

Christmas Memory, Vietnam, 1966 by Pat Simpson

I was assigned as Commander of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 12 Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) on 26 Dec 66. I joined the company on Christmas Eve. They were securing an Engineer unit, located at a rock quarry SW of Pleiku in the Central Highlands of II Corps, South Vietnam.

In the late afternoon of Christmas Eve the Company 1st Sergeant arrived on a helicopter and had a big box addressed to Captain Simpson. It was a three-foot Christmas Tree sent by my sister, Alexis, from Cottage Grove, OR. There was, also, a package of cookies, candy and baked goods that were immediately shared with all of the troops. The Engineer outfit had a mess hall set up in a tent, so the tree was turned over to the Mess Sergeant to be decorated and displayed for Christmas Day. It looked great for all of us to enjoy. I can't remember the details about how it was decorated, but just having the tree warmed all of our hearts. It looked great!

On Christmas Day, I and Cpt Ed Doleman who I had known from Berlin, drove to the Brigade Fire Logistics Support Base called LZ Oasis. We visited the 2-12th Cav troops who were assigned to the "Trains area" (term for Supply/Logistics area) and while there; I met Cliff Barrows and George Beverly Shea of the Billy Graham Evangelical Group. Cliff asked us if we might have a request for a song to be sung by "Bev" Shea. Nobody responded so I asked if he could sing "Rock of Ages"; I had been told it was a favorite of my Great Grandfather. It was nice hearing that song; and I can still hear it my memory, sung in the deep baritone voice of George Beverly Shea.

From the Trains Area, we visited a Quartermaster Shower Unit and took a shower. It was the last one I would have for about six weeks, except what was provided by Mother Nature. After our shower, we checked out the USO Show that was going on and got there in time to see a "stripper", Candy Barr I think was her name, remove her "bra". I'm sure that the troops in the front row were yelling "Put it back on!" Billy Graham followed and, as usual, gave us a "good message". The troops were very quiet and respectful for obvious reasons.

When we returned to the Rock Quarry, we had Christmas Dinner of turkey and all of the trimmings that was tasty and plentiful. The next morning Ed Doleman got on a helicopter and I was "on my own" as the CO of C/2-12 Cav. Two days later we were airlifted to the East Coastal Plain near Bong Son, Binh Dinh Province, where we operated for the entire six months that I was in command. The Christmas at the rock quarry was a memorable one.