

# Quick Thinking Ambush Patrol Kills 7 VC

3RD BDE — Quick thinking by an ambush patrol that was caught in the direct line of attack on the 3rd Bde, 25th Inf Div fire support base Burt resulted in their pulling back to a bomb crater where they held off an all night attack killing at least seven enemy troops. This action took place during the Battle of Soul Cut that resulted in 382 Viet Cong killed.

The ambush patrol from Charlie Co, 2nd Bn (Mech), 22nd Inf, was led by SSG Mark Ridley of San Antonio, Tex., with only two weeks in country. Although the New Year Truce was in effect, previous mortar attacks which had broken the truce prompted the "Triple Deuces" battalion commander, LTC A.G. Norris, to send the ambush patrol out as counter-mortar security for the support base.

Leaving the southern end of the perimeter at 6:30 p.m. the patrol traveled 400 meters down a main trail before angling in to the right. "We had been set in place for half an hour," said Ridley. "Around 7:30 the perimeter opened up and a little later we began to hear the Viet Cong talking all around us."

"Then some Viet Cong came down the path, led by a man with a flashlight," commented PFC William Thompson from Seabrook, Tex. "We threw some hand grenades and got them." By then SSG Ridley had received word that the whole fire support base was under heavy enemy contact. With friendly .50 cal. and enemy fire cracking overhead, the patrol crawled to a bomb crater where they set up in a circle.

It took only a moment for the

men to realize that they were in the line of a major attack on their battalion, and their only chance for survival lay in maintaining a purely defensive posture. For the rest of the night, the patrol called in artillery concentrations and provided targets for the gunships and aircraft pounding the enemy's line of attack between their position and the perimeter.

The only reply to the enemy heavy small arms fire and hand grenades thrown by the circling enemy troops was defensive fire

to keep the enemy at bay. PFC John Marts from Owaneco, Ill., kept his M-60 machine gun below ground level until he could see enemy troops creeping up to throw grenades. "We knew we were surrounded and would not be relieved until dawn," said Marts. "To conserve ammo I waited until they came close enough so I couldn't miss and then put a few bursts into the enemy and got back down in the hole."

The only casualty came when a CHICOM RPG-2 round hit the

lip of the crater, lightly wounding one of the men.

By dawn the unsuccessful attack had been beaten back, and a reinforcing element had moved to the ambush site to escort the patrol back to friendly lines. Seven enemy bodies were found within 15 meters of the bomb crater, and four heavy blood trails led from the immediate area.

"It was a real hairy experience," remarked Ridley back at the fire support base, "and I never want to go through anything like that again."

## Squad Surprises Cong In Attempted Ambush

CU CHI — SGT Vince Iacono, 20, of Brooklyn, N.Y., knew his patrol had to stop the Viet Cong at all costs before they reached Highway 1, where they would probably hit the 3rd Sqdn, 4th Cav's Armored column.

PFC Ed Welk of Bantam, Conn., was the first man in the Alpha Trp patrol to spot the approaching Viet Cong in the darkness. Passing the night vision Starlite Scope to Iacono, the squad prepared for a fight.

When the lead VC was within 15 meters of the hidden cavalrymen, Iacono gave the signal to

comment later, "We must have really surprised them... they didn't put up much of a fight."

After the enemy apparently withdrew, Iacono with Welk and SP4 Andy Garnica from Richmond, Calif., moved forward to check for enemy casualties, leaving the rest of the patrol in position.

They found one body with an automatic rifle lying next to it. As they started to move forward again, small arms fire erupted

from a dirt berm to their front. A bullet slammed into Iacono's shoulder.

Disregarding his wound, the sergeant with Welk and Garnica, started moving toward the VC position.

Two more bullets slammed into Iacono. Both Welk and Garnica pulled the wounded man to cover and bandaged his wounds as bullets snapped over their heads.

With Iacono's bleeding stopped, Garnica moved forward a few yards and hurled a grenade over the berm into the middle of the Viet Cong.

PFC David Kippie of Dagwood, Mich., had moved up from the rear when the firing started, and arrived in position in time to kill three more VC that had been flushed out by Garnica's grenade.

A radio call by SP4 Frank Rompel of Allen Park, Mich., brought in the 1st Plt's reaction team to back up the patrol. With the team in position, the cavalrymen moved forward. A sudden noise to the front of PFC Steve Alvarado of San Antonio, Tex., caused him to fire an M-79 grenade into the brush, killing another VC.

Minutes later a helicopter arrived and took Iacono to the 25th Div's 12th Evac Hosp.

The enemy's attempt at an ambush cost them dearly... five dead and the capture of six weapons.

"We really did surprise them," said Iacono later in the hospital, "because one of my men told me that the first VC we killed had an empty weapon."

## Mortar Round Cache Found

3RD BDE — Daily mortarings are a part of the facts of life in the dense jungles along the Cambodian border, but an opportune discovery by Alpha Co, 2nd Bn (Mech), 22nd Inf, provided a welcome break in the usual routine.

One afternoon recently the "Triple Deuces" of Alpha Co, commanded by CPT Alan R. Wetzel, was sweeping through border jungles when they discovered an enemy base camp. Sniper fire cracking overhead informed Alpha Co that the occupants were still in the neighborhood. Quickly returning fire, they killed the sniper and captured his AK-47 assault rifle.

A search of the base camp showed it was presently in use; cooking utensils were found in quantity, and the fish in pots had not even begun to sour.

Then came the big finds. While searching the base camp, the men found three RPG-2 and two RPG-7 anti-tank rounds. They then uncovered a cache of 76 60mm mortar rounds. The base camp and the enemy munitions were destroyed.

The riflemen of Alpha Co insist that their afternoon's work enabled the men of the battalion to sleep well that night. Charlie's nightly mortar attack never materialized.

## Snake Hadn't Heard About "Quality" Of Army Chow

1ST BDE — When the 25th Inf Div's 588th Engr Bn moved to Katum, 60 kms northeast of Tay Ninh, they set up in a heavily wooded area and thus came into contact with a large number of jungle creatures. They share their bunkers and tents with frogs, lizards, spiders, and in one case, a large snake.

The engineers were getting ready for chow one day when the cry went out, "snake, a great big snake!"

The commanding officer of Co D, CPT Larry M. Pigue of Little Rock, Ark., came running to investigate and was amazed to find a 12-foot python moving

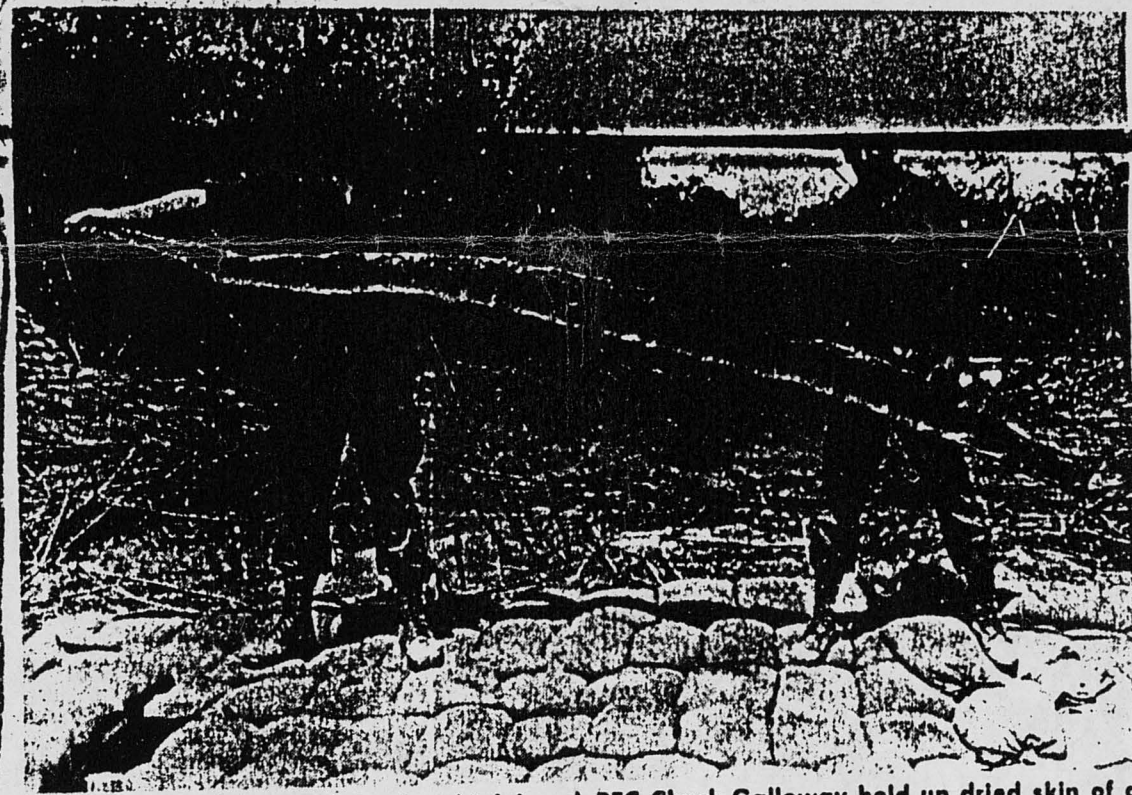
slowly but surely through the battalion area, making straight for the mess hall. SGT David M. Beaver of Royal Oak, Mich., joined forces with Pigue in an effort to chase the snake off with rocks and sticks, but to no avail.

When it became apparent that the snake was determined not to retreat peacefully, Pigue drew his pistol and shot him. It took four shots in the head to stop the huge snake, who almost made it into the mess tent before he died.

SP4 Roger L. Gardner, from Madison, Heights, Mich., who had civilian experience as a tax-

dermist, skinned the snake and mounted the skin on a long plank. The dried skin now stands on display outside Gardner's bunker, a reminder for all to keep constantly alert while in the jungle.

Battalion spokesmen feel the snake was attracted by the smell of food from the messhall, and was so hungry that he ignored all attempts to run him off. The mess sergeant later remarked that it was a good thing the snake was stopped, since only enough food had been prepared for the men—there were no portions allocated for "visitors."



DRIED OUT—SP4 Roger L. Gardner (right) and PFC Chuck Galloway hold up dried skin of a 12-foot python that invaded their camp in search of some Army chow.

## Stranded GIs Survive Night

3RD BDE — "If our patrol had been located 15 meters away in any direction, none of us would have survived," stated PFC John M. Golden from Westminster, Calif.

### When He Plays Homemade Horn Better Watch Out For Elephants

1ST BDE — The first time WO Robert Lockhart played his trumpet, a large crowd gathered. "I was kind of proud," he recalls, "until someone asked where the elephant was."

Lockhart of Sayreville, N.J., is the maintenance officer for the 25th Div's 588th Engr Bn. He got the urge to play the trumpet one day, so since he couldn't find one in the field he

had to make his own. Taking a short length of hydraulic line and part of an airhorn assembly, he fashioned a crude, but playable instrument.

"You can't really improvise a complicated song," Lockhart confesses, "but I can play 'Taps,' 'Retreat,' and 'Charge.'"

He is now working on "Love Is a Many Splendored Thing."

came under heavy Viet Cong mortar, RPG and small arms fire.

With the only radio knocked out of commission and men wounded, the patrol was forced to remain in position. "We couldn't move because we didn't know where the Viet Cong were," commented Golden.

In the meantime the enemy was advancing all around the patrol in their attack upon the fire support base.

With both enemy and friendly fire dropping around their position, the uninjured patrol members bandaged the wounded for the rest of the night.

Only when morning arrived was the patrol able to receive aid from the base camp and return to safety.

## Katum Now Has 'Swap' Library

1ST BDE—When SP5 William Neibauer of Shanokin, Pa., arrived at the 25th Inf Div's 1st Bde base camp at Katum, he noticed that reading material was almost nonexistent.

So he obtained a small supply of books and magazines from Special Services, placed them on his bunker in an ammo box with the sign "One for One" and opened for business.

"A lot of the men had brought a book or a magazine with them, and were glad to have a place they could exchange them for something they hadn't already read," Neibauer said.

"Neibauer's Field Library" is now a popular gathering place in the evenings.