

To: tegtmeie@panix.com
From: Raymond Anderson <109thad@airmail.net>
Subject: Re: Vietnam and the Cinema
Cc: hypercom@tracker.com.au
Bcc:
X-Attachments:

John;
I had to use my email program to put this together. Please post for me.
I'll send documentation if you need it.

At 09:00 PM 2/24/97 -0800, you wrote:

>Alex Revell wrote:

>>

>> I am currently carrying out a study to investigate how accurately the

>> medium of cinema has been used in portraying the American involvement in

>> Vietnam. I would appreciate views or comments on the following list of

>> films from anyone who has knowledge of Vietnam, either, through first

>> hand experience or indirect involvement.

See posting of US Army Riggers in VN after Operation Dumbo Drop...

OPERATION DUMBO DROP

A C-130 was used instead of a C-123 as in the movies. There were two elephants instead of one. They were named Bonnie and Clyde. They were transported the last part of the trip slung under a chopper.

In the no longer published book: Herk: Hero of the Sky by Joseph Earl Dabney the following is found on Page 356 by Sgt. Robert H. Miller, News dispatch in 315th Air Division Airlifter:

NGA TRANG AB, RVN- "What did you do in the war, Daddy?"

"Well son, one day we hauled two elephants in our C-130...."

* * *

An Army Special Forces team at the isolated Vietnamese village of Tra Bong, offered to help 400 Montagnard and Vietnamese families start their own industry. Because of the dense forest, a sawmill appeared to be logical answer to Tra Bong's plight.

After a few weeks, Tra Bong had a burgeoning business going, but soon all the timber close enough to haul by hand had been felled. Distant trees posed a problem. The terrain was rough, so conventional machinery was out of the question.

Village elders cocluded an elephant or two was the only hope to keep the sawmill in operation. The elephants were located at Ban Don - 170 miles away - but transporing them by land was too dangerous; sea transportation would take too long, and the animals might get seasick.

Lt. Col. Stanley J Boren and crew were assigned the job of airlifting the two pachyderms, Bonnie and Clyde, in what came to be known as "Operation Bahroooooom!"

Col. Boren landed the Hercules on a dirt strip at Ban Don that was "little more than a wide spot in the road". Clyde was "shot" first with a dart containing a sedative and lifted into the Hercules by fork lift. On board the Hercules, Clyde was fitted with a self-opening parachute in the event he awoke from his slumber and threatened the saftey of the aircraft and crew.

"We treated Clyde as an 'air evac' and gave him every consideration of cabin pressure, air conditioning, ventulation, and the smoothest ride possible," said 1st Lt. James J. Fortar, navigator.

After arriving at Chu Lai, the net,enclosed elephant was transported to a fork lift and then suspended under a Marine CH-53 helicopter for the remaining 15-minute journey to Tra Bong.

On the second trip to Chu Lai, Bonnie was transported without a hitch.

At Tra Bog, both elephants were met by a cheering and giggling crowd of several hundred villagers. "Operation Bahroooooom" was aa success.

* * *

The real story

No date givien... All type-o's are mine and mine only.

Ray Anderson Cam Ranh Bay - Da Nang 1967 - 196
109th Quarter Master Co. (Air Delivery) a 1st Log Arbn Company.

We didn't do any elephant business but we dropped tons and tons of supplies to encircled men by parachute.

US Rigger Units in Vietnam....

Nha Trang... About 60 Army Riggers as best I can find out. All
Special

Forces Riggers. Started in 62 - 64. They didn't have any
cages

early
her
time.
her
A real
they
in
was to

for animals dropped to special forces camps. In the days they would just strap a parachute to a cow and push out. One old NCO special forces said they did this one. The cows eyes got as big as a saucer and she *dropped* load all over the plane before they could *airdrop* her. mess to clean up once they landed. Early sixties. Later had cages for the live stock. Many of these NCO's worked in SOG operations on other VN tours. Nha Trangs main job was to supply the special forces camps.

Cam Ranh Bay. The 109th Qm Co (Air Delivery) authorized strenght was 267 men. Riggers were Special Forces and Airborne Rangers. Due to a shortage of Trained Riggers some Legs were assigned to company for non-airborne functions. This company came from Ft. Lee 1955 - 1965, attached to Ft. Campbell 101st AirBorne until July 1966 and moved to Cam Ranh Bay by ship and advanced party by C-130. Located across the pavement from 6th Convelscent(sp) Center at the most northern end of

CRB, "The Beach" was between us and South China Sea. The actual rigging Lines (two) of Air Delivery items and supplies were rigged in the Ammo Storage Point

Approx 10 miles away from company area. The 109th was the only "stand alone" Air Delivery company ever in Vietnam. We were for supplying all branches of the service. Seabee's at Khe Sanh to rebuild the Air field. Marines before and during the siege. Lost one man at Khe Sanh 300 ft shy of run way in C-130 crash. Two wonded at Khe Sanh retreiving parachutes and air items. 6 Marines were tragically killed from falling loads and LAPES run amuck (Low Altitud*e(sp) Parachute Extraction Systems). I only found this out last year. I'd say that none of the men I haven't found know of these tragic deaths.

The 109th also

supplied many Special Forces camps as Lang Vei and

Pluoc.

Movied on to A Shau Valley in April or May of 1968.

Many of the old NCO's went on to SOG operations.

Established as a Emergency Company The 109th was

inactivated

Jan 31 1972 in Vietnam. Was reactivated 1981 as a POL

company

at Ft. Lee, VA.

Da Nang..... A heavy drop platoon of aprrox 48 men was movied from
CRB

109th to Da Nang on Sept 1 1967 by CO, Maj Al Lanier.

The

origional use of these men was to support the

Marines at Khe

Sanh. They dropped the supplies for the Air Strip and

Seabees

in Sept 67. These men came back to CRB just to be sent

right

back to Da Nang for perm support of Khe Sanh AD

missions. This

109th assigment seems to have lasted to inactivation in

Jan 72.

Meaning even after Khe Sanh was over they remained in Da

nang.

By the siege Khe Sanh was supplied both from CRB and Da

Nang

109th with the 109th being supported by the 383d at Bien

Hoa.

This was during Tet 68, Air Delivery was at it's busiest

time

in VN.

Bien Hoa ... 383d (AD) detachment of 65 men. This detachment of men
was

formed from the 109th Qm Co (AD) in 1965 at Ft. Lee just

before

the 109th went to Ft. Campbell. A month after the 383d

formation

the 383d went to VN near Siagon. In Nov 1966 the 383d

was

attached back to the 109th at CRB. A few of these men

were

sent to Da Nang in Sept 67. Dec 18 1967 the 383d was

again

seperated from the 109th and sent to Bien Hoa to start

another

AD operation. Mostly supporting the 109th during TET 68

Air

Drops. Was inactivated Jan 1972 in Vietnam.

549th Qm Co.. Also a great Air Delivery Company with a proud history.
This company was the 8081st in Korea. They were out of a

Japan

100,000

They

68,

USAF base during Korea. In one year they used just over
chutes to deliver about 7,000 tons of supplies to Korea.

set an Army combat drop record that held until the Tet

Khe Sanh drops. The 8081st was part of the CIA drops in
the French Indo-China War. They furnished the chutes and
rigging training for the French at Dien Bien Phu. The

Air

Force furnished the planes. History says that the French
Pilots flew the planes and French Riggers rigged the

loads.

There are some indications the CIA also did drops which
means American polits and riggers at Dien Bien Plu. No

true

documentation has been recovered to support the American
involment. That I'm aware of.

383d

the

The 549th sent about 60 men TDY to Bien Hoa with the

during the TET 68 Air Drops. That brought the number of

riggers in Bien Hoa to about 120 men for a short while.

During the An Loc encirclement battle in April or May of

1972

the US Army Riggers had left VN turning duties over to

ARVN

riggers. The 549th (46 men) was sent TDY back to Vietnam

to

solve AD problems for 10,000 ft drops. They corrected

the

problems the ARVN riggers were unable to solve. An Loc

held

and the war continued. If you get a chance to read An

Loc

Checo Report it's very interesting to read.

periods they

While the 549th was only TDY in VN for short time

were never stationed in Vietnam. They did have some
distinguished missions.

the It seems to me it'd be safe to say the 8081/549th did
that first and last Air Delivery in Vietnam. American Riggers
 is. 1954/? and 1972.

Marine DaNang 33 Marine riggers were at Da Nang. Very little is known
about these men. They were used for a short time in Sept/Oct
67 to drop some supplies at Khe Sanh. They were routed away
from Khe Sanh during the siege because their C-130s didn't have
the Mono-Rail system in them. If anyone has
information on these men I'd like to get a copy. I'd bet they have a
distinguish history as well. They were also trained at Ft. Lee, Va.
Other Airborne Units had some riggers as well. They took care of their
own, hung nets under choppers mostly.

US Army Riggers had a long and distinguished Air Delivery history in
South
East Asia working with the US Air Force. I was proud to be a part of
that
history. Legs didn't get much of a chance to serve in these type of
distinguish units. Maybe a hundred or so at the most. I was on of
those
few Legs and damn proud of it!