soldiers. Horace Pope Rogers was one of the men killed during this attack. His date of death is listed as June 24 which seem to differ from the dates in your recollections. It seemed to me that he was killed shortly after our arrival at 10 Alpha. Also we had several CO's during my tour in Vietnam, January 1-Dec 18, 1966. The best was Capt. Alvino Cortez. I'm not sure if he was with us at 10 Alpha but he was a most respected officer and I was proud to be under his command.

Peace,

Ernest E. "Turk" Starniri jr.

ED Note - Horace Pope Rogers was KIA at another battle on 24 June 1966. Mike Kellermeyer has written an account of that action. It can be found on the AAR Index. After 30 plus years a slight misjudgment in time is understandable.

From Ray Pollard B 2/35 65-66

Actually, I thought it was A, 2/35 on the LZ with B, 2/35. The 2/35 won PUC for this action. I think 1/35 came in the second day. The LZ was selected at the edge of artillery support. However, some mountains between the artillery and LZ reduced support to one side of the LZ only - the side, fortunately, the NVA attacked from. After initial heavy contact in the late morning of day one by initial elements of B, 2/35 the remainder of the company was inserted about noon along with a, 2 (i thought)/35. Battle ranged off and on throughout the afternoon and early evening. Heavy attack from NVA occurred early morning hours of the second day and continued through the night. Snipers on first and second day took out several including 2LT Mike Glynn, B, 2/35. Both companies took about 50% casualties killed and wounded. Mortars played biggest role for 2/35 up to that point thanks to LTC Phil Feir foresight to bring in extensive mortar ammunition resupply to the LZ. Also probably first extensive use of gunships in close support by the 2/35 and the Vietnamese AF dropped napalm in the middle of the LZ and took out B, 2/35 1SG and Arty FO along with others.

I don't recall C,2/35 being on the LZ, at least not during the primary part of the battle and I thought it was A, 2/35 but my memory could be failing me here.