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"Troopers of the 7th Cavalry "

Greetings to all members of the 7th Cavalry! Thanks to those of you who welcomed me to my new position here in the Saber, your kind words were appreciated. Also thanks to those of you who sent me information for this and upcoming columns - that, too, is greatly appreciated. It is you, the reader of this missive, who ultimately creates the content by sharing your stories, memories, and important notifications. Please keep it up. And as a side note, taking over as scribe has led to my reunion (at least by email) with brothers in arms from 50 years ago. Since beginning this endeavor, I have come in contact with Bob Tortolani, the 1/7 Battalion surgeon during 1968 and 1969, and Tom Hartin from C Company, 1/7 Battalion, whom I met and served with in March of 1969. Thanks for reaching out, brothers! And to the rest of you who are reading this column, please continue to send your stories to me. They all deserve to be told again and again, as they are the stories of our history.

*From Chan Duryea (Charlie Company, 2nd Bn, 7th Cavalry): I'm writing to let you know of the passing of Charles M. (Doc) McKinney on 25 September 2017. Doc was the senior medic in Charlie Company, 2/7 for just about all of 1966 and for most of the 9 months or so that I was the Company Commander. Doc was a true hero, twice wounded caring for fellow Soldiers while under fire. He was always by my side until the shooting started, and then he would be out recovering and taking care of the wounded. Returning from the hospital after he had been wounded the second time, he was reassigned to the Battalion Aid Station in an attempt to keep him alive. When the battalion surgeon shortly thereafter was injured in a helicopter accident and evacuated, Doc (without anyone to stop him) simply left the aid station and returned to Charlie Company to rejoin the rest of us. He is the author of the book *Borrowed Time: A Medic's View of the Vietnam War*. Doc and I got together years after the war and were close friends. We both were active in the 1st Cavalry Division Association, he was a trustee until his health began to slow him down. I am still on the Board of Governors. Doc's wonderful wife Linda cared for him until the very end. He was a handful as those of you who knew him can imagine. He and Linda were very dear to Patti and me, and we are in close contact with Linda.*

My thanks to Jim Savage for this report on 2nd Battalion 7th Cavalry Troopers: Camp Buehring, Kuwait - Competition can often bring out the best in people. Whether a person is competing against other individuals or just with himself or herself, he or she is challenged to come out on top. Two hundred twenty infantrymen from the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division engaged in a week of intense competition, not against each other and not even against themselves. These Soldiers competed against long-established standards to earn the coveted Expert Infantryman Badge, and 29 emerged victorious. After two weeks of train-up, the candidates began testing week with the Army Physical Fitness test. While the Army standard is at least 60 percent in each of three events: pushups, sit ups and a 2-mile run, to pass the EIB's physical fitness test, candidates had to score at least 80 percent in each event. "It always starts with the PT test," said Greene. "And when it starts out, 42 percent are going to lose immediately for multiple reasons, not making the run, pushups, sit ups, whatever it is." Ever true to historical trends, 220 candidates began the APFT; when the last person crossed the finish line, 122 remained. "And then the percentage decreases, because the number is smaller, but normally you end up with 10 to 15 percent who actually make it," Greene said. "So, if we end up with 50 EIBs out of this, that will be a huge number." The competition had just gotten started, and already nearly half the candidates were out, but those remaining weren't even close to being finished. The next event was a day and night land navigation. "And you're doing it

in Kuwait where it's between 95 and 120 degrees depending on the day and the night you're doing it, so now you're not just adding the normal work environment, you're throwing a heat index on it, so it's going to be tough," said Greene. "The heat and the humidity will be playing a factor." Because of the environment in which the brigade is currently deployed, the EIB was scheduled on a reverse schedule, where the Soldiers rested during the heat of the day and commenced their EIB tasks starting at 8 p.m. until 8 a.m. "Land navigation is the only one that will have some daytime and nighttime hours in it," Greene said. "We're doing all the lane stuff, medical, patrol and weapons, at night to try to keep the sun off the Soldiers. That's another mitigating factor that we're using to at least not have the sun on top of the heat and humidity." One hundred sixteen candidates now remained and began testing on the 30 tasks split between three lanes; the patrol lane, the medical lane, and the weapons lane. Whether it was lack of attention to detail or a momentary lapse in judgement, slowly but surely, the number of competitors was whittled away. The tasks had to be executed step-by-step in sequence and perfectly. The standard is established, and there is no getting around it. Candidates can retest after one no-go in an event, but two no-goes in the same event or three cumulative no-goes leaves a candidate with no more chances. "You get flustered," said Greene, who earned his EIB in 2004 after his third attempt. "There's a lot of stuff going on. You have to memorize every thing. You're talking not just the road march or 'The Bull,' not just land navigation or the PT test, but there's 30 stations that all have subtasks inside each one, and they have to memorize each one at every station and what they're supposed to do on it. If they mess up one thing, they're out."

"I'm making it this year," said SSG John Agoo, infantryman assigned to Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, who attempted the EIB for the second time. His advice to his Soldiers was, "Try to get in a small group where everybody actually wants it. Take your time. Don't let the nerves get the better of you." At 2 a.m. on Oct. 1, after training for two weeks and perfectly executing task after task after task, 36 candidates stepped off with 35-pound ruck sacks on their backs and a burning desire in their hearts, a desire to wear the badge. When their bodies begged them to quit, when their feet felt like they were on fire, they persevered. They put one foot in front of the other, and many of them ran, didn't walk, but ran to get their badge. Even at the completion of 12 grueling miles in less than three hours, the exhausted candidates were still not done. They still had to pass Objective Bull, a series of medical tasks standing between the candidates and that shiny new badge. "Twelve miles is not the end state; 12 miles is how to get from one place to another," Greene said. "Now can you do something, completely exhausted after walking for three hours or less carrying a pack and accomplish a mission at the end of that 12 miles. It's that final mental test. It's not a difficult thing." "When I went through, it was disassemble, reassemble and do functions check on an M4, and if you screwed that up, you're done," Greene added. "Like, that 12-miler, even though you did it in an hour and a half or however fast you did it, it didn't matter. That whole thing was a fail." The scene at the Objective Bull lane was a pressure cooker of emotions. Some were stoically fighting back tears. Some were grimacing in pain as muscles they didn't even know they had screamed out in agony. Some brand-new badge holders, overcome with adrenaline, were slapping high-fives and running from place to place motivating those who were still trying to complete Objective Bull. And some were so exhausted, so physically spent, they nearly fell over while attempting to drag 130 pounds of sandbags wrapped up in an evacuation sled from one point to another. And these same Soldiers got a miraculous jolt of energy when they crossed the finish line and were met with jubilant cheers of, "Congratulations, Expert!" "You infantrymen, you are the decisive effort," said BG Jeff Van, Deputy Commanding General of 35th Infantry Division and guest speaker of the EIB graduation ceremony. "Infantry units bear the largest brunt of warfare and typically suffer the greatest number of casualties during warfare campaigns. You are the Soldier that everybody else relies on to conduct direct combat operations, seize terrain and hold it by putting your feet on it. Your boots on soil is what drives the national strategy of our country and ensures freedom in our country. "Getting the expert infantry badge is special," he continued. "As your counter parts who did not pass will attest, this is no easy task. This is especially within the infantry community a rite of passage. You are in a fraternity of men that comprise the best Soldiers in the Army. Be proud of what you just accomplished. Be proud of what you stand for. You are part of a profession of arms that spans the globe and is required for peace and security in any nation." Now, that's one tough test! I was extremely proud the day I saw a copy of the orders stating that I had been awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, but I can only imagine how proud those 29 Troopers were when the EIB was pinned to their chests! Congratulations, one and all!

A request for information has been received from Chan Duryea, 2nd Battalion 7th Cavalry. If you can help him, please reach out: "I have agreed to coauthor a book with another Cav Vet, Bob Orkland, on the malfunction issue (failure to extract) of the first issue of the M16 rifle to Vietnam bound Troops. My first KIA as Company Commander resulted from just such a malfunction when one of my guys got off just one round at a group of advancing NVA at night. He was killed by return fire. Before going to Vietnam in February of 1966 I had spent two years as a test officer on the Infantry Board at Fort Benning. I was acutely aware of the problems with the then XM16E1. Bob and I need first-hand accounts from men who had problems with the M16. This will be an essential part of the book. We would be greatly appreciative of any support and information we might receive from 7th Cavalry Vets." Contact information for Chan and Bob is: Chan Duryea 701 Timberlake Ln, McDaniels, KY 40153 (270) 316-6295 Bob Orkland 27 Elkins Lake, Huntsville, TX 77340

And finally, it's never too early to start your planning for the 2018 1st Cavalry Division Association Reunion, to be held in

Charleston, WV, June 20-24. Reunions are a time for all of us to gather and renew old friendships or make new ones and we want each of you to be a part of this great event. The Almost Heaven West Virginia Chapter invites you to join the rest of the First Team Family in Charleston, West Virginia for the 71st Annual Reunion of the 1st Cavalry Division Association from 20-24 June 2018. We are planning numerous events and with ample opportunity for you to go off on your own and see the surrounding area. All Life Members and Associate Members of the 1st Cavalry Division Association are welcome to attend this special event. As always, Family members of our war dead, Gold Star Families, and widows of our members are welcome to join us for this reunion. Please register early to assist us in coordinating the best reunion possible.

All members of the Association must register and pay the registration fee in order to attend the reunion. Early registration, November 2017 through 01 June 2018 will be \$20 for members, except those on active duty. Active Duty Troopers pay \$10 to register. Those sending in registrations post-marked after 01 June 2018 must pay late registration fee of \$40. Family members attending with an Association member, widows of 1st Cavalry Division Troopers and Gold Star Family members that attend do not have to pay a registration fee. We will be utilizing the Charleston Marriott Town Center as the Reunion Headquarters and will hold many of the scheduled reunion events at that same location. The Charleston Marriott Town Center has a guaranteed room rate of \$99 per night plus tax (12.5%) for up to 300 rooms on peak nights and there is no charge for parking. Call (304) 345-6500 to reserve a room. The hotel's reservation toll-free number is (800) 228-9290.

Make sure that you identify yourself as attending the 1st Cavalry Division Association Reunion and make your reservations prior to 01 June 2018. The hotel does provide a free shuttle service from the Yeager Airport. Shuttles and rental cars are also available. The hotel is located at 200 Lee St, Charleston, WV 25301. There are several other hotels within walking distance of the Marriott. And so, as we look to the future, we also must remember the past. If you have contributions that you would like to see in this column, please, please, PLEASE feel free to send them to me. Use the contact information at the top of this column.

Until the next issue, Garryowen, my friends!