

THE ORIGINS OF THE 2D BATTALION, 8TH INFANTRY LIE IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN, WHERE THE UNIT WAS FIRST ORGANIZED ON 5 JULY 1838. SINCE THEN IT HAS SEEN ACTION IN THE INDIAN WARS, THE MEXICAN WAR, THE CIVIL WAR, THE WAR WITH SPAIN, THE PHILIPPINE INSURRECTION, WORLD WAR I, WORLD WAR II, AND VIETNAM. ASSIGNED TO THE FOURTH INFANTRY DIVISION IN 1923, THE 2D BATTALION AS A COMPONENT OF THE 8TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, WAS AMONG THE FIRST TO LAND ON THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY ON D-DAY IN 1944. FOR THAT HEROIC ACTION, THE UNIT RECEIVED A DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION. FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II, THE BATTALION SERVED AS PART OF A NATO REACTION FORCE BOTH IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES, AND IN EUROPE. REASSIGNED TO THE 4TH DIVISION IN OCTOBER 1963, THE BATTALION DEPLOYED TO SOUTH VIETNAM IN JULY AND AUGUST 1966. THE 2D BATTALION, 8TH INFANTRY DREW FIRST ENEMY BLOOD FOR THE 4TH DIVISION BY KILLING A VIET CONG ON 31 AUGUST 1966 IN OPERATION PAUL REVERE III.

THE BATTALION PARTICIPATED WITH VALOR, IN OPERATIONS PAUL REVERE III AND IV AND SAM HOUSTON. ON 11 FEB 1967, SSG ELMELINDO R. SMITH, OF C COMPANY, BY HIS HEROIC ACTION IN AN ENEMY AMBUSH NEAR THE CAMBODIAN BORDER, HELPED SAVE HIS PATROL FROM BEING OVERRUN BY THE ENEMY. SSG SMITH WAS AWARDED THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR HIS SUPREME SACRIFICE. IN THE LATE SPRING OF 1967, THE BATTALION MOUNTED THE TRACKS OF A MECHANIZED INFANTRY BATTALION. AS MECHANIZED INFANTRY, THE BATTALION ACTED IN BOTH MOUNTED AND DISMOUNTED ROLES DURING OPERATIONS FRANCIS MARION, GREELY, MACARTHUR, AND HINES. THE BATTALION HAS BEEN RECOMMENDED FOR A PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION FOR ITS ACTION AT PLEI MRONG IN 1969.

THE BATTALION HAS SEEN ACTION THROUGHOUT THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS FROM THE CAMBODIAN BORDER TO PLEI MRONG TO THE AN KHE PASS. IT HAS

PARTICIPATED IN EVERY TYPE OF INFANTRY MISSION - SEARCH AND DESTROY,  
SWEEP AND CLEAR, ROAD SECURITY, MOBILE REACTION FORCE.

FROM CHAPULTEPEC TO ANTIETAM, FROM GETTYSBURG TO LUZON, FROM UTAH  
BEACH TO PLEI MRONG, THE MEN OF THE 2D BATTALION, 8TH INFANTRY HAVE  
ASSURED THEMSELVES AND THEIR UNIT A GLORIOUS CHAPTER IN MILITARY ANNALS.

GENTLEMEN -- IT IS THE PROUD BOAST OF THE 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION THAT WE ARE THE "FIGHTING FOURTH". THE TENACITY, COURAGE, AND FIGHTING SPIRIT OF THE 2ND BATTALION, 8TH INFANTRY HAVE GIVEN MUSCLE TO THIS MOTTO.

① FROM THE TIME YOUR UNIT ARRIVED IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND CLAIMED THE DIVISION'S FIRST KILL, IT HAS BEEN IN THE VANGUARD OF DIVISION OPERATIONS. YOUR NICKNAME, THE PANTHERS, BESPEAKS THE SPEED AND MOBILITY WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE MANNER IN WHICH YOU ACCOMPLISHED EVERY MISSION ASSIGNED.

IN MY DUTY POSITION, I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE FREQUENT VISITS TO YOUR ELEMENTS IN THE FIELD, AND HAVE PERSONALLY WATCHED YOUR MANEUVER ELEMENTS AT WORK AGAINST A DETERMINED AND WILY ENEMY. I CAN SAY WITHOUT RESERVATION THAT YOURS IS ONE OF THE FINEST BATTALIONS IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY.

IT HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY EVIDENT TO ME THAT THE MEN OF 2ND OF THE 8TH LIVED, WORKED AND FOUGHT EXTREMELY WELL AS A UNIT. BUT I ALSO NOTICED THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE UNIT WAS DUE TO THE SUPREME EFFORT PUT FORTH BY ITS MEMBERS.

② EACH MAN HAS REASON TO LOOK BACK WITH PRIDE ON HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS. YOUR VALOR AND PROFESSIONALISM HAVE EARNED YOU MANY ACCOLADES. THE FACT THAT THE BATTALION HAS BEEN RECOMMENDED FOR A PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION -- THE HIGHEST UNIT CITATION FOR VALOR THAT CAN BE AWARDED -- IS TESTIMONY TO THIS.

HOWEVER, LET US HOPE THAT SOMEDAY IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE, THE ULTIMATE TESTIMONY TO YOUR SUCCESS WILL OCCUR -- THAT OF PEACE AGAIN COMING TO THIS ANCIENT LAND AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE BEING FREE TO LIVE AS THEY CHOOSE.

TO MOVE BACK TO THIS IMMEDIATE HOUR, I AM SADDENED TO THINK OF THE PENDING INACTIVATION OF SUCH A DISTINGUISHED UNIT. THE HISTORY OF THE 2ND OF THE 8TH,

WHICH YOU ALL HAVE HELPED TO WRITE, IS INDICATIVE OF THE FINEST IN SPIRIT AND MEN IN TODAY'S ARMY. HOWEVER, I AM ENCOURAGED THAT SUCH FINE MEN AS YOU WILL CONTINUE TO BE AVAILABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WELL-BEING OF OUR NATION, BE IT IN MILITARY OR CIVILIAN CAREERS.

PRIOR TO CLOSING, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE JUST A MOMENT TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THOSE GALLANT MEN OF THE BATTALION WHO HAVE MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE. THE SADNESS OF REMEMBERING THEM IS TEMPERED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY DIED HONORABLY AND BRAVELY. LET EACH OF US RESOLVE THAT THEY SHALL NOT HAVE DIED IN VAIN.

AN SO, TO YOU, COLONEL GAZLEY, AND TO ALL OF YOU MEN, ON BEHALF OF MAJOR GENERAL BURKE AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FOURTH INFANTRY DIVISION, LET ME SAY THAT IT HAS BEEN A GREAT HONOR TO HAVE SERVED WITH AND BESIDE YOU. TO EACH OF YOU WE WISH GOOD LUCK, GOD SPEED AND SUCCESS IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS.