

BUSTIN' JUNGLE

The mission of the Cav was to find Charlie.

Sometimes, of course, he found us. But that was not the way we liked to play the game. Because when he found us it was, of course, on his terms. We much preferred that it be on ours.

So we tried, whenever possible, to go to him. That meant taking to his turf: the jungle—a seemingly odd place for armor.

The question became, "How does the armored cavalry get to him in his own backyard?" Since nature rarely provided broad, treeless avenues along which to move, we made our own. We called it "bustin' jungle."

The process was fairly straight forward: put your tracks in column, point 'em in the right direction, and move out. If anything gets in your way, run over it. Simple.

At times we were guided from above by Big 6 (our squadron commander). "Three-Six, you've got a big ravine dead ahead. Turn left 45 degrees for 300 meters." And off we'd go at 45 degrees like a column of army ants crunching our way through the forest.

At the front of my column I'd put the biggest thing I had, which was just another ACAV till we got our Sheridans in August of 1969. The lead track simply knocked down everything in its path. Sometimes a tree or other obstacle was just too big and we'd have to go around. But, for the most part, we stayed on course.

Now, a column of growling ACAVs and Sheridans busting through the jungle doesn't sneak up on anyone. Sometimes we were ambushed along the way. At times we found enemy camps hastily deserted, with rice pots still on the fire. We discovered trails that would lead us to our prey. And there were a few times that we found a large, aggressive, enemy force prepared to stand and fight.

In addition to the enemy we sought, we faced other enemies, as well. A large branch caught in your road wheels could throw a track. (Tankers hate that.) Some trees were covered with ants that covered *you* when you shook their perch. Big, monstrous, voracious ants that ate armored cavalymen for lunch. I even had one trooper who was popped by a scorpion that fell out of a tree. He had to be medevaced. (The trooper, not the scorpion.) And there were tales of vipers whose bite would kill within seconds. Fortunately, we never saw any of those.

But the point of it all was to "FIND THE BASTARDS—THEN PILE ON."

So, we did.

Ty Dodge