



The Official History of the 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne)

Colonel Kenneth S. Bergquist, Commanding

Robert M. Doyle, Command Sergeant Major

Compiled by First Lieutenant John G. Heidenrich
S-2 Section, 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Fort George G. Meade, Maryland

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DEDICATION

*To the Members, Past and Present,
of the 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne).*

Although their names and accomplishments are too numerous to list, the late Captain Dean K. Phillips, Commander of the 11th Signal Company, was a fitting example. A tireless advocate for American war veterans like himself, Captain Phillips was prematurely silenced by cancer in 1985. He relinquished command of his unit only five days before he died. The Drop Zone on Fort Meade, Maryland, was renamed in his honor and the following *Washington Post* article was placed in the *Congressional Record* by the Honorable Orrin Hatch, U.S. Senator from Utah:

The Bonding of War

On Monday morning, the Army, which he had served so valiantly, buried Dean K. Phillips with the full panoply of military honors that was his due. This much-decorated citizen soldier and fellow Vietnam veteran was laid to rest in his uniform, the ribbons on his chest a solemn testament to the professionalism he brought to his calling in the now distant rice paddies of an earlier and more troubled era. In the end, the ravages of cancer was able to effect that which another formidable, though less insidious, enemy had been unable to accomplish almost twenty years previously. Through it all, Dean's courage served as a beacon to all of us who loved and admired him.

As his friends and family gathered at the grave site in a stand of pines beneath a slate gray August sky in Arlington National Cemetery to pay their last respects, I reflected on what his passing meant to me and on the special covenant that binds men who have experienced the horrors of war. I had been to see him one last time shortly before he died, not because we were particularly close, but because ours was a kinship forged in the bloody crucible of Vietnam, and because I felt an urgent need to honor him for what he had endured. He had by then become a shell of his former self, the cataclysmic virulence of the cancer having almost run its course, but his handshake remained firm and his thinking clear.

He had been to see *Rambo* several weeks earlier, which he disliked for a number of reasons, among them the facile way the picture treated death and the distortedly romantic gloss it placed on combat. Dean knew better, and we discussed the new patriotism and the so-called revisionist view of Vietnam at length. He had enlisted in the Army in the mid-Sixties, despite having been granted a student deferment to attend law school, and he had refused a commission out of a desire to serve in the ranks. Often at odds with the Army as an institution, he nevertheless passionately loved its soldiers, and his service in Vietnam earned him two silver stars, two Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart. He told me

that he did not understand the cynical view of patriotism, and he was realistic enough to know that no amount of revisionism could erase the obloquy returning veterans faced as they attempted to enter the mainstream of society in the late Sixties and early Seventies. He had devoted the remainder of his professional life to easing that transition by his tireless work as an attorney on issues affecting veterans.

I spent several hours with Dean that sultry summer afternoon, and I watched him mask his pain as he acted the good host and tended to the needs of his company. I could see also by his conversation and demeanor that he was putting his house in order and preparing himself for the last battle. As I readied myself to leave, he took my hand in both of his and told me that he hoped he had been able to do some good for mankind in the time he had been given. I do not know if his final words to me were a question or a declaration, but I was only able to squeeze his hands by way of affirmation in what I now regard as a woefully inadequate response.

Dean Phillips died at home with his family a month later, beaten but not bowed by an enemy whose onslaughts he was powerless ultimately to turn aside. He was forty-two years old and left behind grieving parents, a loving wife and daughter, and a two year old son who will develop, at best, only a vicarious insight into his father's enormous stature.

He is gone now, joined at last with his beloved brothers whose names appear on the Vietnam Memorial, most of whom died themselves in their teens and twenties well before their time, like Dean, and I am yet unable to derive any meaning or take any solace from his death. I know only that he touched my heart, and I am richer for having shared his life.

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FOREWORD

Since its inception over two centuries ago, the United States Army has established a rich heritage of wartime victories and peacetime accomplishments around the world. This heritage is a source of pride for every soldier.

It falls to the military historian to capture the elements of detail that create the rich fabric of our history. While the most recent combat deployments are always clearest in memory, nonetheless the US Army of today can trace its roots backward through the Persian Gulf War, Panama, Grenada, Vietnam, the World Wars and so forth, to the early Colonial militia companies. This heritage is, by rights, the property of every soldier and each unit must contribute to the collection and presentation of it.

With this solemn responsibility in mind, I am pleased to introduce this official history of the 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne). It provides a glimpse into our unit's past. It reminds us of how the 11th Group began, how it progressed, and where it stands today. By understanding our past, we can better anticipate the future.

This is the first official history of the 11th Group. I hope that subsequent members of the Command will add to this initial offering. Take pride in the heritage that is your due.

KENNETH S. BERGQUIST
COL, MI, USAR
Commanding

THE 11th GROUP LINEAGE AND FLASH

The 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne) actually has three different historical beginnings. Its official lineage was established by formal administrative decree and dates back to the Second World War. The unofficial lineage of the 11th Group is its actual history and evolution, beginning with the 316th Special Forces Detachment of 1959. The unofficial heritage of the 11th Group dates back to ancient times, to the earliest days of insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare. This official unit history will examine all three paths, with an emphasis on the unofficial lineage and the experiences of its members since 1959. These subjects are examined in subsequent sections. According to the Office of the Chief, Military History, the official lineage and honors of the 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne) are as follows:

LINEAGE:

Constituted 5 July 1942 in the Army of the United States as the 5th Company, 2nd Battalion, First Regiment, First Special Service Force, a joint Canadian-American organization. Activated 9 July 1942 at Fort William Henry Harrison, Montana. Disbanded 6 January 1945 in France.

Reconstituted 15 April 1960 in the Regular Army and designated as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces. Withdrawn 14 December 1960 from the Regular Army and allotted to the Army Reserve (organic elements concurrently constituted). Group activated 1 March 1961 with Headquarters at Boston, Massachusetts.

CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION CREDIT:

World War II

Aleutian Islands
Naples-Foggia
Anzio
Rome-Arno
Southern France (with Arrowhead)
Rhineland

Our current lineage and honors were established in 1986. Prior to that, all Special Forces units had a lineage that included the famed Ranger Battalions of World War II. In the case of the 11th Group, this lineage went back to Company B, 2nd Ranger Battalion. This connection credited the 11th SFGA with ten additional wartime campaigns in Europe and the Pacific, along

with four Presidential Unit Citations and the French *Croix de Guerre* with Silver-Gilt Star. To provide official lineage to the current Army Ranger formations, this connection with the earlier Rangers was formally withdrawn from all Special Forces in February 1986. With this withdrawal, the Special Forces Command was officially thanked for "preserving" the lineage and honors of the Rangers during the pre-1986 period. The 2nd Ranger Battalion became the lineage of the current 75th Ranger Regiment.

In the early years of Special Forces, all Reserve Component Special Forces (RCSF) units had the same flash of a blue field with a white border. With official permission, the 11th Group created its own distinctive red, white, and blue flash in 1967. Accounts differ concerning why these particular colors were chosen. The colors were *not* adopted from the American flag; until recently, the blue portion of the flash was light blue, not dark blue. One account states that, to represent the then-nationwide expanse of the 11th's elements, the flash shows the eastern sun (the red portion) setting upon the Pacific west coast (the blue portion), separated by the horizon (the white stripe). A more likely explanation states that the 11th Group's flash is based upon the red, white, and black flash of the 6th Special Forces Group (Airborne), an active unit that the 11th reportedly absorbed. The replacement of black with blue denotes the merger of the 6th SFGA with the RCSF.

COMMANDERS OF THE 11TH GROUP

Raymond J. Glaze
Lieutenant Colonel
2nd SFGA 1962 - 1964

Warren Marsteller
Lieutenant Colonel
2nd SFGA 1964 - 1965

Joseph Crane
Lieutenant Colonel
1965 - 1968

Angelo Gallantie
Lieutenant Colonel
1968 - 1972

Walter Eckart
Major (Acting Commander)
1972

Louis Meyers
Lieutenant Colonel
1972 - 1974

Richard L. Clark
Lieutenant Colonel
1974 - 1977

Theodore Gannis
Lieutenant Colonel
1976 - 1978

Charles E. Chambers
Lieutenant Colonel
1978 - 1979

Richard L. Clark
Colonel
1979 - 1980

James E. Willoughby
Colonel
1980 - 1983

Wilson Barnes
Colonel
1983 - 1986

Carlton A. Mallory
Colonel
1986 - 1989

Paul E. Lima
Colonel
1989 - 1992

Kenneth S. Bergquist
Colonel
1992 - Present

IN THE BEGINNING

Special operations, the basic function of Special Forces, are as old as warfare itself. The oldest deep reconnaissance mission ever recorded can be found in the Biblical Book of Numbers (13:1-2), in which God directed Moses to "send men to spy out the land of Canaan." Moses sent out twelve men (the size of a standard Special Forces A-team) with these instructions:

"Make your way up the Negeb, and go on into the hill-country. See what the land is like, and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. See whether it is easy or difficult country in which they live, and whether the cities in which they live are weakly defended or well fortified; is the land fertile or barren, and does it grow trees or not? Go boldly in and take some of its fruit."

Today, the objectives of a modern reconnaissance mission would not be much different. Some years after this Biblical passage was written, the ancient Chinese warrior-philosopher Sun Tzu wrote his classic military treatise, *The Art of War*. In it, he urged his students to adopt the unconventional methods inherent in Special Forces, and to avoid the protracted conflict that Special Forces can wage:

"Do not repeat the tactics which have gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances...Water shapes its course according to the ground over which it flows; the soldier works out his victory in relation to the foe whom he is facing."

"(If) the campaign is protracted, the resources of the State will not be equal to the strain. When your weapons are dulled, your ardor dampened, your strength exhausted and your treasure spent, other chieftains will spring up to take advantage of your extremity. Then no man, however wise, will be able to avert the consequences that must ensue...There is no instance of a country that benefited from prolonged warfare."

The American experience with unconventional warfare dates back to Colonial times. In 1756, during the French and Indian War, Major Robert Rogers raised nine militia companies that became the first Rangers. Since that time, forerunners of Special Forces have played a role in every major American conflict, up to and including the Korean War. Perhaps the most famous of these forerunners was Colonel Francis Marion (known as the *Swamp Fox*) during the American Revolution, and later Confederate Colonel John Mosby during the American Civil War.

The First Special Service Force

All modern Special Forces, including the 11th SFGA, can trace their lineage back to the First Special Service Force (FSSF) of World War II. The FSSF was the brainchild of Geoffrey Nathaniel Pyke, an eccentric English scientist and armchair tactician. In 1942, with the blessing of Britain's Lord Louis Mountbatten and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, he convinced the US

War Department to form a joint Canadian-American brigade-size force equipped with high-speed armored snowmobiles. The purpose, codenamed Project *Plough*, was to tie down half-a-million German troops in the mountains of Norway, Romania, and Italy through guerrilla warfare.

Although the FSSF was raised and trained, the perceived difficulties in resupplying it kept the unit from being sent to perform its intended mission. Indeed, the Force was almost disbanded soon after its creation. But its first commander, American Colonel Robert Frederick, managed to save it by transforming the unit into an elite shock force, capable of performing almost any combat mission anywhere.

Thus began a legendary unit. On the Allied beachhead at Anzio, Italy, the Force successfully defended a perimeter twice the length held by the nearby American 3rd Infantry Division. After the Allied breakout, the FSSF became the first Allied unit to enter Rome. Western correspondents wrote about the unit at length, frequently noting the grudging respect the Germans displayed toward it. Sergeant Bill Murray, the famed GI cartoonist, based several of his "Willie and Joe" depictions upon its actual experiences.

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the First Special Service Force was its first combat engagement, portrayed in the film *The Devil's Brigade* with William Holden as Colonel Frederick and Cliff Robertson as his French-Canadian subordinate. In late 1943, the Germans in Italy had managed to block the progress of the entire American Fifth Army by holding the commanding twin peaks of Monte la Defensa and Monte la Remetanea. For weeks, the Fifth Army had repeatedly tried and failed to seize these heavily fortified peaks, with a cost of heavy casualties.

By scaling Monte la Defensa -- a height of 1,000 meters, including a 70-meter cliff, up to ledges barely wide enough to hold a single man, let alone several -- the FSSF managed to seize the first peak within hours. General Dwight D. Eisenhower later wrote:

"In mountain passes the Germans constructed defenses almost impregnable to attack. Yankee ingenuity and resourcefulness were tested to the limit. Shortly after the capture of Monte Camino, I was taken to a spot where, in order to outflank on these mountain strong points, a small detachment had put on a remarkable exhibition of mountain climbing. With the aid of ropes, a few of them climbed steep cliffs of great height. I have never understood how, encumbered by their equipment, they were able to do it. In fact, I think that any Alpine climber would have examined the place doubtfully before attempting to scale it. Nevertheless, the detachment reached the top and ferreted out the German company headquarters. They entered and seized the captain, who ejaculated, 'You can't be here! It is impossible to come up those rocks!'"

Despite the surprise, the battle for Monte la Defensa was extremely fierce. Even after the summit was cleared, the Force had to endure several days of German sniper and mortar fire. Amid this harrassment, however -- and only two days after La Defensa was taken -- the FSSF's 1st Regiment (from which the 11th SFGA is descended) was sent to clear out the saddle area

between La Defensa and La Remetanea. It did so, despite being outnumbered four-to-one. Hours later, the summit of Monte la Remetanea was conquered by the Force.

Of the 1,800 Forcemen who participated in the struggle for the twin peaks, over 500 became casualties. Similar massive losses were suffered in the months that followed. At Monte Sammucro in early 1944, the 1st Regiment overcame the mountain's German defenses within thirty minutes, but was virtually decimated in the process. Yet after this and other engagements, the Force was reconstituted again and again. Wounded Forcemen frequently left their hospital beds to rejoin their comrades. Colonel Frederick himself was wounded six times during his command of the unit.

In December 1944, the First Special Service Force held a final parade at Villeneuve-Loubet in France. Ironically, the Force was a victim of its own success. By late 1944, there were no more special missions to perform. In recognition of its contribution against Nazi Germany, the colors of the Force received an honorary battle streamer for "duty" in the German Rhineland. The Force was officially disbanded on January 6th, 1945.

The Establishment of Special Forces

With the end of World War II in 1945, the fate of the First Special Service Force was not unusual. Virtually every American special operations organization was disbanded, including the Army Rangers and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Even amid the first years of the Cold War, the United States failed to reinvigorate its special operations capability until the late Nineteen Forties.

As fears of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe grew ever larger, the United States eventually organized various resistance-oriented "stay-behind" forces in case the Soviets attacked. The fledgling Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) also began to undertake various special operations. And on the Korean peninsula, in response to the North Korean attack in 1950, special operations were mounted by the United Nations Partisan Forces Korea (UNPFK).

On June 20th, 1952, the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) was established at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The 10th SFGA was the US Army's first permanent unit skilled in unconventional warfare -- and its creation marked the advent of modern American Special Forces. Although all Special Forces take pride in the creation of the 10th Group, members of the 11th SFGA can take particular pride since the 11th has enjoyed particularly close ties with the 10th for many years. By 1961, there were four active Special Forces groups, with the 1st Special Forces as their regimental parent. Yet the number of personnel remained small -- only about 3,000 -- until their military potential captured the interest of President John F. Kennedy.

President Kennedy had good reason to be interested. As a patrol boat skipper during World War II, he and his surviving crew had been rescued by special operations personnel after his boat, PT-109, was sunk by a Japanese destroyer in 1943. As President, Kennedy became an avid supporter of Special Forces and obviously a powerful one. Among other actions, he

approved the green beret for official wear, calling it "a symbol of excellence; a badge of courage; a mark of distinction in the fight for freedom."

Upon his assassination, perhaps no element of the US Armed Forces felt his loss more deeply than did Special Forces. The Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg was renamed in his honor. Members of Special Forces served in his funeral Honor Guard. And there is a widely told story that one member of this Honor Guard removed his own green beret and presented it as a posthumous gift.

What is not so widely known is the role played by Army reservists, specifically from a forerunner of the 11th SFGA, in the funeral of President John F. Kennedy. The following article from an Army publication of the time tells the story:

"Reservists Serve As Honor Guard"

On the day following the assassination of President Kennedy, two Army Reservists served as members of the Honor Guard stationed in the East Room of the White House, where the remains of the late President were lying in state.

The family of the late President had requested that members of the Army's Special Forces (SF) be included in the Guard of Honor. As no Active Army SF units were stationed in the Washington area, and as it would be late evening before SF personnel could be brought up to Washington from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, a call went out to Major Richard S. Friedman, Executive Officer of Company B, 2nd Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Fort Myer, Virginia.

As the result of the call, shortly after noon, Master Sergeant Arthur C. Gunther, Jr., and Specialist Four Harold B. Robinson, both of Washington, D.C., and both members of Company B, reported to the Officer-in-Charge of the Honor Guard at the White House. Both Reservists subsequently served in the Honor Guard until the arrival of the Active Army SF Detachment from Fort Bragg late that evening.

Company B, 2nd SFGA, was absorbed by the 11th SFGA in 1966 and eventually became the 11th Group's Headquarters and Headquarters Company at Fort Meade, Maryland. After the funeral of President Kennedy, the 3rd Group at Fort Bragg expressed its thanks to Company B in a gracious Christmas card. Master Sergeant Gunther and Specialist Four Robinson later received formal certificates of appreciation from Major General Philip C. Wehle, Commanding General of the Military District of Washington.

The 316th Special Forces Detachment (Airborne)

During the Nineteen Fifties, as Special Forces gradually gained supporters within the Active Component, a growing number of Special Forces Detachments (SFDs) were established

within the Reserve Components. Among these was the 316th Special Forces Detachment (Airborne), formed in 1959. Perhaps the man most responsible for the creation of the 316th was then-Captain Richard S. Friedman.

An intelligence officer by branch, Friedman had served with the OSS during World War II. While in German-occupied territory, he once strolled past a *Gestapo* police headquarters disguised as a peddler pushing a cart of apples. Someone even photographed the spectacle. Not surprisingly, he found peacetime to be much less exciting, especially in the Army Reserve. By the late Fifties, Friedman was drilling at a USAR school and anxious to find something new. On May 20th, 1959, he sent a letter to his Area Command, which included units in and around Washington, DC:

"Approximately three and one-half years ago, the undersigned reserve officer, together with a number of other reserve officers and enlisted men, were rendered surplus from troop-basis units then in existence in the area. It had been learned from a DA publication -- 'The Army Reservist' -- that Special Forces Detachments were being activated in the Reserve Components. Request was made for allocation of such a unit to the District of Columbia Military District..."

This request was never carried out, but Friedman was persistent. He mentioned that, in early 1959, a staff officer in the Pentagon's Office of the Chief, Special Warfare (UW), had told him that an SFD could be established in the Washington area. After further inquiries, Friedman ultimately spoke to the Second Army's Reserve Operations Officer at Fort Meade, Maryland, who

"...suggested that the undersigned officer undertake to determine if there were sufficiently interested personnel in the area in number adequate to form, at least, a training unit with the idea that -- if a successful training unit could be activated -- then later consideration could be requested for TOE status.

"...The list of names of these persons is attached hereto."

One month later, in June 1959, the 316th Special Forces Detachment (Airborne) was activated at USAR Center Number 1, in Louisiana Hall, Fort Myer, Virginia. Its first commander was Lieutenant Colonel Erven E. Boettner of Silver Spring, Maryland. Captain Friedman became the Detachment S-1 and recruited the unit's first personnel. Within a few months, the unit produced this press release:

Since its activation in mid-1959, the 316th has grown from one man to an almost full strength of thirty. A tough and realistic training program has included work with the Navy's submarines, the Air Force troop carriers, and the firing facilities of the Marine Corps School at Quantico. Under the direction of Colonel Boettner, the 316th Special Forces Detachment represented the Army Reserve at the Armed Forces Day display at Andrews Air Force Base, receiving four commendations in the process. In recent months, the unit established its own radio station in Louisiana Hall for additional communications training.

Members of the 316th with more than usual experience in the field include a former wartime OSS member who served behind the lines in France and Italy; a wartime member of the Polish underground; and an officer, fluent (in) Chinese, who served as an advisor to the Nationalist Government on Formosa. Many members of the unit saw combat in World War II or Korea with airborne or infantry divisions.

Several skills to be mastered in the coming year (of 1960) include horseback riding, skiing, snowshoeing, and skin-diving.

The initial organization of the 316th bore little resemblance to a current Special Forces detachment. At that time, the designation "team" referred to different units at several levels. In December 1959, the first edition of *Bravo Bugle* (the 316th's newsletter) showed the 316th as having a senior headquarters, known as the *FD*, in Columbus, Ohio. This element was described as having "engaged in some good survival training" at the Strategic Air Command's survival school at Lockbourne Air Force Base. Its training had even been broadcast by a local Columbus television station. Beneath the FD headquarters were three *FC teams*, known as FC-1, FC-2, and FC-3. The 316th Special Forces Detachment was FC-3. The locations of FC-1 and FC-2 were unpublished. Beneath each FC was a single *FA team*, which later became the "A-team" of more contemporary doctrine.

"A-team" is one of the few organizational terms that has remained with Special Forces up through the present day. By 1960, the average Special Forces detachment consisted of much more than a single A-team. Back then, four A-teams comprised a *B-team* commanded by a major. Three or four B-teams comprised a *C-team*, which was typically the entire detachment. The C-team/detachment was typically commanded by a lieutenant colonel. The terms "B-team" and "C-term" soon fell out of vogue, however, replaced by the more traditional terms of "company" and "battalion" (or "group" in the case of a separate battalion-size unit). The term "detachment" became synonymous with "A-team" and the 316th SFD soon reflected this change. In late 1961, the unit was redesignated as Company B, 2nd Special Forces Group (Airborne).

The 2nd Special Forces Group (Airborne)

Established in November 1961, the 2nd Special Forces Group (Airborne) was headquartered at Fort Hayes, Ohio, near the city of Columbus. It controlled units throughout the northeast and mid-Atlantic states. The 11th SFGA absorbed the 2nd Group in early 1966. Up until then, however, the 2nd SFGA was a full-fledged Reserve Component Special Forces (RCSF) group in its own right and had little to do with the 11th.

Training opportunities during this period were very limited, a reflection of the general lack of support given to the Reserve Components. This problem was especially acute in Special Forces, since even its active component was neglected until the Kennedy Administration. If a new reservist wanted to become *Special Forces Qualified*, he normally had to wait several months or even years before a slot became available to attend Airborne School. There was *no* opportunity for the reservist to attend the active Special Forces Qualification course at Fort

Bragg. Instead, he was expected to learn his craft through correspondence courses. Once he felt confident enough of his skills, he was tested in the field by Regular Army evaluators during a two-week Annual Training period. If he met with their satisfaction, and they were reportedly quite honest in their assessment, then the reservist became "SFQ" and was allowed to wear the coveted tab. Throughout this period, however, he and everyone else in his unit was allowed to wear the green beret.

Since training was essential, albeit not well funded, reservists in Special Forces went to great lengths to employ what Special Forces have become famous (or infamous) for: taking initiative. In 1963, at the 2nd Group's Company B had little more than a dilapidated building in Maryland's Upper Marlboro County (which the unit had relocated *into*, not out of); some obsolescent field gear (including aging M-1 Carbine rifles); and a small collection of World War II-vintage small arms for display and familiarization purposes. But the unit was also located near Andrews Air Force Base. Bravo Company persuaded the Air Force to let the unit conduct weekend parachute jumps and other air-land exercises. This was good initiative, and Bravo Company wanted to advertise it. Photographs were taken, after-action reports were written, and a fairly elaborate summary was produced. One junior officer then took the very bold initiative of personally dropping off this proud summary at the Pentagon -- *in the Office of the Secretary of the Army*. He was later telephoned by a senior officer who praised the officer's desire to please, but informed him that Bravo Company's training was not quite in accordance with standard Special Forces doctrine.

Tragedy in the Air

On April 18th, 1964, about thirty members of the 2nd SFGA boarded nine C-119 "Flying Boxcar" transport planes in preparation for an early-evening jump. Among them was the group commander, Lieutenant Colonel Ray J. Glaze. An airborne officer during World War II, Colonel Glaze had undertaken several missions behind enemy lines in Europe and the Far East. As a reservist, he had struggled to build the new 2nd SFGA into an effective Special Forces unit. As the senior officer present, he boarded the first plane. The nine C-119s took off at about 2040 hours, amid a dark and threatening sky. The paratroopers hoped to make their jump before an approaching rain storm denied them the opportunity.

It was not to be. Aboard the second plane was Sergeant First Class William H. Kremer, Jr., the aircraft jumpmaster. His frequent checks of the weather outside always yielded the same result: rain. The C-119s made three passes over the drop zone. Three times, the weather proved prohibitive. The jump was cancelled. Staff Sergeant William L. Zugelder, riding on the same plane as Kremer, took a cockpit seat behind the pilot and started to gaze out a side window as the storm gradually passed.

Looking out that window, Zugelder saw something that paralyzed him with fear. He tried to shout a warning but no words came out. Suddenly a loud crash thundered through the aircraft. Kremer stared in disbelief as the troop compartment separated itself from him and started disintegrating. Two C-119s had collided in mid-air *and Kremer was in one of them!*

But only for an instant. A row of overhead lights above him suddenly vanished, and the roar of aircraft engines and twisting metal was quickly replaced by silence. Kremer felt himself falling through a black void with wind slipping across his body. Realizing what had happened, he instinctively reached for the handle on his reserve chute -- *but he could not grab it!* It was blocked by his rucksack, lifted by the rushing air from its place fastened below his reserve chute. Pushing away the rucksack for dear life, he managed to grip and pull the elusive handle. Moments later (or an eternity later, depending upon your point of view), the chute opened.

As he descended at a much slower speed than before, Kremer noticed several metal fragments falling nearby. Suddenly, a giant ball of flame shot past him and exploded upon the ground. *"I made it!"* It took a moment for Kremer to realize that he had just heard his own voice. After a further pause, he remarked, "I hope you guys made it..."

Kremer landed in a country field, wet with mud. After releasing himself, he cried out, *"Hey! This is Kremer! I'm okay! Let me know where you're at and I can help you!"* No one answered. Kremer rolled up his chute and left it with his unopened main chute. His rucksack had remained with him throughout his descent. He slung it over his shoulder and ran toward a distant white canopy near the blazing wreckage. The mud was ankle-deep and a barbed wire fence slowed his pace even more. But he reached the chute and found a badly injured captain moaning beneath some metal debris.

Kremer used his sleeping bag to comfort the officer and then shouted for help. Six civilians from a nearby farmhouse soon arrived and took the captain away. Despite the help, the captain later died. Kremer continued to search for survivors -- and passed three corpses before he found one. It was Staff Sergeant Zugelder, almost unconscious with pain.

The collision had apparently knocked Zugelder through the roof of the C-119, injuring his shoulders and chest. It also snagged his static line, which miraculously opened his parachute. "I guess we're lucky guys," Kremer said, more to himself than to Zugelder. "Neither one of us had his seat belt fastened!"

In all, the collusion -- the Army's worst mid-air collusion ever -- killed seventeen men, including Lieutenant Colonel Glaze. Exactly one year later, in April 1965, the 2nd SFGA held a memorial service for those who died. William Kremer, meanwhile, continued to jump. Indeed, only one month after his rather unorthodox exit from a disintegrating C-119, he made a more routine jump from another C-119 -- his fourteenth. Kremer, whose 32nd birthday began on the night of the collision in 1964, ultimately lived to be 59 years old. He died on August 29th, 1991, at the rank of Sergeant Major. Members of the 2nd Battalion (the former 2nd Group) participated in his funeral, twenty-seven years after he failed to fasten his seat belts aboard an ill-fated C-119.

CREATION OF THE 11TH

The 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne) was among the first Reserve Component Special Forces groups to be established. It was created gradually, beginning on April 15th, 1960. To provide it with some official lineage, the 5th Company of the First Special Service Force's 1st Regiment was administratively reconstituted and consolidated with Company B, 2nd Ranger Battalion. (This lineage with the Rangers was removed two decades later.) The new unit was designated the Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces. Eight months later, on December 14th, 1960, the HHC was withdrawn from the Regular Army and allocated to the Army Reserve.

Despite the name of its HHC, the 11th Group itself did not officially exist for another two months. On March 1st, 1961, the 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne) was formally activated with its HHC located in Boston, Massachusetts. Yet even this action did not establish its operational elements. These were added as Reserve SF detachments were gradually consolidated around the country.

On March 1st, 1966, the 2nd SFGA was formally absorbed by the 11th and became its 2nd Battalion. The 2nd Battalion is still headquartered near Columbus, Ohio. Its Bravo Company, the former 316th Special Forces Detachment, was by this time commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Richard Friedman, whose personal initiative had helped establish the 316th years before. The following excerpts are from a unit press release dated January 31st, 1966. It describes a drill weekend from that era and mentions the company's forthcoming incorporation into the 11th SFGA:

Regular Army and Army Reserve Special Forces personnel battled their way through an avalanche of snow and ice at Fort Meade this weekend to complete a scheduled two-day MOS training session that ended much on the order of an Arctic maneuver.

Receiving the snowy benefits of the training were the members of Company B, 2nd Special Forces Group (Airborne), an Army Reserve unit commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Richard S. Friedman. Detachments of Company B train throughout the year at US Army Reserve training centers located in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and the District of Columbia...

The actual MOS training for the Army Reserve Special Forces got underway Saturday morning at Fort Meade's Education Center Annex. The snow that had fallen the night before had little effect on the conduct of the training exercise and the scheduled instruction in light and heavy weapons, demolitions, operations and intelligence, communications, medical, supply, and administrative operations. Saturday afternoon, the Special Forces troopers even braved the cold and snow to practice fire automatic weapons on Meade's weapons range. Saturday night, the snowfall buried the post under a 14-inch blanket of white -- and still the men with the Green Berets continued their training.

Their Sunday morning and afternoon training schedule called for the firing of demolition charges and the additional firing of weapons. These operations, however, were cancelled when the snow drifts on the roads to the ranges stalled the motor trucks transporting the equipment.

Now that the hectic weekend training exercise is completed, the four-state Special Forces Army Reserve Company B will be reorganized into two units. The two newly formed units will be designated as Company B and Company C of the 11th Special Forces Group, with Company B composed of Special Forces detachments in Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Company C will be formed from detachments in Virginia and the District of Columbia.

The reorganization of the Special Forces unit will create some 90 officer and enlisted vacancies...(An) applicant must be over 20 years of age; be able to swim 200 yards; be able to pass the Airborne Physical Training Test and the Special Forces Selective Battery Test.

On March 31st, 1973, Company B was redesignated as the present Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne) located at Fort Meade, Maryland. 'Not a bad fate for a unit of such humble beginnings.

Major Exercises of the Sixties

During one night jump in 1966, an A-team was ordered to parachute onto a site identified by an "inverted-L" pattern, illuminated by flare pots that were extinguished once the jumpers exited their plane. At the appointed time and place, however, the plane overflowed the site without depositing any jumpers. Ground personnel radioed the pilot, only to discover that the A-team had jumped much earlier. With visions of twisted bodies in mind, the ground people began to get worried. Were the jumpers hurt? *Were they alive?* Search parties combed the area for days, calling with bullhorns for the team leader by name. No one was found. As the exercise drew to close, it was hoped that the A-team or what remained of it might appear at a prearranged spot where helicopters waited to collect the team. If the A-team failed to show itself there, the worst was feared.

Sure enough, an unhurt and highly motivated A-team emerged as planned, awaiting their return transportation. The proud team leader reported that his men had accomplished all their assigned missions without a hitch. When asked why he and his team had failed to show themselves after numerous search parties had called for him by name, he replied, "Oh, I thought that was your *psyop*," referring to a psychological operations ploy. "I wasn't about to fall for that stuff!" No one ever discovered what illuminated phenomenon the A-team had mistaken for their jump site.

Throughout the middle and late Nineteen Sixties, the 11th SFGA conducted several large training exercises in the Allegheny, Monongahela and White Mountain National Forests. During a typical two-week annual training period, A-teams were airdropped into "enemy-occupied" forests where they recruited, trained, and commanded "guerrillas" from the local population. The enemy forces, known as the *Circle Trigon Party* (and played by 11th Group personnel), actively pursued the teams and encouraged local civilians to do the same. These exercises usually received front page coverage by the local newspapers. Sometimes these exercises were the *only* stories on the local front page. The following excerpts describe one such exercise, known as Operation *Cold Sweat*, which took place in the autumn of 1967:

"Green Berets Launch Exercise"

-- *The Times-Mirror and Observer* (September 29th, 1967)

(Warren Country, Pennsylvania) Allegheny National Forest has been occupied as the first phase of a US Army Special Forces field exercise got underway in sections of five counties in the area. The exercise was launched Monday when forces of the Circle Trigon Party moved in strong reconnaissance parties.

The Army issued a special warning to people in the areas about the use of firearms. There will be considerable shooting from time to time, with some minor explosions and flares. All firing, however, is done with blank ammunition. The Army expressed concern that citizens, many of whom own rifles and shotguns, might believe the mock firing is real and, seeing armed men, might shoot back.

The tactical situation is based on the supposition the eastern United States has been overrun and subdued by the Circle Trigon Party. The partisans are asking the US Army - - supposedly fighting a conventional war somewhere west of the Mississippi -- to send in a party of Special Forces to organize, train, and lead them in acts of sabotage and war against occupation troops.

Once entrenched, (the Green Berets) will organize schools and hospitals, as well as supply depots in the forest, train the partisans and lead them in raids against strategic points. They will live in the woods, finding what shelter they can and carrying their ammunition and food. They will be resupplied at least once by airdrop during the exercise.

Green Berets will also contact actual citizens in an attempt to get food and shelter along with information. Meanwhile, the Circle Trigon group will be asking citizens to provide information on the movements of the Green Berets and their allies. Posters have already begun circulating warnings against the danger of helping these men.

"Loyal American citizens of Warren and Sheffield -- If you come in contact with a member of the Green Berets, give him all the help, food, shelter and cooperation at your disposal. They are your friends. The Special Forces are fighting on the side of the citizens of the Forest. This is your war as well as ours, and we strongly and sincerely urge those individuals who are, or have been involved in guerrilla operations, to join the Green Beret liberators."

-- Typical 11th SFGA leaflet

"Area Patriots, Green Berets Win Daring Battle on Tionesta Bridge"

-- *The Derrick* (October 3rd, 1967)

(Forest County, Pennsylvania) What was undoubtedly the shortest war in history ended in victory early Wednesday morning as the Green Berets successfully blew up the Tionesta Bridge, completely overpowering the Aggressor troops.

The Aggressor troops went on watch at the bridge -- just as if they were guarding it during wartime -- at about 10 p.m. on Tuesday. A spokesman for the Aggressors told *The Derrick* that they were expecting an attack for the purpose of blowing up the bridge sometime before 3 a.m.

The night was cold and foggy in Tionesta -- and quiet until 1:30 a.m., when two youths walked along Elm Street, turned left and began to saunter over the bridge. They were followed by the Forest County Civil Defense Mobile, resembling a miniature tank, carrying a group of armed Green Berets.

For approximately an hour, Tionesta was turned into a virtual battleground with intense fighting between the two factions. The dark night was lit with the fire from rifle shots and flares, and the stillness which had prevailed was invaded by loud yelling and incessant rifle blasts.

The enemy forces fought valiantly -- at one time pushing the Green Berets' mobile off the bridge with one of their large trucks and pinning it in between two of their trucks at the end of bridge. However, the Green Berets rose to the occasion and accomplished their objective -- blowing up the bridge and overpowering the enemy.

Needless to say, the episode must have thrown a bit of a scare into several unsuspecting motorists who turned to go over the bridge -- only to back up rather quickly when they saw two large trucks and the Civil Defense tank battling in the middle of the bridge.

"Patriotic Guerrillas and US Special Forces Victorious"

-- *The Forest Press* (October 5th, 1967)

(Tionesta, Pennsylvania) Tionesta residents had survived the initial attack of the Circle Trigon troops three years ago, fortunately with little damage. And in the ensuing years, the area had seen little action. It seemed that its residents had almost accepted the rule of the tyrants.

When the Special Forces (Green Berets) were called in to rout the enemy, they found the heaviest concentrations in the Kellettsville, Duhring and Sheffield areas. Within a short period of time, with the aid of a quickly-recruited band of Forest County guerrillas, the enemy was routed. And on Monday of this week, the enemy was in full retreat. This was not an easy task: the enemy guerrillas were well-entrenched. Through psychological warfare and well-planned guerrilla attacks on the enemy encampments, they were decisively defeated.

However, two vital transportation arteries remained in the western part of the county. Tionesta provided a means of regrouping and escape for the enemy -- the railroad and the bridge across the Allegheny River. By capturing these vital points, the Special Forces could be assured of complete control of the area until arrival of the Regular Army forces from the west.

On Monday, residents read with interest posters that had appeared mysteriously on electric poles and in store windows; a special edition of *The Forest Press* appeared throughout the county proclaiming victory over the enemy Circle Trigon forces.

By Tuesday, many "strange" faces, in non-military attire, appeared along the streets and by-ways. Hopes began to rise that these were the liberation forces. In secret meetings, borough officials and prominent citizens were assured that the time for liberation had arrived. They were asked to break all ties with Circle Trigon personnel and to volunteer their services for guerrilla tactics which would be necessary if the entire operation was to be successful.

Several houses were shuttered against the outside and there was considerable activity in that neighborhood -- there was constant coming and going of unfamiliar faces. Increased traffic appeared as vehicles bearing the despised circle and triangle, and soldiers wearing the red-festled helmet, made appearances in surprising numbers.

For the first time since the invasion, Circle Trigon guards appeared on the bridge and along the railroad. Enemy patrols were sent into the hills in search of the liberating forces.

By 1:30 a.m. Wednesday, October 4, Tionesta was restlessly quiet and the streets were unusually devoid of traffic. Suddenly a loud speaker broke the silence, telling the enemy to lay down their arms as they were surrounded. This was accompanied by rifle

and mortar fire from all directions. Civilian guerrillas crept onto the bridge and disarmed the guards. A blast upstream indicated the railroad had been blown; still another was heard further downstream. Rifle and mortar fire persisted.

Within one-half hour, it was done. The enemy had been forced to surrender. Tionesta and Forest County had been liberated. News flashed across the country; all enemy troops were reported in frenzied retreat.

Throughout the night, there were celebrations in the street. On Wednesday morning, the victorious troops marched into town amid the cheers and tears of its citizens. School children lined the streets, running out to touch their heroes. Bands trumpeted a loud acclaim! After a glorious march to the Court House steps, citations and honors were bestowed on soldiers and citizens alike for their part in this glorious victory.

The game was over. Some 700 members of the Reserves would now return to their homes having completed the required summer training program. These men left their families to spend these grueling days in the cold and rain, living off the land, participating in strenuous maneuvers, and in constant battle with the elements, that they might be better trained to serve you.

Yes, this was a game. But for many of these boys, the next time it will be for keeps -- in Vietnam, or wherever in the world they are called on to fight for their country and the cause of freedom.

The Shadow of Vietnam

Like virtually all Army Reserve Component units, the 11th SFGA was not mobilized for duty in Southeast Asia. Years before, during the reserve mobilizations for the Berlin and Cuban Missile Crises, many mobilized reservists in other units had complained to their Congressmen. Then as now, the military proficiency of reservists was also questioned. Even short tours by reservists in Southeast Asia were discouraged for fear of the domestic political consequences if any "weekend warriors" were killed. In the case of the 11th SFGA, the unit also had a different geographic orientation than Southeast Asia and its basic mission was unconventional warfare, not counterinsurgency operations.

Nonetheless, the 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne) felt the influence of the Vietnam War in certain ways. During the early years of the conflict, when the war was still considered "limited" and the big American buildup had not yet taken place, some reservists actually joined the 11th in the belief that the unit *would* be mobilized (since active Special Forces were already in-country) and they wanted to go with it. That mobilization never took place, of course, but contingency plans were drawn up to use the 11th Group to "back-fill" (free up) elements of the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) stationed in Japan. The plans were never implemented.

As the years passed and American military participation in the war increased, a growing number of new members joined the 11th Group with experience from Southeast Asia. This

experience gradually reflected itself in the unit's training, especially in lessons concerning "booby traps" and small unit operations. Yet the basic mission of the 11th remained unconventional warfare, not counterinsurgency.

As the war became unpopular, various members joined the unit to *avoid* being sent to Southeast Asia. For many, their induction reflected a race of sorts between the recruiting process and the draft board. Prospective members had to score well on the Armed Forces Battery Test and pass a subsequent mental aptitude test to for Special Forces. If they succeeded and their candidacy was approved at higher levels, and they still had not been drafted, they were formally inducted into the 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and henceforth were never required to go to Vietnam. They did, however, spend almost as much time on active duty as did regular draftees. The combination of basic training, military specialty training, airborne school and any other SF-related training (including, perhaps, the SF Qualification course) often exceeded eighteen months or more. This length of time was so long, many new members actually qualified for the educational benefits of the GI Bill. It was not unusual for a new member to enlist as a private and complete his active-duty-for-training as a specialist or even a sergeant.

Roughly two dozen members of the 11th Group volunteered for duty in Vietnam. In doing so, they forfeited their right to any guaranteed civilian reemployment upon their return. Of those who went, approximately a handful were killed. Among them was Specialist Keith Campbell, one of the 11th Group's few fully-trained medics at that time. A former Regular Army soldier, Campbell served with the 11th until late 1966, when he volunteered again for active duty. In January 1967, as a medic with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, where he was in nonstop combat and was killed while saving the life of another soldier. He had been in Vietnam for only 19 days. He received a number of posthumous awards, including the Bronze Star with V Device, Distinguished Service Cross and a South Vietnamese medal.¹

The experience of three members who went to Vietnam is especially noteworthy. In 1966, Henry L. Koren joined the 11th Group after dropping out of the US Military Academy. Although leaving West Point in disgrace was not the best way to begin a military career, Koren joined an A-team and subsequently attended Airborne School, Pathfinder School, Ranger School, and the Special Forces Qualification Course. Among Sergeant Koren's friends at the 11th Group was Specialist Kevin Burke, known widely as "Burke the Clerk." Burke was an unusual individual. Once, while watching medics perform an actual suturing operation, he deliberately cut his own leg and began to suture himself. Horrified by this unique display of initiative, the medics brought Burke to a physician who, equally horrified, nonetheless noted that Burke had done a good job at suturing himself. Koren also knew a platoon leader named First Lieutenant Wolf Detrick Cutter. Cutter was an ROTC graduate who left active duty in 1965. Due to a clash of tactical and leadership styles, the relationship between Sergeant Koren and Lieutenant Cutter was rather strained.

Koren applied for and received a direct commission and went to Vietnam. One day in 1967, now First Lieutenant Koren and his rifle platoon found themselves in a very desperate combat situation. Koren radioed for help. Fortunately, an artillery spotter plane soon arrived and directed fire accordingly, saving the platoon. That airplane was flown by Chief Warrant

¹ Corrected information provided by Keith Campbell's sister, Judy Campbell on June 11, 2008.

Officer Kevin Burke, who had left the 11th to receive a warrant appointment, attended flight school, and went to Vietnam. Sometime after this unexpected reunion, First Lieutenant Koren became an acting company commander. With the completion of his combat tour, he experienced a more unpleasant reunion as he transferred command to now-Captain Wolf Detrick Cutter, who had also gone to Vietnam.

All three men survived the war and continued their military careers. Kevin Burke received a commission and ultimately progressed through the officer ranks in the Indiana National Guard. Wolf Detrick Cutter changed his name to Wolf-Dietric Cutter, stayed in the Regular Army and retired as a full colonel. His assignments included a battalion command with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and brigade command in the 10th Infantry Division (Mountain). After various Special Forces assignments, Henry Koren later became Deputy Commander of the 75th Ranger Infantry Regiment and served in Operation *Just Cause* in Panama. He later became a brigade commander.

The Battle of Grossman Hammock

On a dark night in early December 1974, a young game warden in the Florida everglades conducted his usual motorized patrol along the Grossman Hammock State Park. His route included an obscure radio navigation tower owned by the Federal Aviation Administration. It was usually deserted, but on this particular night it was surrounded by vehicles and a handful of men. Curious, the game warden stopped his car and got out to investigate.

Within moments, the men dived into the underbrush and, according to the game warden, began shooting at him -- *with machine guns!* Flares were thrown. Tear gas was thrown. The terrified warden radioed frantically for help. Were these Cuban exiles undergoing paramilitary training? Were they terrorists preparing to blow up the radio tower? Whoever they were, the game warden aimed his 12-gauge shotgun in their general direction and fired three live bursts into the air. The machine guns ceased.

Soon the beleaguered game warden was reinforced by some twenty-three sheriff's deputies armed with shotguns and the sheriff's helicopter overhead. For thirty tense minutes, the deputies and the mysterious handful of men stalked each other. Neither side fired a shot. Eventually a police lieutenant took out his bullhorn and, after identifying himself and his deputies, demanded to know who his opponents were.

From out of the underbrush, Captain Ron Mongole of Miami's 3rd Battalion, 11th SFGA, identified himself and his four men as Army reservists on a routine training exercise. They had been ordered to "defend" the radio tower and, accustomed to being vastly outnumbered and attacked by helicopters, thought the police were part of the exercise. The reservists had attacked the game warden with blank ammunition.

Both sides subsequently retreated, equally dumbfounded and annoyed. Thus ended the Battle of Grossman Hammock State Park. The incident was widely covered in the newspapers, including the *Miami Herald*. An account by United Press International even appeared in the

respected (although now defunct) *Washington Star*. According to Captain Mongole, it was the *game warden* who fired first. "We fired back and I gave the order to pull back to the tower," said Mongole. "I guess the warden got mad when we fired back at him and he called the Metro Police for help."

Everyone knew, of course, that the situation could have proven very deadly for the unsuspecting reservists. Prior to the exercise, the 11th SFGA had notified the authorities by letter that an exercise was planned for that evening. Somehow the letter either got lost or forgotten. But the authorities did not forget the Battle of Grossman Hammock. Thereafter, all reservist exercises required their prior notification *in person*.

Major Exercises of the Seventies

As in the Nineteen Sixties, the 11th SFGA continued to conduct exercises in America's national forests, albeit less frequently and with less civilian participation. Nonetheless, the exercises were large and complex, especially for a reserve unit in the later Seventies, when defense spending was extremely limited.

One such exercise, Operation *Cabana Strike*, was conducted in June 1977 in north-central Florida's Ocala National Forest. *Cabana Strike* involved the entire 11th SFGA -- from the Group Headquarters, down to the operational detachments -- as well as numerous units from the Army Reserve, the National Guard, the active Air Force, and the active Army. Fort Rucker, Fort Benning and Fort Stewart were all used as staging areas. The area of operations encompassed some 1,000 square miles, most of it jungle and swamp. Daily temperatures rose well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (once as high as 138 degrees), with humidity to match. In addition to tropical insects like mosquitoes, the participants had to contend with rattlesnakes, cottonmouth, coral snakes, scorpions, and alligators.

There was some civilian participation in *Cabana Strike*, although not as much as in years past. Residents served as guides and provided their homes as temporary safehouses. A few joined up as guerrillas. Most of the guerrillas, however, were played by active Army personnel from Fort Benning's 193rd Infantry Brigade and by junior ROTC cadets from local high schools. Civil Affairs personnel played the roles of civilian mayors and minor officials forced to contend with the foreign occupation. Instead of the *Circle Trigon Party*, the enemy troops were simply known as *Aggressors* from a foreign power called the *Aggressor Nation*.

Operation *Cascade Laurel* was held in July 1979 in the Susquehannock State Forest in north-central Pennsylvania. The enemy troops were now called *Opposing Forces*, although the acronym *OPFOR* had not yet been coined. *Cascade Laurel* was smaller than *Cabana Strike*, but still fairly large. Six Pennsylvania counties participated, with an enthusiasm in stark contrast to the generally anti-military attitudes that prevailed nationwide. Local newspapers and radio stations publicized "appeals" from both the guerrillas and the enemy occupiers. Statements by unit leaders and "prisoner confessions" were given front page coverage. Some newspapers even took editorial positions supporting one side or the other.

The general population treated both sides with helpful courtesy. Some civilians were recruited as pro-guerrilla spies, but none were recruited as guerrillas themselves. Instead, A-teams trained reservists from non-SF units and some midshipmen from the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. The energy crisis was especially acute in mid-1979 and was even mentioned in connection with *Cascade Laurel*:

"Army Reserve Special Forces In Area to Stage Mock Battle"

-- *The Potter Enterprise* (July 11th, 1979)

(Coudersport, Pennsylvania) Leading the troops participating in *Cascade Laurel* is Lieutenant Colonel Charles E. Chambers, Commander of the 11th Special Forces Group. According to Lieutenant Colonel Chambers, *Cascade Laurel* is similar to operations held annually by US Army Reserve Special Forces. Since 1973, three exercises have been conducted in Pennsylvania, including one in the Allegheny National Forest in 1976.

Chambers emphasized that there would be no interference with traffic or tourists in more populated areas. Fuel for the exercise is from Army stocks at Fort Indiantown Gap near Harrisburg, and civilian allocations for the six-county area will not be affected.

Training in the Eighties

With the advent of the Nineteen Eighties, the US Army placed an increasing emphasis upon its Reserve Components and the concept of the "Total Army" ceased to be a mere slogan. The 11th SFGA experienced this change with the assignment of an actual wartime mission, with specific targets, to be accomplished in Europe if a conflict ever erupted between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. With this assignment came a more focused training agenda. The US Army's European Command (EUCOM) and Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) required the 11th to determine what training and skills were necessary to accomplish its missions per target. EUCOM and TRADOC then expected the 11th to prepare its A-teams accordingly. Cold weather operations were emphasized and, in 1982, elements of the 2nd Battalion were sent to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. Many personnel had not received cold weather training in ten years. This was permanently remedied as Fort McCoy and other "winter wonderlands" became familiar places for unit training throughout the Eighties.

Exercise *Golden Glacier* involved the 1st and 3rd Battalions in two weeks of winter warfare training in early March 1985. In their quest for arctic conditions at New York's Fort Drum and Vermont's Camp Ethan Allen, the units were not disappointed. Evening temperatures dropped to minus-seventeen degrees Fahrenheit. The weather changed from mild and sunny, to rain, then freezing rain, followed by heavy wet snow, culminating in sleet. Some areas received six hours or more of freezing rain, followed by eighteen inches of heavy wet snow. Not only did the snow pose a barrier itself, but it also concealed forest brush, stumps, small streams, and manmade obstacles. Mobility was almost halted. At one point, the water storage trailers ("waterbuffalos") broke down and the cooks had to cut holes in Lake Meachem to draw water. The A-teams slept in frigid two-man tents.

Yet the participants persevered. They practiced cross-country skiing and learned to build survival shelters, snow caves, and lean-to windbreaks. They learned downhill skiing and how to transport equipment on an *ahkio* (a sled pulled by two men, anchored by a third behind). They learned that, with good physical conditioning, suitable equipment and proper training, soldiers can become adequately proficient in winter warfare within a few hours. More importantly, they learned how to turn arctic conditions to their advantage. They used snow to *enhance* their speed and exploited the vulnerability that snow places upon conventional units. Once minor roads become impassable, conventional units are forced to rely upon a mere handful of cleared main routes.

By the end of *Golden Glacier*, the participants had learned to appreciate relative degrees of frigid cold. One participant noted, "Some people recommend bringing a candle into the two-man mountain tent, but it causes the tent to sweat and freeze up. The best idea, if you don't have a stove, is to do without it." Other cold weather lessons became increasingly ingrained as the 11th SFGA conducted arctic exercises on an annual basis.

The weekend drills also became more intensive and received some very senior-level interest. The following article appeared in the Fall 1987 edition of *The Beret*, the 11th SFGA's quarterly newsletter:

"2nd Battalion Mobilization Training"

In spite of *glasnost*, the Bad Guys are continuing to improve their combat readiness and, for all their openness, seem as anxious as ever to use military force as a primary tool of their foreign policy. With this threat in mind, the task of mobilizing a Special Forces battalion is always a very high priority -- perhaps the most important task we have. *Can a Reserve Special Forces battalion deploy from four widely dispersed locations and conduct an airborne assault within fourteen hours of the initial assembly of personnel?* That was the task which 2nd Battalion, 11th SFGA, attempted during its October drill.

Operation *Cold Harbor* was primarily a mobilization exercise to test the ability of the unit to assemble its personnel and then plan and conduct a simulated combat mission: *Secure an airfield for use by a follow-on friendly airmobile force.* The operation was conducted at unit home stations, at departure airfields, and at Fort AP Hill, Virginia on 23-25 October 1987. The conventional nature of the mission was for simplicity only, since the main training objective was battalion mobilization.

Unit assembly occurred at 1900 hours on 23 October at each company's home station. Orders, equipment, and weapons were issued according to unit SOPs. Jumpmaster briefings and mission rehearsals were conducted to ensure that sub-units and personnel understood what was required of them. Following successful rehearsals to standard, the soldiers were given a brief rest period. By 0400 hours, 2nd Battalion was enroute to the airhead from three departure airfields: Youngstown, Wright-Patterson, and Andrews Air Force Bases.

Company B dropped in first at Fort AP Hill on 24 October at 0725 hours, followed by HHD, Company A and Company C. Company B, fleshed out by the follow-on units, secured the most likely avenues of approach to the airfield and other key terrain on the airhead. Command Sergeant Major Julian Gates, the Sergeant Major of the Army, was on the Drop Zone observing the operation and was pleased by how well it was conducted *except for those who landed in the trees*, which CSM Gates explained as "operator error." The mission ended at 1015 hours.

After the airborne insertion, the battalion conducted individual weapons qualification and live-fire exercises with mortars and light antitank weapons. Once completed, the various elements parachuted into drop zones at their respective home stations. In all, eleven separate aircraft missions were conducted by the battalion within a 36-hour period, including four separate airborne operations involving 250 paratroopers jumping from C-130 and C-141 aircraft. All this, within *one weekend drill*.

Foreign Training

Much of the foreign training conducted by the 11th SFGA, either in foreign countries or in the United States with foreign counterparts, remains classified. It can be revealed, however, that the 11th Group has conducted joint training with counterpart elements from throughout Western Europe and North America. The following excerpts from the Fall-Winter 1990-91 edition of *The Beret* provide a sample. They describe an exercise with reserve elements of the British Special Air Service (SAS). Among American Special Forces personnel, the British SAS enjoys the distinction of being considered an equal, if not superior, in professional quality and elan. As these excerpts show, this admiration is mutual:

The SAS exchange was a resurrected version of a program that was ongoing during the late 1970s through the mid-1980s...Due in large measure to the efforts of Lieutenant Colonel Earl C. Howell, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 11th SFGA, this small unit exchange program is once again alive and in-place, with its worth being demonstrated by the enthusiasm of the soldiers.

"The purpose of the SAS exchange is to facilitate an exchange of ideas, tactics, viewpoints, and training methodology that will facilitate a more dynamic training environment for all of the soldiers involved in the effort," cited LTC Howell. (He) made it very clear that the selection of the American personnel in his command for this training opportunity would be very tough. "Therefore, physical conditioning, mental toughness, and dedication to a common goal should be paramount in every man's mind. There should not be one instance of an individual not being ready due to the lack of any of these characteristics."

The exchange was a two-part exercise, with training being conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom simultaneously. (The American-based portion) was *Honey Gift*. It was conducted in the Miami/Ocala National Forest and the Orlando area.

The exercise conducted by the SAS for the 11th SFGA soldiers was called *Pirate Bell* and was located in the London, Bramley, and Stanford areas.

High energy and professional pride was evident from our counterparts from England. This spirit permeated the entire FTX for both (organizations). A medical specialist from the SAS expressed it best: "This type of training with the Yanks just couldn't be better. It's tough, realistic, and very useful. If we work together in a real-world scenario, it will be as a team because of this training."

(Training for oceanside operations) was conducted by the USAF Air-Sea Survival Facility at Homestead Air Force Base, Florida...(Later training included rappelling, a parachute jump, tactical) house-clearing operations, entries, an obstacle course, and immediate action drills along "jungle lanes." The live fire portion included day and night ambushes.

In his farewell address to the 11th SFGA soldiers, the SAS Regimental Commander summed up his feelings by saying, "All of us from England were made to feel at home here in every aspect of the training."

PUBLICATIONS OF THE 11TH GROUP

The first publications produced by the 11th SFGA began to appear in the Nineteen Seventies. This was before "desktop publishing" existed, when each publication had to be typed on a manual typewriter (with its characteristic lettering) and then mass-produced on a simple printing press. Later on, the publications became more sophisticated and glossy -- and popular. By the late Eighties, it was not unusual for a publication by the 11th Group to have a worldwide audience, encompassing active and retired Special Forces personnel, intelligence experts, senior military officers, and thousands of rank-and-file soldiers without any connection to Special Forces, but who relied upon a publication from the 11th Group for the valuable information it contained. The following are samples:

The 11th Special Forces Group News

The Group Headquarters produced a few editions of *The 11th Special Forces Group News*. This newsletter, which had some photographs, was originally printed on poster-size paper and folded into regular-size pages. The reader had to unfold the newsletter to read the entire text. In later editions, the pages were separated, but there were no staples to hold them together. The newsletter mostly contained drill-related information and advice for aspiring NCOs. It did, however, touch upon some less serious subjects. This excerpt was published in September 1974:

AT-74...did provide a number of social functions. Each morning the officers and men engaged in a game of volley ball. The efforts of the officers seemed futile, as each morning the enlisted personnel thrashed the officers without pity. Even with additional training, the officers "just could not get it together."

There were two social functions for the officers during summer training: an Officers Call and a dinner party. The Officers' Call initially went slow, but as the day wore on and Go-Go dancers appeared, things began to develop. The dinner party held at the Fort Meade Officers Club proved to be an enjoyable and educating evening. Early in the evening, the officers watched a drill and ceremony demonstration by the "Green Beret Drill Team," a local youth group. The officers were fortunate enough to have Major General Samuel Wilson as the guest speaker for the evening.

As for the troops, they had a unit-sponsored party on 13 June, when the steak and beer was free. It turned out to be a typical SF party. The TET team also provided, most evenings, beer and movies for the men during AT-74.

The Seventies also witnessed greater opportunities for women in Army. The *News* reflected this change in its own way:

"Dina Has Made It!"

Dina Laue, who completed Jump School earlier this year (1974), has completed Rigger School this summer. She is not only a credit to herself, but to the 11th as well.

Dina, who has been a member of the Army Reserve for the past two years, joined the 11th during January this year and has really gone far. In March, she went to Fort Benning in borrowed fatigues and the SF patch on her shoulder -- times are changing. Dina became the first female Army Reservist to complete Airborne School at Fort Benning; she also became the first female reserve parachute rigger. For Dina's efforts and being the first there, she was awarded the Army Commendation Medal while at Rigger School.

All of us within the 11th extend our congratulations for a job well done and a "thank you" for bringing credit to the 11th Special Forces.

The Apex

One of the most interesting publications of the Seventies was *The Apex*. Started in 1971 by B Company, 1st Battalion, this newsletter contained training schedules, military-related articles from newspapers, cartoons, and an occasional sexy photograph. One photo showed a scantily-dressed Rachel Welch with a caption that advised unit members to maintain their physical fitness and a healthy weight since she obviously did. The entire publication was compiled, edited, and produced by Sergeant First Class James Santos. This is how he described *The Apex* in 1973:

"I usually print up about four or five pages by first starting off making zinc plates and then finally running them off on my multilith press. This is an internal-type newsletter and is solely used for our own personnel, which number about eighty-five."

Santos produced *The Apex* on his own time and at his own expense. Nonetheless, questions were eventually raised as to whether this small newsletter constituted an "official" publication. The formal term was *official indicia*. Although the matter may seem trivial, the controversy actually reached First Army Headquarters, the then-parent unit of the 11th SFGA. First Army "resolved" the matter with a memo that contained various "clear-as-mud" statements like this:

"The use of the official indicia to distribute The Apex is governed by paragraph 5a(7), AR 340-3 and paragraph 2-19, AR 360-81. Basically, the requirements involve unsolicited requests from recipients of the publication and such requests must be renewed annually, as well as retained on file for the duration of distribution period to prospective addressees."

Right. Despite this and other publishing problems, *The Apex* remained in print until September 1975. In his last edition, Santos explained that he could no longer afford to produce

it. According to his own calculations, its ninety-one issues since 1971 had consumed a total of 2,184 hours of his time (equivalent to 273 days) and \$ 3,675 of his own money.

Ranger Ryan

How do you erect a slant wire antenna in the field? How do you conceal that antenna in the midst of several well-watched buildings? How do you operate a PRC-70 radio, not to be confused with the older PRC-77 radio? What frequency range does the PRC-70 encompass? How long does a BB-542/U battery last on average? How do you encrypt and decipher radio messages in the field?

Questions like these represent the heart and soul of Special Forces communications. Without communications (or "commo" in semi-official slang), an A-team operates in a deadly void. Yet there was a time when finding an answer to these and similar questions forced an SF commo sergeant to wade through a daunting mountain of field manuals, technical journals, and school notes to find a kernel of wisdom. The situation was so frustrating that then-Staff Sergeant First Class Michael R. Ryan finally put an end to it in 1984.

A member of the 11th Group's 2nd Battalion, "Ranger Ryan" earned his nickname after attending US Army Ranger School, only to graduate *without* the coveted tab because he failed to accumulate enough points. He later joked about the experience and with good reason, because he later earned a Special Forces tab and an honored place in the Special Forces communications community. After collecting the most important pieces of SF commo wisdom into a short handy booklet, he published it as "Ranger Ryan's Concise Guide to Special Forces Electronic Communications." Its introduction read:

This manual is not meant to turn you into a fully qualified 18E40; only years of hard study and practical experience by a human possessed of high intellect, phenomenal patience, and true grit can forge a real commo man. But, armed with this text, the individual should be able to initiate, secure, and sustain basic electronic communications between his detachment and the Base Station.

I make few pretensions toward literary originality; I pimped, plagiarized and purloined with my usual vulgar gusto, and I acknowledge the many sources plundered and utilized. My sins will weigh a bit less oppressive if I see this assembled knowledge progressively applied by my compatriots.

By 1990, Ranger Ryan's guide was in its fourth edition and it remains in great demand in both active and reserve Special Forces groups around the world. Copies have even been distributed to communications students at the US Army Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg, although the booklet remains only semi-official. Ranger Ryan himself, now a Master Sergeant, has become a living legend of sorts. Frequently recognized whenever and wherever he travels on Special Forces business, he even has a mini-fan club. In exchange for five dollars (cash), he will provide an eight-by-ten inch glossy photograph of himself in uniform holding a Soviet-made

AK-47 assault rifle and displaying a Patton-like "war face." For seven dollars (cash), he will autograph it with this inscription:

To _____:

From one real man to another. 'Love and kisses...

-- Ranger Ryan

The Beret

First published in the spring of 1985, *The Beret* remains a quarterly publication of the Group S-5 Section (Civil-Military Affairs). In many respects, it is a successor to the *11th Special Forces Group News* of the early Seventies. Unlike the *News*, however, *The Beret* has a much more professional appearance with the introduction of desk-top publishing. It contains bulletins and announcements, advice to unit members concerning their professional development, reviews of past training and exercises, and other matters of interest to the Group at large. On occasion, however, *The Beret* will print something rather unique and different. The following piece appeared in the Spring 1987 edition. It was submitted by then-First Lieutenant Chuck Cosenza from C Company, 1st Battalion:

"The Creator"

The Lord spoke forth unto the Heavens and said, "*Let there be Airborne.*"
And the Earth did tremble and quake. And the Waters did reach up. And the Clouds did part.
And there came forth, a multitude of Paratroopers that filled the Sky.
God looked down and saw that this was good -- and they were *good*.
They were Airborne.

And God then spoke forth unto the Land and said, "*Let there be Rangers.*"
And, all at once, the Day turned to darkness. And the Winds did howl. Mountains crumbled into the Sea, and the Great Rocks did part.
And there came forth, a horde of methistopheles disciples wearing Ranger tabs and carrying all sorts of deadly weapons.
God looked down and saw that this was bad -- and they were *bad*.
They were Rangers.

And God spoke forth thrice -- unto the Sky, the Earth, and the Sea -- and said, "*Let there be Special Forces.*"
Lightning did flash. And Thunder echoed across the Sky. Mountains spewed molten rock and rained ripe upon the Land. Tidal waves surged against the shore.
Despair, disorder and turmoil did prevail.
Forthwith, there did appear a Band of Twelve Extraordinary Men...

A Few came from beneath the Waves;
Others jumped from the Sky;
And More still silently stalked from the dense forests.
Each One was in Camouflage Battle Dress, wearing a Randall Knife; a Star Sapphire
Ring; a Rolex Watch; and a Green Beret.
Working together, They brought Peace unto the Land.
God looked down and saw that this was amazing -- and they were *amazing*.
They were Special Forces.

Beside Himself, God now spoke forth again and commanded, "*Let all Ye that be Weak in
Mind and Body -- Arise and Go Forth.*"
And lo, from the Abyss, They crawled forward with Indecision and Limped meekly upon
the Earth.
God looked down and shook His head,
For this was pathetic -- and they were *pathetic*.
They were Legs.

The Readings

Among the variety of publications produced by the 11th Group, *The Readings* is truly unique. It usually contains very little if any information about the 11th SFGA itself. Instead, it presents a monthly collection of articles and essays drawn from various newspapers and magazines concerning current events of interest. During the Eighties, it frequently examined the threat of Soviet Special Purpose (SPETSNAZ) forces and the subject of low intensity conflict. By the late Eighties, its focus had shifted to the progress of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union. By the early Nineties, the publication had given substantial attention to the use of Special Forces in Operations *Just Cause*, *Desert Shield*, *Desert Storm*, and *Provide Comfort*. In recent months, it has given ongoing attention to the turmoil in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, to American military efforts in Somalia, and to the downsizing of the US Armed Forces after the Cold War. It has also examined the controversial issues of homosexuals in the military and to whether women should serve in combat roles.

The variety of subjects addressed by *The Readings* has made it a popular publication among major American military commands around the world. The publication has thus given exposure to the 11th SFGA in places and organizations that, otherwise, might have very little contact with the unit. Perhaps more importantly, every edition routinely reminds these organizations that Army Reservists *do* exist in the Army's force structure and that they have an important role to play. This fact is often forgotten. Fortunately, a little bit of advertising can go a long way.

The Field Order of Battle Handbook

In early August 1990, Iraqi troops invaded the tiny Emirate of Kuwait and threatened to press on into Saudi Arabia. To prevent this possibility, and to ultimately expel the Iraqis from

Kuwait, hundreds of thousands of soldiers from nearly thirty nations deployed to the Saudi Kingdom. And they waited. For almost six months, the largely American troops of Operation *Desert Shield* were forced to wait and wonder about what kind of enemy they faced across the border.

Two booklets were circulated to provide some answers. The first was *How They Fight: The Desert Shield Order of Battle Handbook*, published in September 1990. The second booklet was a more concise updated version of the first, entitled, *Identifying the Iraqi Threat and How They Fight*, published in December. The two booklets described Iraqi tactics and Iraqi unit structures; displayed pictures of the Soviet-made weapons, vehicles, and aircraft in the Iraqi inventory; displayed Iraqi rank insignia for officers and enlisted; explained first-aid procedures for heat injuries, bites from poisonous snakes and scorpions, and chemical warfare casualties; and provided phonetic pronunciations of common Arab words and phrases.

These two booklets were officially published by the US Army Intelligence Agency, with assistance from the US Defense Intelligence Agency and the private Jane's Defense Group. All were noted accordingly. What countless readers of these booklets were not told is that the basic idea behind the booklets, as well as preliminary work on them, actually came from an obscure Army Reserve unit that was never mobilized for *Desert Shield* or *Desert Storm*. That unit was the 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

In 1985, the Group S-2 Section (Intelligence and Security) produced a handbook on the Soviet Armed Forces for use by the Group's A-teams. Like the concise communications guide of Ranger Ryan, the *Field Order of Battle Handbook* compiled important pieces of information from a variety of sources into a portable reference guide. Like Ranger Ryan's commo guide, it was produced internally because no one in the entire United States Army had addressed the problem or seemed likely to anytime soon. In addition to Soviet tactics, unit structures, and equipment recognition data, as well as extensive first-aid data, the handbook provided elaborate lists of phonetic Russian, German, and Spanish words and phrases. It described basic survival techniques and in-field food preparation. It described basic insurgency doctrine, small unit tactics, targets for guerrillas, basic interrogation techniques, and a wide variety of other Special Forces-related subjects.

Like Ranger Ryan's commo guide, the *Field Order of Battle Handbook* became a military sensation. Hundreds of requests for copies poured in from military intelligence entities around the world, from field units and staff units, Army units and Marine units, the Regular Component and the Reserve Components. Requests have even come from the elite British Special Air Service (SAS). Copies have since been distributed to students by the US Army Intelligence School. Yet the requests for copies continue to arrive at the Group S-2 Section. With the abundance of Soviet-made equipment in the world, not even the collapse of the Soviet Union has stemmed this tide of requests.

In mid-1990, after Kuwait was invaded and *Desert Shield* was in its early stages, the Group S-2 Section contacted Army Intelligence and asked whether a similar handbook oriented toward Iraqi forces would be helpful. The answer was an enthusiastic yes and preliminary work began. When the booklet was ultimately published by the Army Intelligence Agency in

September, however, no credit was given to the 11th Group. Nor was any credit given in the December version. Special Forces are accustomed to secrecy, but this was ridiculous.

Ironically, the 11th SFGA was thanked by those American intelligence personnel who brought copies of the *Soviet*-oriented handbook to the Gulf. The equipment recognition data was largely identical and, although the Iraqi-oriented booklets had some unique data, the Soviet handbook addressed a much wider variety of subjects with relevance to any conflict. The Group S-2 Section would have preferred some wider appreciation, but the gratitude shown by these few veterans was tremendously valuable and, in some respects, perhaps more meaningful.

HONORABLE MENTION

Anyone who has ever served honorably in the 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne) deserves to be mentioned here. Leaders who look after their people with the love of a father. Veterans who wear hard-earned patches on their right shoulder, and yet treat their fellow non-veteran members with decency and respect. Privates, specialists, and corporals whose monthly commutes may involve tremendous distances, sometimes in excess of one hundred miles in each direction, and yet receive meager paychecks that barely cover their expenses. All these reservists deserve honorable mention, but the limitations of space preclude their names.

Many members have undergone and completed the most demanding military training available in the United States, if not in the world. They have served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf. They have received every award, decoration, and medal their nation can bestow. Some have died in the service of their country. From drug-interdiction efforts in Latin America to humanitarian relief efforts in Iraq and elsewhere, to assignments throughout the former Soviet Union, members of the 11th Group have been involved. All these people deserve honorable mention.

Some names must remain secret; members who, in their civilian capacities, have either served or continue to serve in extremely sensitive positions of authority and trust. Their employers include Presidential administrations, the Congress, the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department, the Justice Department, and the most sensitive agencies of the Department of Defense. The 11th Special Forces Group is probably the most well-represented Army Reserve unit in the highest levels of government.

Some members have made history without any secrecy. The Honorable Martin Hoffman, Secretary of the Army in the mid-Seventies, was once Operations Officer of the 316th Special Forces Detachment. Colonel Kenneth Bergquist, the current Group Commander and a former Assistant Secretary of the Army for Readiness was, in 1987, recommended to become the first Assistant Secretary of Defense for Low Intensity Conflict. The Honorable Timothy Connolly, currently the Principle Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, served in several positions in the 11th Group. Lesser known members have also made history. In 1963, Master Sergeant Arthur C. Gunther, Jr., and Specialist-Four Harold B. Robinson became the first Special Forces personnel *and the only reservists* to stand watch at President John F. Kennedy's State Funeral. In 1973, Second Lieutenant Ross Crossland became the top graduate of his Reserve Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning. He captured every trophy available and was featured in *Army Reserve Magazine*. In 1974, Specialist Dina Daue became the first female reservist to complete Airborne School and Rigger School. In 1983, Sergeant First Class Bobby Parker became the first reservist to join the Army's elite Golden Knights Parachute Demonstration Team. In a unit as diverse as the 11th Group, there are obviously other history-making members who deserve mention. Their omission here is not for lack of worthiness.

Yet there is someone whose name and story occupy a special place in the history of the 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne). In 1971, on an obscure hill in Southeast Asia, this future member of the 11th performed acts of heroism that earned him the nation's highest award: the

Congressional Medal of Honor. The military historian, Shelby Stanton, briefly related this member's story in his book, *Green Berets at War*:

The "Task Force 1 Advisory Element" was forced from the Hickory Hill radio relay site in early June 1971. The Hickory post had existed on strategic "Hill 953" in northwest Quang Tri Province at the edge of the Demilitarized Zone since June 1968. On 3 June 1971, heavy North Vietnamese artillery began battering the bunkered Hickory defenses. On 4 June, five wounded Special Forces and ten indigenous commandos were medically evacuated, leaving Staff Sergeant Jon R. Cavaiani and Sergeant John R. Jones with twenty-three commandos defending the mountaintop. An NVA (North Vietnamese Army) battalion stormed the summit and captured Hickory Hill on 5 June 1971. Cavaiani led a spirited defense but was captured as the last positions fell, while Jones was declared missing in action.

Jon R. Cavaiani remained a prisoner of the North Vietnamese for twenty-two months, until his release in April 1973. He served as the full-time Operations Sergeant of the 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne) from 1984 to 1985.

A Farm Boy enters the Army

Jon Cavaiani was born in England, moved to America as an infant with his parents, and grew up in Ballico, California. He worked with his step-father on the family farm until college, when he earned a bachelor's degree in pomology, the science of fruit trees. Then, at age 26, he enlisted in the Army.

"Joining the Army was something I always wanted to do," he later recalled. His entrance scores were so high that every military specialty was open to him. "I said 'Infantry' and they thought I was crazy." Most people would have; the Vietnam War was raging harder than ever at that time, and it was increasingly unpopular. The question of a military specialty was left open until Cavaiani finished basic training and Airborne School. At that time, Cavaiani repeated his desire to become an infantryman.

"We have enough infantry soldiers," a colonel told him. "By your GT scores, we think you should become a medic."

"I don't want to be no medic."

But the colonel revealed that a medic slot was available with the famed 82nd Airborne Division. Cavaiani's initial refusal turned into an active interest...

"Aw, I'd love to become a medic!"

After completing his medical training, Cavaiani attended the Special Forces' heavy and light weapons course. In late 1969, he began his combat tour in the Republic of Vietnam. Upon

his arrival, a personnel specialist reviewed his records. It took only two questions to establish his first assignment:

"Special Forces medic?"

"Yep," Cavaiani replied.

"Farm boy, right?"

"Yep."

"Well," the personnel specialist announced, "you're now the agricultural advisor for Military Region I, slash veterinarian."

The Farm Boy in Vietnam

Military Region I was the operational area of the US Army First Corps ("I Corps"), located on the southern side of the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Vietnam. As ordered, Cavaiani became the region's agricultural advisor/veterinarian. In his own words:

"We had pig projects and chicken projects. We taught them how to raise more rice on an acre and how to use fertilizers. I didn't know a damn thing about chickens or pigs or cattle. I mean NOTHING. But I learned out of manuals and didn't have any major catastrophes.

"I used to go into the villages to treat their water buffalo and then turn right around and treat their children. I was naive as far as the war went. I just didn't see much of it. Oh, once in a while I would get a message like, 'Help! My pig's got holes in it!' So I would go out and dig out the shrapnel, do a little minor surgery, and put the pig back together.

"I delivered children. I even started an orphanage while I was a veterinarian -- which was ultimately the reason why I ended up getting out of the agricultural advisory business."

To the Vietnamese, Cavaiani became known as *Bocsi Jon* -- *bocsi* meaning "medic." Cavaiani learned that an orphanage was needed near the village of Nong Son, in an area where the Communists (nicknamed "Charlie") were active. Since Cavaiani himself had travelled in that area quite frequently, he started one.

"I had Bodi monks and nuns run my orphanage. And I had thirty orphans being cared for until Charlie came in and killed all my kids and all the monks except one, who they left alive with a warning: 'Bocsi Jon -- Stay Out of Our Area!'"

"Like I said, I was relatively naive about the war."

A Prolonged Second Tour

After the orphanage incident, Cavaiani spent a year attached to a reconnaissance unit. After that, he was assigned to a radio relay site at a place called Hickory Hill. Jointly operated by a platoon of Americans and South Vietnamese, the site was located near the village of Dong Tri, overlooking Kagsahn Airfield.

On June 4th, 1971, North Vietnamese troops attacked this remote outpost with an intensive barrage of rifle fire, automatic weapons, rocket-propelled grenades, and mortar rounds. The site's casualties were heavy. Staff Sergeant Cavaiani took command. Disregarding his own safety, he repeatedly exposed himself to incoming fire as he moved about the beleaguered perimeter, directing his platoon's fire and rallying his men.

The North Vietnamese stormed the site, but Cavaiani and his men managed to hold them off with a variety of weapons. Nonetheless, the situation was deteriorating. Helicopters were called in to evacuate the platoon. Despite the enemy fire, Cavaiani managed to direct three of the helicopters into the perimeter, where they collected most of the platoon. As the remainder of his men struggled to improve their battered defenses, Cavaiani remained behind as well and calmly helped them do so.

The morning of June 5th began with a heavy fog -- an advantage the North Vietnamese quickly exploited. Advancing in two ranks, over eight hundred North Vietnamese troops advanced upon the site. The first oncoming rank fired rifles, machine guns, and rocket-propelled grenades. The second rank threw a steady barrage of hand grenades at the tiny American and South Vietnamese force. Cavaiani and his men returned fire and threw their own grenades, but to little effect. This time, the North Vietnamese were determined to win.

With the site's defenses nearing collapse, Cavaiani ordered his men to flee while he provided cover fire. They fled. With one last courageous stand, Cavaiani stood up with a machine gun and -- completely exposing himself to the incoming fire -- sprayed the two enemy ranks closing in on him.

He survived -- and managed to escape.

"I was shot up and burnt pretty badly. I had steel in my face from shrapnel, was shot in the back, had burns on my face and hands, and shrapnel in the legs."

Despite his wounds, Cavaiani trekked some forty-two kilometers to another American camp named Fuller. "I was crazy," he later explained, "and just didn't want to get caught." It was dark by the time he arrived. To keep from being shot by his own people, he waited outside the camp until past dawn, until about 0800 hours -- "After everyone should have been awake..."

Someone was, but not an American. As Cavaiani started to move, an elderly Vietcong guerrilla promptly captured him. Years later, Cavaiani would laugh about the incident:

"I got captured by a guy about 80 years old! 'With a Russian bolt action rifle about as equally old! He was as scared as I was! But he had the weapon."

The Journey into Prison

Cavaiani was dragged back to Hickory Hill and tied up. Only his face and hands were given medical attention; nothing else. "They would only treat those parts of my body that you could see. This was in case we were spotted by a plane and photographed." Thus, the Communists could claim that their prisoner had been "treated."

Cavaiani was taken to an NVA camp whose commander had just lost his son in the attack upon Cavaiani's outpost. The commander wanted revenge -- and his men had to literally tie him to a tree to keep the distraught commander from extracting it from Cavaiani himself. Cavaiani was quickly moved out. After passing through a series of other NVA camps, he was brought to one just south of the Benhai River, still inside South Vietnam. This camp had an interrogator, one whom Cavaiani would later recall with a touch of dry humor:

"This guy was not a very good interrogator. (He) had three Montagnards (mountain people) executed because I wouldn't talk. The interrogator shot them, each in the head, right in front of me.

"He then proceeded to work on me -- and did a pretty good job. He busted my ribs on my left hand side. And when they cut me down, they fractured three vertebrae in my upper back and three in my lower back. I didn't come to for a couple of days after they busted my ribs."

Cavaiani was moved to still more NVA camps, until a North Vietnamese political officer finally took charge of him. The political officer made him wear a US Air Force flight suit and helmet, making him look like a downed American pilot. The officer and some guards then took Cavaiani into a South Vietnamese village which had been bombed only days before. The political officer announced to everyone that this captured "pilot" had bombed their village and that they should extract their revenge accordingly. The infuriated villagers prepared to do just that. Unbeknownst to the political officer, however, Cavaiani had delivered four babies at that very same village sometime before. After the officer removed his helmet, revealing Cavaiani's face, an old woman stepped forward to get a better look at this "pilot" they were about to beat up...

"Well, this little 'old grandma got right up in my face and, all of the sudden, she let out with 'Bocsi Jon! Bocsi Jon!' She, of course, had recognized me.

"Well, it caused the political officer to lose face. (He and his men then) got the hell 'out of there because, by now, the villagers were not beating on me -- they were beating on the North Vietnamese soldiers and this political officer! The Vietnamese people don't believe in lying.

"So they took me to another village and this time they were going to be smart -- they were going to leave the helmet on so I wouldn't be recognized. Well, they had all the villagers out with their canes..."

"But, unfortunately for my captors, a runner from the first village had run ahead and told these villagers the truth! So, just about the time this political officer was about to start this political thing, THESE villagers started to beat him and his men! So we had to race out of that village too!"

Interrogation by Torture

Cavaiani was eventually moved by train to Hanoi, to a place called "Plantation Gardens." ("They always had nice names for crappy places.") Eventually, his captors learned that he was allergic to certain bugs, which they used upon him when their usual methods of interrogation failed.

"Beating did nothing because I had already ended a couple of interrogations at other small camps this way. I would piss them off, just so they would knock me out. And, if they knocked me out, I won. I had traded time for a little bit of pain."

Unfortunately, the pain got much worse in Hanoi. There, at a special center nicknamed "The Zoo," Cavaiani was tortured by the chief interrogator of Hanoi, an Oxford-educated man whom the prisoners called "Dumbo."

"A very, very good interrogator. I ended up getting worked over real bad there. They hooked a wire to my ear and put a nail down my privates and then generated electricity. 'Screws you up real bad.'"

Camp Regulations and Survival

Cavaiani was returned to "The Plantation," where about one hundred other prisoners were held. Most of his time was spent in isolation for breaking camp regulations. *Do not communicate. Do not make obscene gestures at the guards. Do not look out the door peep-holes. Do not fight. Show respect towards the guards. Sleep during sleeping hours. Listen to the camp radio.* The regulations were endless.

A typical day began with wakeup at 0700 hours. Breakfast ("half a loaf of French bread and what they called tea -- which was water they had waved a tea bag over...") was provided at 0830. Prisoner uniforms were then folded up, in a specified way. At 1030 hours, lunch (composed of whatever vegetable was in season, along with a tiny piece of fat and some more French bread) was eaten. Dinner (with the same menu as lunch) was provided at 1530. Whatever vegetable was in season was the only vegetable ever served until that season passed.

Conditions improved somewhat after the American rescue attempt at the Son Tay Prison Camp in November 1970. Although no American prisoners were freed at Son Tay, the operation scared the North Vietnamese leadership. Hanoi centralized its control over all prisoners in North Vietnam and thus curbed the abuses of local political officers. Cavaiani noticed a marked decline in beatings. The North Vietnamese also played movies for the prisoners, about once or twice a month. Most were Soviet-made films with an anti-American message.

For their supposed "enjoyment," all the prisoners were required to listen to Communist propaganda on the camp radio. This propaganda consisted of news from the United States and elsewhere, distorted into half-truths or presented out of context. "(This) was difficult to listen to," he recalled. Therefore, to pass the time, the prisoners improvised their own entertainment:

"(At) night, we would 'tell' movies. After dinner you would get up and say, 'Tonight's movie is...' and then tell the director, the cast, and anything else you could recall, but mainly just about the movie. We also would occasionally be given decks of cards. We used to cut the decks in half in order to make the deck last twice as long.

"We celebrated every holiday, ours and theirs. We were given pork and a bottle of beer. We celebrated every holiday but one -- Thanksgiving. They said we had nothing to be thankful for. And you know what? They were right!"

The Approach of Freedom

Despite the strict rules, Cavaiani became the secret chief of communications for the prisoners throughout the camp. This duty became especially difficult after Cavaiani and his comrades were moved to the infamous "Hanoi Hilton."

"We were there about two weeks when I overheard one of the guards and a cook talking about the peace talks in Paris -- that the papers were signed, that the war was over, and that soon we would be going home!

"The Vietnamese didn't know that I spoke their language, so they didn't suspect that I knew this information. Unfortunately, I had been in so much previous trouble that a North Vietnamese general had promised that, the next time I broke a camp regulation, I would be executed. Even so, I thought: 'This has got to go out anyway...'

"So my job was to get communications around the camp that the war was over -- without people reading a message and then starting to yell and scream with me standing right outside their window!"

Cavaiani and the other prisoners remained at the "Hanoi Hilton" until April 23rd, 1973. Finally, twenty-two months after his capture, his freedom was at hand:

"We all wanted to be released, but we wanted to come out with our heads held high. This is something which all of us felt -- not just a few.

"I can remember when they took me out to the airplane at the Hanoi Airport. We walked up and saluted the Vietnamese general, who then turned you over to a colonel in the US Air Force. They called out your name and, thump, the American would check your name off.

"I started walking out to the airplane and...aw, man, I was trying to walk upright and really proud. And this American captain grabbed me by the arm and said, 'You're all right now, Sarge. I've got you.'

"My knees just turned to rubber. Seeing that big C-141 landing with the American flag on the tail -- there's nothing like it!

"I came back with a hell of a lot deeper pride in America."

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