

Gen. Robert M. Shoemaker



Inducted December 10, 2002

Member, Test Group
Howze Board/Army Concept Team;
Test Officer, Armed Mohawk airplane,
Vietnam
1962-1963

Chief, ADCS for Force Development
Office of the Director of Army Aviation
Washington, DC, 1967-1969

Deputy Commanding General
Headquarters, Modern Army Selected
Systems Test, Evaluation and Review
(MASSTER)
Fort Hood, Texas, 1971-1973

In 1971, Gen. Robert M. Shoemaker was considered one of the Army's top combat commanders - the man who led the allied task force into Cambodia in 1970. However, that distinction was not the only attribute he possessed that led to his being selected to head the Army's top-level field test center - MASSTER - at West Fort Hood in August 1971.

Tasked with the responsibilities of developing and testing the Triple Capability Division and Air Cavalry Combat Brigade, Shoemaker fit right in with the business of testing and evaluating new equipment and tactics, especially in the areas of air mobility and air cavalry. Shoemaker said, "Our job here is to investigate ways to make the Army better using modern technology and lessons learned and experience gained in Vietnam."

During the period Shoemaker was at the helm of MASSTER, some 54 tests were completed. Those tests included the large-scale ACCB II with 2,100 troops and TRICAP I, which used some 55,000 acres of Central Texas; and a Scout Platoon test that involved the unique motorcycle platoon. Shoemaker brought to MASSTER almost a decade of operational testing knowledge and experience.

In 1962, Shoemaker commanded the experimental 8305th Aerial Combat and Reconnaissance Company at Fort Rucker, Alabama. This was the initial unit to use armed helicopters as an offensive force and was the forerunner of the current air cavalry concept. In actuality, the commander was the test officer. During this time he also served as Chief of air cavalry and armed aircraft testing for the Howze Board, the group which developed the basic concepts that provided the basis for both the Air Assault Division and ACCB.

Following a tour with the Army Concept Team in Vietnam, where he served as test officer for the armed Mohawk airplane, Shoemaker was assigned to the 11th Air Assault Division at Fort Benning, the test division for the Army's new air assault and mobility concepts.

When the test division was re-flagged as the 1st Air Cavalry Division and deployed to Vietnam, Shoemaker put his testing experience with air mobility into real combat as commander of the Army's only air cavalry squadron - 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry. Again, the commander was really the test officer.

From the muddy foxholes on test sites to the cockpit of modern attack helicopters, Shoemaker was consistently on the front lines of operational testing.