

1-12-98

David Dick

I made it to the copy store sooner than I thought. The enclosed will for some good reasoning should be helpful to you.

The copies turned out pretty well. This will come from Quarterly Magazine that the 101st published during the last time I cld' no-one knew if they were authentic.

Did not like leaving a long message but if you contact the enclosed more info will come your way.

Cpt. Gen (Ret) JOHN CUSTHMAN

Annapolis, Maryland

✓ B.B (Scotty) Scott A 1/501

P.O. Box [REDACTED]  
Belfair, WA. [REDACTED]

PH # [REDACTED]

I saw his video from his trip to us in 95 or 96 & I'm sure he has some pictures.

Good Luck

David Reinheimer

B 2/501 68-69

David M. Reinheimer

Saint Louis, MO [REDACTED]

(Over)

80-51-1

There is a Chaplin-Corbin Cherry (Chief Chaplin)

San Francisco VA Hospital

He was with the 501<sup>st</sup> during my tour.

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HEADQUARTERS 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION  
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL  
APO San Francisco 96383

AVDG-CC

19 July 1968

To the Men of the 101st Airborne Division

Today, as I reminisce back over my year as Commander of the 101st Airborne Division, I ask myself, "what greater heights can a man reach?" The opportunity to command the famous "Screaming Eagles", and especially during battle, is one of the greatest honors that any one man can receive. I am doubly fortunate insofar as I brought the Division, minus the 1st Brigade, to Vietnam.

A little over one year ago, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, I took command knowing we would face difficult tasks ahead. In August, of last year, the official notification was received that the Division was to deploy to the Republic of Vietnam. Training cycles were established, personnel departed for off-post and out of state schooling, loading lists were updated, and the mountain of administrative planning began to rise.

When General Westmoreland requested our presence, at an earlier date than planned, it was necessary to accelerate our training program. This was accomplished and you were ready. We deployed 10,356 men over 10,000 miles from Fort Campbell in Operation Eagle Thrust. We closed the Division in 41 days, ready for our mission. Every man in this Division who participated in this historic move, is to be commended for a job well done.

On 13 December 1967, I arrived, with my staff, at Bien Hoa Air Base and reported to General-Westmoreland, "The 101st Airborne Division reports for combat in Vietnam." After a short in-country training period, you were ready to meet and defeat the enemy. Uniting with our 1st Brigade, the Division once again became a balanced fighting force. You have written, with blood and sweat, your place in history, and continue to fulfill the Division's "Rendezvous With Destiny" - Bien Hoa, Phouc Vinh, Cu Chi, Song Be, Phan Rang, Phan Thiet, Bao Loc, Hue/Phu Bai, Phouc Yen, La Chu, Veghel, Pinky, Bastogne, Sally and Eagle are familiar names, recalling enduring memories to us all.

I have pushed hard and demanded much, always knowing what the results would be -- success and victory. I have talked to you in burning villages, sand-bagged bunkers, foxholes, wet jungles, and in the blazing sun on the coastal dunes. Your answer to my queries added much to my knowledge of the success of our tactics. The tactics used by this Division are not new, they are only the sound application of good principles of war. You came with a job to do -- defeat the enemy -- and you have done this job well. To accomplish this we have employed every resource in the command, day and night. My philosophy is simple; continuous attack with multiple-actions, always attack under an umbrella of friendly artillery, when a lucrative target is found, mass forces; and company size actions continuous around the clock on all fronts. You are experts at the art of night fighting and jungle fighting, you have learned well the valuable lesson of reacting violently to enemy fire, never break contact, and shoot low.

You are a well decorated distinguished unit. We have tried to decorate every deserving individual. This would be nearly every man in the Division. During the last six months you have established records that other units have not surpassed in much longer periods of time. This is a tribute to your dedication, "will to win", and discipline as an Airborne Division. The curtain now unfolds on an era that will bring new glory to this proud unit. Let your memories remain strong and keep your driving sense of competition, excellence, and aggressiveness AIRBORNE!



DAVE REINHEIMER  
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ST. LOUIS, MO 63125

*O. M. Barsanti*  
O. M. BARSANTI  
Major General, USA  
Commanding

# rendezvous with destiny



Vol. 1 No. 2  
July 1968



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## Editor's Note

This special issue of *Rendezvous With Destiny* was published as a tribute to Maj. Gen. O. M. Barsanti, Division commander for the past year. The 101st's Vietnam record speaks for itself. A combat diary covering the last four months of heavy action appears on page 2.

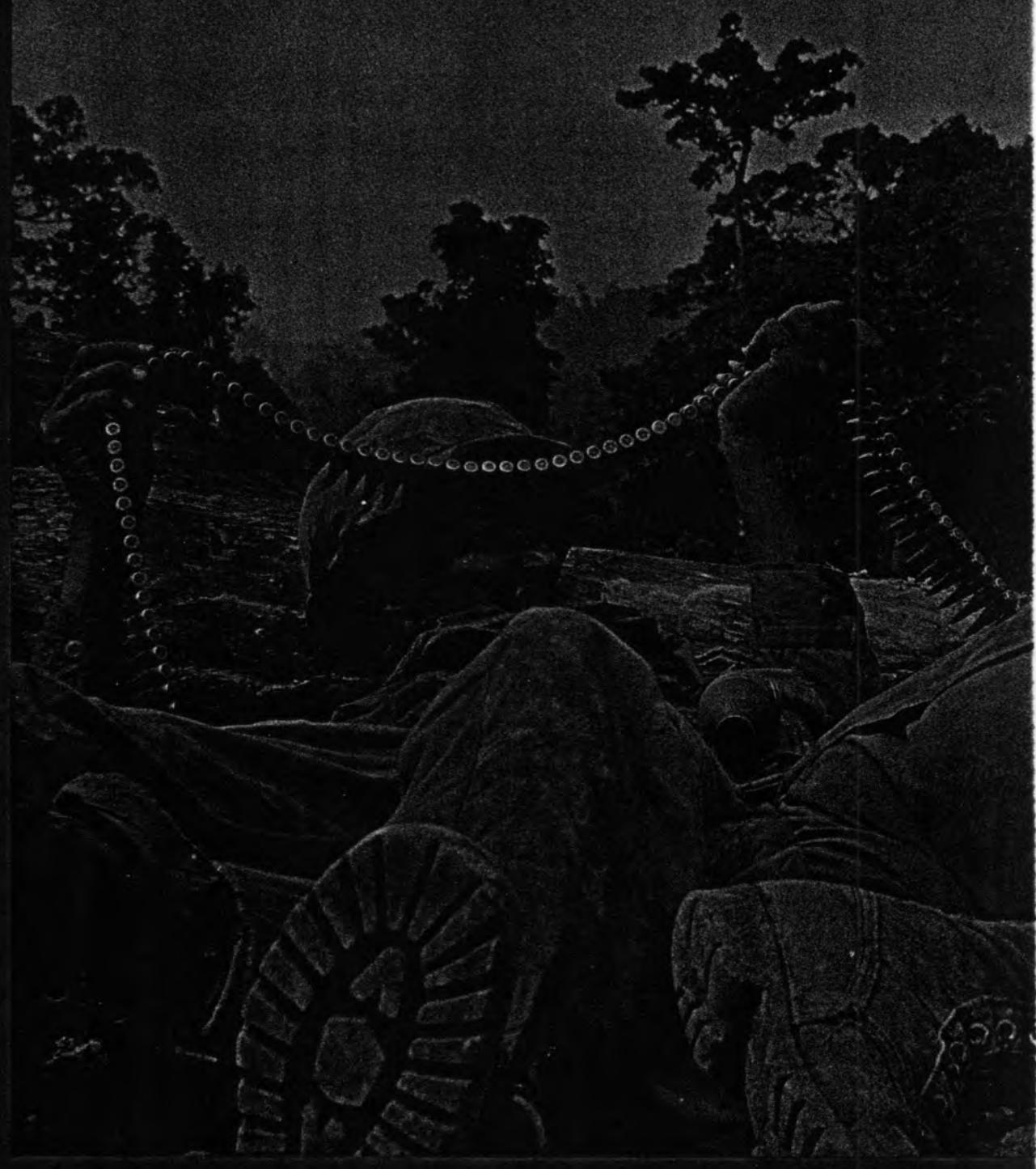
As a change of pace from the emphasis placed on combat articles, a feature has been written about an experience everyone in the Division has gone through during their tour. See *Mixed Emotions*, page 23.

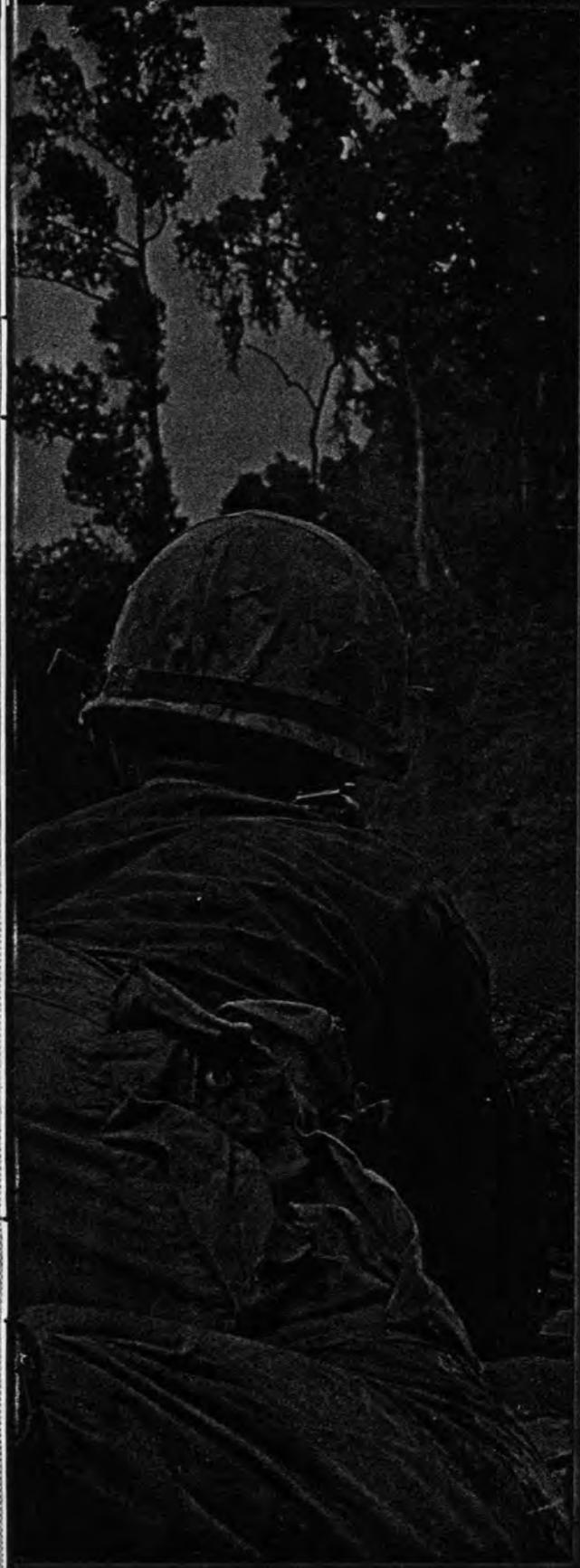
We hope you will keep this magazine as part of your Vietnam file when you return home. An envelope is attached so you can readily mail it to the U.S. for 60¢ airmail, 40¢ regular.

*Rendezvous with Destiny* is an authorized publication of the 101st Airborne Division. It is published for the benefit of all members of the Division serving in Vietnam. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. This publication is printed at Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd., Tokyo, Japan.



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# *Screaming Eagle Vietnam Diary*

Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division deployed rapidly to South Vietnam's I Corps tactical zone following the Communist threat to Hue. The following is an account of the highlights of these campaigns.

**March 8**—The Division launched Operation Carentan with airborne infantrymen of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division in Thua Thien province, north of the new forward base camp, Camp Eagle, located southwest of Hue. Joining the "All-Americans" in the initial assault were members of B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav. and F Co., 58th Inf. Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP).

**March 9**—Screaming Eagles of the 2nd Brigade rejoined the Division after completing their phase of Operation Jeb Stuart near Quang Tri City with the 1st Air Cavalry Division. They killed 1,011 enemy during their phase of the operation.

**March 10**—A large weapons cache was discovered by A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. It included 16 rockets of 122mm, 321 rounds of 60mm mortars,

*1st Brigade machine-gun team blasts away at NVA bunker position during Operation Carentan II.*

170 rounds of 82mm mortars, 107 RPG-7 rounds, 228 RPG-2 rounds, 24,000 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, 2,800 blasting caps and 28 cases of TNT. Paratroopers of C Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. killed 25 enemy during a contact with an NVA company. Meanwhile, Screaming Eagles of A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. captured a weapons cache containing 16 assault rifles, 10 rounds of 60mm mortars and 15 rounds of 82mm mortars after a bitter battle resulting in seven NVA killed. During the same period, other Division forces captured 22,700 pounds of rice along the banks of the Song Bo. It was found mostly in caves.

**March 11**—Members of C Co., 326th Engineer Bn. (Abn), clearing Highway 1 north of Hue with the 1st Bn (Abn), 502nd Inf., discovered and dismantled an NVA booby trap of 11 rounds of 105mm shells buried in the road and wired for command detonation. Staff Sgt. Ronald Henn, Clarksville, Tenn., had to take the wires out and remove the shells because exploding them in place would have blown too large a hole in the road.

**March 12**—Paratroopers from C Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. killed

McLaughlin

41 NVA at the close of a two-day battle three miles north of Hue.

**March 18**—Screaming Eagles from 1st Brigade's 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. were given the mission of clearing Route 547 leading out of Hue toward Fire Support Base Bastogne. They encountered extensive NVA bunker positions along the road. In one two-hour battle, 25 enemy soldiers were killed.

**March 20**—Members of the 82nd's 1st Bn. (Abn), 505th Inf. encountered an NVA company four and one-half miles east of Hue along the coastal plains. An all-day battle resulted in 26 enemy killed and two detained.

**March 21**—Late in the evening, the North Vietnamese made a daring attack on the night defensive perimeter of the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., using B-40 rockets as covering fire. Using small arms, automatic weapons and direct artillery fire, the paratroopers drove the enemy force off, killing 22.

**March 22**—Five miles west of Hue, gunships of B Co., 101st Aviation Bn. caught a company of NVA in an open fields, killing 34. Later three sampans were destroyed by a Light Fire Team (LFT) from the battalion, resulting in nine more enemy deaths.

**March 28**—Rifle companies of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. made contact with elements of the 803rd NVA Regiment. D Co. paratroopers swept an area two and one-half miles north of Hue. Stiff enemy resistance indicated a sizable force in the area. The battalion sweep, aided by Naval gun fire, artillery and air strikes, netted 24 NVA killed, 10 AK-47's and eight SKS carbines captured.

**March 29**—The 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. conducted a cordon operation four and one-half miles northwest of Hue. When an NVA platoon located in the village began to fire on them, air strikes and supporting artillery fire were called in. By early afternoon, the NVA broke contact and the paratroopers began a sweep of the village. Thirty-three bodies were found as well as 20 weapons.

**March 30**—Seven and one-half miles east of Hue, D Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. found 31 NVA killed in the previous day's action in their area of operation (AO).

*1st Brigade riflemen engage enemy snipers in jungle southwest of Hue.*





2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalrymen sweep the coastal plains in search of NVA strongholds northeast of Hue. Sugar

**March 31**—The last day of Operation Carentan saw no let-up in the relentless search for enemy soldiers and local Viet Cong in the Hue area. Fifteen miles northwest of the imperial city, airborne artillerymen from the 1st Bn. (Abn), 321st Arty. were called by an aerial observer and immediately trapped 85-100 NVA soldiers in an open field with accurate fire. Thirty of the NVA were killed. Six and one-half miles west of Hue, members of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. encountered a well-positioned enemy company. They called in air strikes that resulted in several secondary explosions. A quick search of the area uncovered 18 enemy dead. During the operation, 861 enemy were killed. The total weapons and munitions captured included 186 individual and crew-served weapons, while 1,027 rocket, mortar, and artillery rounds were kept from the enemy. More than 41,000 rounds of small arms ammunition and 45 hand grenades were captured, along with nearly 17 tons of rice and grain.

**April 1**—Paratroopers of the 1st and 2nd Brigades and the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division launched Operation

Carentan II in the same AO as Carentan I.

**April 5**—A platoon of NVA were spotted in an open field north of Hue by an FO of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and blasted by the guns of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 321st Arty. Twenty-two enemy soldiers were killed. Airborne infantrymen from C Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., engaged the enemy on two successful ambush attempts and fought a two-hour battle north of Hue resulting in 21 enemy killed for the day's action.

**April 6**—In a village 10 miles southwest of Hue, members of A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. engaged an NVA company located in bunkers. After supporting fires were lifted, paratroopers from the 1st Brigade's B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. moved in to ring the village with a night perimeter. An NVA attempt to break through the small cordon proved unsuccessful and resulted in two enemy killed. At first light, A Co. paratroopers swept through the village and uncovered 27 NVA bodies while they captured six weapons. That same day, members of B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. scored 27

enemy kills and captured eight weapons in a battle 10 miles southwest of the imperial city. In other action, riflemen from A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. accounted for 17 dead NVA 35 miles northwest of Hue. Division paratroopers recorded 71 enemy kills for the day's action.

**April 8**—In an action 19 miles west of Hue, B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav, engaged an estimated NVA platoon during a five-hour period. After supporting air strikes were lifted, a sweep of the area revealed 19 dead while the remaining enemy fled the area.

**April 9**—An apparent rocket attack of the 1st Air Cav. Division headquarters at Camp Evans was prevented by Maj. Brad Telshaw, Clovis, N. Mex., an alert FAC pilot attached to the 2nd Brigade. He directed two air strikes on the target which resulted in many secondary explosions. A platoon from C Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. was helifted into the area. They found nine 122mm rockets elevated on bamboo logs and pointing in the direction of Evans.

**April 11**—Two days of fighting by

A, B and D Co.'s, 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. was conducted as another village full of NVA was cordoned 10 miles northeast of Hue along the "Street Without Joy." A sweep of Phong Dien village following a night of constant bombardment resulted in 66 enemy dead and 26 weapons captured. Meanwhile paratroopers of A and C Co.'s, 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and A, B, and C. Co.'s of the 82nd's 1st Bn. (Abn), 505th Inf. ended a week-long search and destroy mission along the Song Bo, three miles northwest of Hue. Army aviation, artillery, tactical air and the airborne troopers combined to kill 200 enemy and capture 44 weapons.

**April 12**—While investigating digging sounds in action 20 miles southwest of Hue, airborne infantrymen from B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. detected six NVA and took them under fire. Elements of the 9th Division's 3rd Bn., 5th Cav. swept the suspected enemy area with the paratroopers. B Co. riflemen engaged the NVA company, using organic weapons, and swept over the enemy bunker positions. The NVA force broke contact, leaving 20 dead behind.

**April 16**—Eighteen miles north of Hue, elements from the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. discovered an enemy base camp containing 20 underground tunnels and bunkers. Stored in the tunnels were 1,000 AK-47 rounds, 20 rounds of 60 mm mortars and various medical supplies. In the 1st Brigade AO, A and B Co.'s, 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. killed 12 NVA and captured five weapons during a fierce battle 12 miles southwest of Hue.

**April 17**—A battalion-size cordon was conducted by paratroopers of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. around the fortified village of Dong Xuyen three miles north of Hue. Following Army aviation, artillery and tactical air strikes, the "Geronimo" troopers entered the village, killing 53 enemy in three days. Eight more kills were recorded by the "No Slack" paratroopers of B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf.

**April 19**—In what was termed "one of the 101st's toughest missions in

Vietnam," Screaming Eagles of the 1st Brigade and the 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. began Operation Delaware in an attempt to block off enemy supply routes along Highway 547 leading out of the A Shau valley toward Hue. During their phase of the operation, the 101st paratroopers were joined by the 3rd ARVN Airborne Task Force. During a reconnaissance-in-force operation nine miles northwest of Hue, paratroopers from B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav. killed 33 NVA and captured 19 weapons. They were supported by an armor platoon from

village, five miles north of Hue, C Co. paratroopers from the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. spotted and killed two Viet Cong. The fleeing enemy led the airborne riflemen to the village, where an enemy company was waiting. Early that evening, paratroopers from A and B Co.'s air assaulted into blocking positions, completing the cordon of the village. The enemy body count at the end of the day rose to 21. Illumination continued throughout the night as the enemy employed heavy volumes of automatic weapons and RPG fire in an unsuccessful attempt to exfiltrate the



1st Brigade infantrymen contact NVA force north of Phu Bai during Operation Carentan II.

the 3rd Bn., 5th Cav. Eighty-six NVA were killed in all 1 Corps actions.

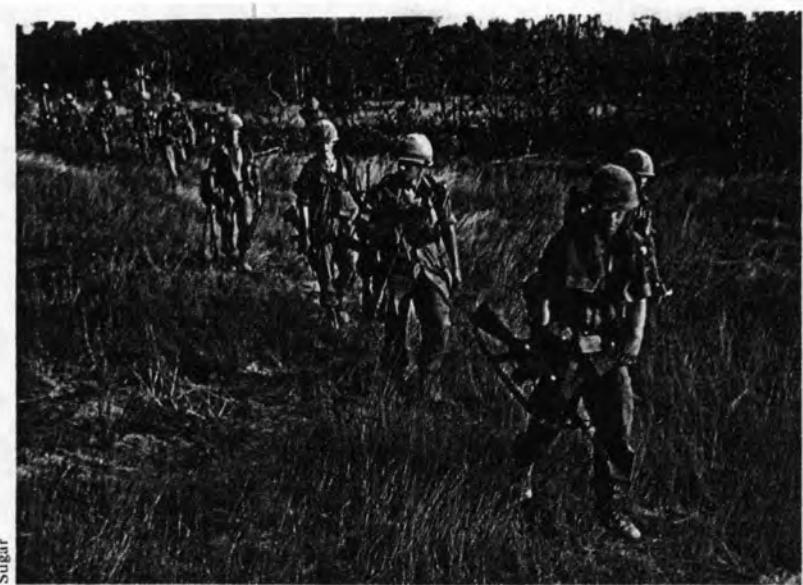
**April 20**—In continued heavy action four miles northwest of Hue, members of B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav. engaged a company of NVA and local Viet Cong at Cao Bang village. The enemy returned their fire with automatic weapons and began using rocket-propelled grenades (RPG's) against the cavalrymen's Armored Personnel Carriers (APC's). By afternoon, the enemy resistance slowed down to sporadic rifle fire. As the cavalry paratroopers crossed over the rugged terrain, 33 enemy bodies were discovered and 19 weapons, including an RPG launcher, were captured.

**April 21**—Near Thon Kim Doi

village.

**April 22**—At first light, the multi company paratrooper force pour suppressing automatic weapons fire on the enemy location while calling for more artillery and air strikes. At the close of the night's action the Screaming Eagles were credited with 47 NVA kills and seven weapons captured.

**April 23**—In the 1st Brigade area of operations, airborne infantrymen of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. continue their clearing operations at landing zone Veghel, six miles east of the A Shau valley. Scattered resistance was met as the paratroopers prepared the LZ for the insertion of heavy engineer equipment and artillery pieces. The cordons of Thon Kim Doi was completed as the



Sugar

Early morning infantry sweep following a night of firefights.



Onn  
2nd Brigade machine-gunner takes aim at NVA positions at Phuoc Yen.

## Eagles' Photo Diary



Onn

Pointman steadies himself while crossing fragile bamboo bridge.



McLaughlin

1st Brigade troopers fight jungle heat to save buddy's life.

Trooper takes aim at enemy position during firefight.



Onn



2nd Brigade paratroopers debark Chinook helicopter to assault enemy hilltop positions north of Hue.

Bailey

2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. scored 27 more kills and took four more weapons.

**April 25**—Paratroopers from the 82nd's A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 508th Inf. decimated an enemy platoon with 106 mm recoilless rifle fire and artillery support. Ready reaction gunships of the Division's B Co., 101st Aviation Bn. added their deadly firepower in the assault. Within 30 minutes, 28 NVA regulars were dead. The same afternoon during Operation Delaware, C Co. 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. engaged two NVA companies along Route 547, 15 miles southwest of Hue. The "No Slack" Battalion's A Co. moved in while C Co. maintained contact. The surprised NVA finally left their positions, leaving 32 dead and seven weapons behind.

**April 26**—The day was marked with major contacts along Route 547 in the Delaware AO near the newly constructed Fire Support Base Veghel at the edge of the A Shau valley. Early in the afternoon, paratroopers from B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. were patrolling the southern ridges along the highway. They quickly engaged an NVA company occupying well-fortified bunker positions. The B Co. riflemen reacted with heavy volumes of small arms and automatic weapons fire while C

Co. moved in from the north. The two companies linked up and overran the enemy positions, killing 16 and capturing 12 weapons. Later that afternoon, airborne infantrymen from B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. assaulted an enemy anti-aircraft position that was harassing Division helicopters heading to FSB Bastogne from Veghel. The paratrooper unit took the enemy soldiers by surprise, killing 10 and capturing two Soviet 12.7 heavy machine-guns mounted on wheels.

**April 27**—Paratroopers from B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav., received automatic weapons and small arms fire from an estimated NVA battalion, 17 miles northwest of Hue. The enemy soldiers were positioned in bunkers near Ap Phu An hamlet, situated on the rich coastal plain bordering the Tonkin Gulf. A platoon from B Troop immediately returned the fire, fixing the NVA as two more platoons of cavalrymen maneuvered to flank the enemy's fortifications. Helicopter gunships and artillery rained down a steady hail of deadly fire as the platoons linked up and waited for a final attack. The relentless pressure from the massed firepower and the final sweep of the hamlet resulted in 44 NVA dead and 15 weapons cap-

tured. At the same time, members of the 3rd ARVN Airborne Bn. spotted two platoons of NVA troops moving out across a valley floor two miles east of Veghel, along the northern edge of the highway. Division Artillery batteries stationed at Bastogne were notified and immediately engaged the enemy with 105 mm Howitzers, resulting in 23 NVA killed.

**April 28**—The day marked the beginning of the five-day battle at Phuoc Yen (See story page 29). The airborne infantrymen of A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. attacked an enemy base camp deep in the jungles east of Veghel following the completion of preparatory fire missions. A search of the bunkers resulted in the capture of the following munitions: 17 rockets of 122 mm, 80 B-40 rockets, eight rounds of 75 mm Howitzer shells, besides numerous fuses, grenades, small arms ammunition and cases of explosives.

**April 30**—Strike paratroopers of the 1st Brigade continued reconnaissance-in-force missions near Veghel, contacting the enemy three times, killing 21 and capturing three weapons. At 4:25 that afternoon, one mile east of Bastogne, the CG's command and control helicopter received hits from ground automatic weapons fire, slightly wound-

ing Maj. Gen. O. M. Barsanti in the left leg. After directing artillery to be fired into the enemy location, Barsanti was evacuated to the 22nd Surgical Hospital, treated, and returned to duty at 5:15 the same day.

**May 1**—Highlight of the day's action was the Ap Cao Xa attack by members of the 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav., who killed 83 NVA during the battle which took place four miles northwest of Hue. In further action, A and C Co.'s, 1st Bn. (Abn), 505th Inf. immediately engaged an enemy battalion near Bon Tri village, three miles west of Hue. The two-day battle resulted in 121 enemy killed and 17 weapons captured.

**May 2**—The sixth large ammunition cache since Delaware started April 19th was captured by paratroopers from C Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf., one mile northeast of FSB Veghel. The week's total munitions captured by the 1st Brigade paratroopers included: 442 rounds of 75 mm shells, 415 rounds of 76 mm tank ammunition, 112 B-40 rockets, 29 rockets of 122 mm, 30,000 rounds of 23 mm antiaircraft shells, 100 rounds of 85 mm shells, and 225 rounds of 12.7 anti-aircraft shells. The captured ammunition represented an important loss to the enemy, thereby weakening his potential capabilities to operate in the Hue area, according to Division officials.

**May 3**—Paratroopers of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division completed their assault on Bon Tri village, killing 18 more NVA and bringing the total for their cordon to 139 enemy dead.

**May 5**—Early in the morning, Division headquarters at Camp Eagle received more than 50 enemy mortar rounds. Counter battery fire from Division Artillery units was immediately placed on the suspected mortar positions.

**May 7**—A three-day cordon of La Chu village, three miles northwest of Hue, was completed by elements of A and B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav., C Troop, 2nd Squadron,

Croxt



1st Brigade reconnaissance unit searches for enemy supply points close to the A Shau valley during Operation Delaware.



Paratrooper comforts wounded friend following heavy firefight. McLaughlin

34th Armored Cav., B and D Co.'s, 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., and A and C Co.'s, 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. Fifty-five NVA were killed, five prisoners were taken and 30 weapons were captured in the cordon.

**May 8**—In the jungle four miles north of Hue, paratroopers from B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. established an early morning ambush position and killed 17 NVA after two squads of enemy soldiers walked right into the position. There were no paratrooper casualties. Continuing application of their highly successful cordon tactics, airborne infantrymen from the 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. trapped a re-inforced NVA company in Phu Luong A village, six miles northwest of Hue. Fifteen enemy were killed in the initial contact. In Delaware action, the paratroopers of C Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. captured the ninth enemy ammunition cache of the operation. Less than two miles east of Veghel, they found more than 2,000 rounds of 76mm high explosive ammunition, 200 rounds of 76mm smoke ammunition, and 6,300 rounds of 23mm ant-aircraft shells. The cache was stored in bunkers built into a hillside and protected from aerial

observation by triple canopy jungle.

**May 10**—In action five miles north of Hue along Pha Tam Giang inlet, airborne riflemen from C Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. trapped an NVA platoon inside a horseshoe cordon and drove the enemy toward the water. The fierce paratrooper attack drove the enemy force from its position and the NVA left 21 dead behind.

**May 11**—Sixteen NVA were killed by air attacks from Army aviators in action 10 miles southwest of Hue after a Division reconnaissance unit observed the enemy preparing a rocket launching site. The "Lancers" of the 308th Aviation Bn. engaged the enemy with 2.75-inch rockets and mini-guns, and quickly scattered the NVA force. Secondary explosions were observed by the pilots as they made passes over the target area.

**May 13**—Paratroopers of A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and D Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. completed a successful cordon of Co Thap village, eight miles northwest of Hue. The infantrymen surrounded an NVA battalion suspected of protecting a nearby enemy regimental headquarters and were joined by members of A Troop,

2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav. The two-day battle resulted in 38 NVA killed and 11 weapons captured.

**May 17**—Screaming Eagles of the 101st and paratroopers of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division under their operational control, terminate Operation Carentan II at noon. The combined paratrooper force killed 2,100 NVA, captured 157 prisoners and 58 enemy weapons during the 47-day operation near Hue. "Relieve the pressure from the area around Hue," was their standing order and the paratroopers did just that as their highly mobile fighting units continually maintained pressure on the enemy. The same day 1st Strike paratroopers of the 1st Brigade completed their phase of Operation Delaware, designed to block the main enemy supply route leading out of the Shau valley toward Hue. The airborne infantrymen from the 1st Brigade battalions killed 318 NVA, captured three prisoners and 121 weapons during the 28-day operation. Delaware was characterized by the capture of several large caliber ammunition caches, the loss of which further limited enemy capabilities in providing fire support for large scale operations, according to Divisic intelligence sources. The interdiction of Route 547 was also realized during this operation, completely cutting off its use by enemy forces as a resupply route.

**May 18**—Paratroopers of the 1st and 2nd Brigades and 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division initiated Operation Nevada Eagle in northern I Corp. It was designed to deny all NVA and Viet Cong forces operating in the area the ability to capture the ripening rice crop growing in the rich coastal plain north and south of Hue.

**May 20**—Nevada Eagle action intensified as Division paratroopers killed 103 NVA and captured 34 weapons. Exploiting intelligence information, members of B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. trapped an enemy force in Dong Gi Tay village northeast of Hue. Rapidly massing forces, three morter companies and one Popular Force (PF) platoon cordoned the village. The action continued throughout the night.

as early reports showed 57 enemy killed and 20 weapons captured. A second major action occurred when airborne infantrymen from A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. received a mortar attack and ground probe at their night defensive perimeter. Artillery and organic fires were immediately placed on the enemy force. A sweep of the area the next morning revealed 31 enemy dead and 12 weapons captured.

**May 21**—At 12:30 a.m., an NVA battalion augmented by personnel from a sapper demolition team, launched a daring ground attack against Camp Eagle, following the firing of more than 400 rounds of 122 mm rockets, 82mm mortars, B-40, and B-41 ammunition into the Division headquarters area.

#### SUMMARY OF LARGE WEAPON CACHES

Cache of 25 May, 1968  
2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf.

- 1 82mm Mortar Round
- 31 60mm Mortar Rounds
- 3 122mm Rocket Launchers
- 168 SKS Rifles
- 16 Machine-guns
- 11 AK-47's
- 1 K-44 Rifle
- 2 RPG-2
- 8 RPG-8
- 12,100 Rounds Small Arms Ammo
- 317 Grenades
- 106 Rounds Mortar Ammo
- 279 B-41 Rockets

Cache of 27 May, 1968  
2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf.

- 12 60mm Mortar Rounds
- 150 K-44 Rifles
- 4 Light Machine-guns
- 1 AK-47
- 40 B-40 Rockets
- 80 Rifle Sights
- 5 Sights and Optics

Caches of 19, 27-28 May, 1968  
1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf.

- 2 12.7mm Machine-guns
- 10 122mm Rockets
- 8 23mm AA Guns
- 5 85mm Light Artillery Pieces
- 54 Trucks
- 56 85mm Rounds Ammo
- 3,000 23mm Rounds Ammo

The ground attack was staged at the southwest edge of the perimeter and was beaten back by headquarters troops of the 1st Brigade, members of the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. and helicopter gunships. Fast thinking gunners from the 320th Artillery rolled in a 105mm Howitzer without sighting devices and killed 12 enemy at the edge of the wire with four anti-personnel rounds. At first dawn, a sweep of the area revealed 54 enemy bodies and 16 individual weapons captured. Additional ordinance uncovered included 40 satchel charges, 30 bangalore torpedoes, and 50 RPG rounds. Damage to the base area was termed light.

**May 22**—The day's action brought the enemy body count for Operation

Nevada Eagle to 255 killed in six days. Airborne infantrymen of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. captured three light artillery pieces, two anti-aircraft guns and one truck in the area north of FSB Veghel. The paratroopers also captured seven boxes of 85mm ammunition, two boxes of delay fuses and 10 cases of 23 mm ammunition.

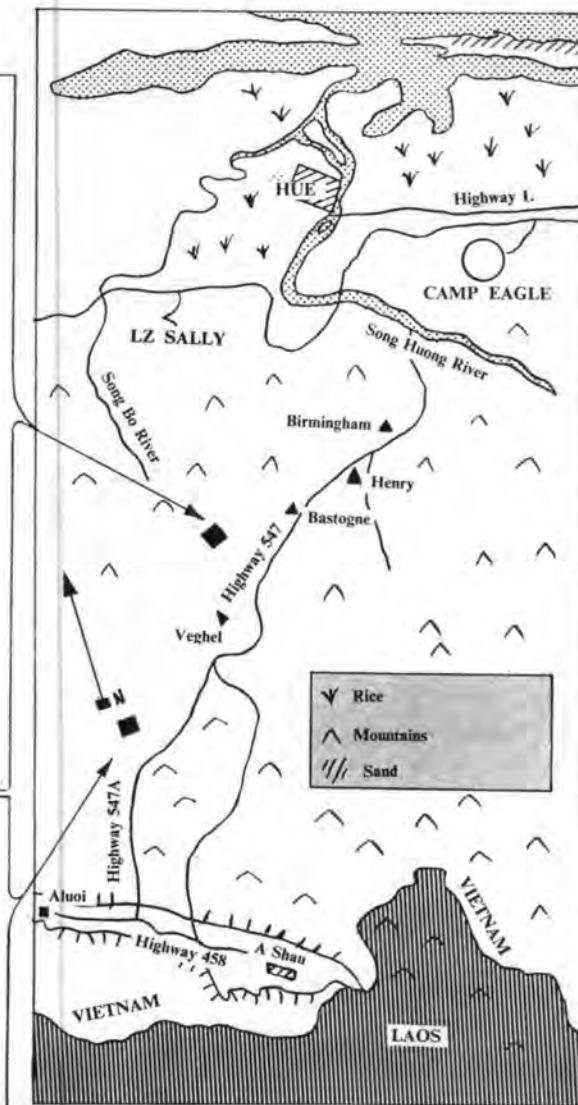
**May 25**—Members of A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. uncovered the largest arms cache of Nevada Eagle along Route 547, 12 miles southwest of Hue. The airborne riflemen discovered several 5' by 8' bunkers with three feet of overhead cover nestled in the triple canopy jungle. Closer investigation revealed a cache of 238 individual and crew-served enemy weapons. They included 167 SKS rifles and 32 cases of new AK-47's.

**May 27**—The second major arms cache of Nevada Eagle was captured by A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. in a bunkered enemy base camp four miles east of the A Shau valley. The weapons included 12 complete 60mm mortars, 150 bolt-action Chicom rifles (K-44), four Communist light machine-guns, 80 rifle grenades and 40 B-40 rockets.

**May 28**—Forty-nine enemy trucks were captured by elements of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. They were found along a road 15 miles southwest of Hue without their engines, but closer investigation revealed the engines buried 5 to 10 meters on either side of the trucks. The paratroopers also captured four 23mm anti-aircraft guns with 2,100 rounds of ammunition.

**May 29**—Continuing extensive search operations were conducted by riflemen from A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. Included in a third major weapons cache were: 107 SKS rifles, 59 K-44 rifles, four AK-47's, 102 rounds of 75mm shells, 5,660 rounds of small arms ammunition, 3,300 grenade fuses, 26 B-41 rockets and 24 rounds of 60mm mortar.

**May 31**—A two-day cordon operation seven miles east of Hue near Le Xa Dong hamlet was conducted by A Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav.; B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and elements of the 1st ARVN Divi-



sion, resulting in 91 NVA killed, 19 prisoners taken and 34 weapons captured.

**June 3**—Division paratroopers and units under their control in I Corps tactical zone killed 81 enemy, captured 50 prisoners and gathered 661 individual and crew-served weapons from the NVA. The seizure of a fourth major weapons cache by elements of the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. in the coastal plains area highlighted the day's action. At the end of a two-day cordon around Trung Phuong hamlet, three miles southeast of Hue, a multi-company airborne task force of 17th Cavalry, 2nd Brigade and ARVN airborne troopers killed 66 enemy, took 51 prisoners and captured 55 weapons.

**June 4**—Paratroopers of A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. continued to uncover large quantities of weapons as they continued an extensive search of the complex found June 3rd. Added to the previous total were 87 AK-47's, 174 AK-47 magazines with 1,500 rounds of ammunition and more than 300 rounds of 82mm mortar.

**June 10**—Division forces seized two rice caches totaling more than 37,000 pounds in two locations. The first was captured by B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav., 12 miles southeast of Hue. The nine tons of rice were bagged and evacuated to Phu Tu District headquarters. Paratroopers from C Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. took a second cache of 9½ tons from

an area 6½ miles northwest of Hue.

**June 12**—Four rice caches totaling 55,500 pounds were found throughout the 2nd Brigade's AO. All of the rice was given to various district chiefs throughout Thua Thien province.

**June 13**—Fifteen-and-a-half tons of rice were captured by Division infantry and cavalry units. The total rice recaptured in the rice denial program of Nevada Eagle rose to more than 156 tons.

**June 17**—Continuing psychologic operations throughout the Division A resulted in the rallying of a Viet Cong village chief to the South Vietnamese government. The rallier stated he deserted because all of his soldiers were captured in a recent battle fought with paratroopers of B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., where 58 suspects were taken from a village nine miles east of Hu

**June 20**—In Hue, South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu presented Col. John H. Cushman and the paratroopers of the 2nd Brigade Task Force with the country's Presidential Unit Citation for their combat record since deploying to I Corps in early February. From then until this date, the task force paratroopers killed 2,382 enemy, detained 257 suspects, and captured 7 enemy weapons.

Operation Nevada Eagle, continuing in I Corps when this magazine went to press, carried all indications of being the fourth major Screaming Eagle campaign victory since the remainder of the Division arrived in Vietnam in December, 1967. Since the initiation of combat operations on January 17, the airborne troopers have continuously pressed the enemy, forced him to fight, restricted his night movement with extensive night operations, and through mobility and heavy supporting fire defeated the enemy in every major battle. The success of the airborne operations can be most adequately measured by the operational totals scored by Division infantry and cavalry units. In six months, they have killed more than 8,000 enemy soldiers, taken more than 350 prisoners and captured more than 2,650 individual and crew-served weapons in Vietnam.



Bishop  
Captured enemy weapons displayed by 1st Brigade infantrymen during Operation Nevada Eagle.

# LIBERATION OF QUANG DIEN

*2nd Brigade paratroopers fought bravely for four months so 50,000 South Vietnamese people would not have to choose between death and slavery as a way of life.*

**By Spec. 4 Robert P. Johnston**

The story of Quang Dien District is a story of South Vietnamese people who learned that life without freedom is no life at all. It also concerns a brigade of American airborne soldiers who gave their strength and some of their lives so that the district's 50,000 people would not have to choose between death and slavery.

Early in February, during the stormy weeks surrounding the Communist Tet offensive, this patchwork of flat, coastal ricefields only an afternoon's walk from Hue's Citadel was the undisputed home of two North Vietnamese Army regiments and a strong infrastructure of local Viet Cong.

Feeding like giant leeches from the lifeblood of the cone-hatted farmers, fishermen and small merchants, the enemy soldiers and Viet Cong ruled absolutely. The people did not have to build bunkers and give up their rice; but the alternative was always a bullet in the head.

The only American presence then was a five-man MACV advisory team, holed up like prisoners at the district headquarters with only a small contingent of district Popular Force (PF) soldiers for protection.

"They could have overrun us any time they wanted," said the team's commander, Capt. Robert A. Selzer, Merritt Island, Fla. "We asked a captured prisoner why the NVA didn't come and massacre us, and he said it was because nobody told them to."

On March 1, the 2nd Brigade moved south from Quang Tri and pushed the NVA off an abandoned French airstrip along Route 1 a few kilometers west of Quang Dien. Springing up there almost overnight, the brigade's base camp was dubbed Landing Zone Sally, the new home of the "Ready To Go" paratroopers.

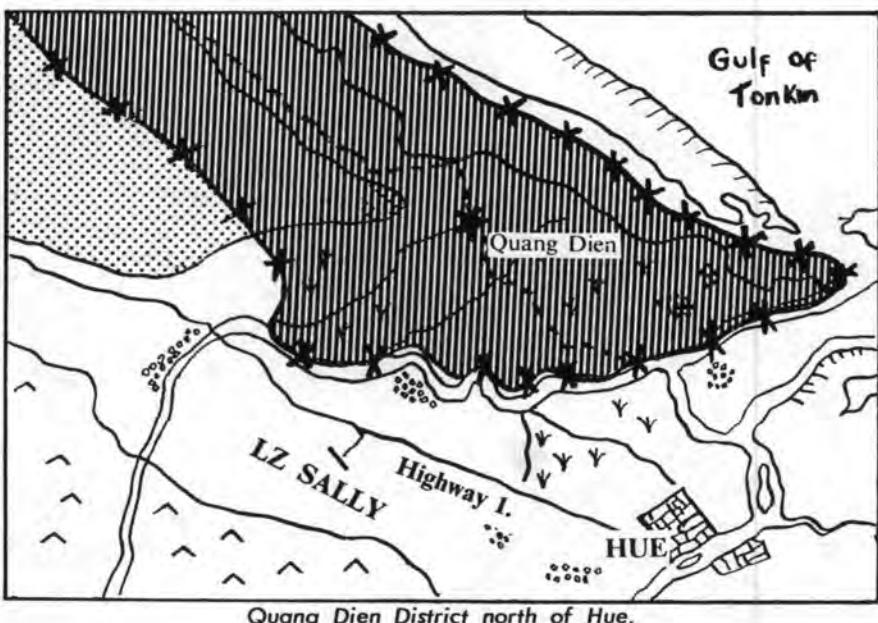
For the liberation of the district, brigade commander Col. John H. Cushman, Lexington, Mass., chose the 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf., commanded by Lt. Col. Bertram J. Bishop, Springfield, Va.

The first thing Col. Bishop noticed

was the steady, silent streams of villagers leaving his new turf. Sensing a fight, many of the people hastily migrated to the homes of friends and relatives farther south.

Then began some of the most bitter and bloody fighting of the Vietnam Conflict as the "First Strike" Battalion mounted a war of attrition against the wily and well-dug-in NVA and VC. Every village and hamlet meant another prolonged battle; every hedgerow meant another fight. A single error or misjudgment could have cost an entire company of paratroopers.

With the Airborne providing the



Quang Dien District north of Hue.



2nd Brigade paratroopers invade rich rice basin of Quang Dien district in search of harassing NVA soldiers.

Hi

muscle and mobility, and the PF's furnishing the intelligence reports, detainee interrogation, and scouting knowhow, the allies hounded the NVA in every known sanctuary in the district.

"Col. Bishop used the PF's just as they should be used," Capt. Selzer said, "and he treated them with the same consideration and respect as his men."

It was the PF intelligence officer, the young and talented Nguyen Van Hue, whose accurate and timely information led to the two landmark battles of the Quang Dien campaign.

The first was Ap Dong Lam, where the "First Strike" battalion, plus D Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., and the PF's hemmed in an estimated reinforced battalion of the 803rd NVA Regiment. The four-day struggle cost 222 dead enemy soldiers and put the NVA on the run throughout the district.

It also helped accomplish something totally unexpected by the Americans. One afternoon in late March, some 2,000 district citizens gathered in the Sia market place to pay tribute to the Airborne combat successes, and to condemn the terrorist tactics of the local Viet Cong. Vowing to fight the VC to the death, the people themselves recorded a stirring moment in their country's history with shouts of "Vietnamese Government Number One! Down with

the VC!"

Such bravado in a secure marketplace would be meaningless unless reflected in the countryside where people were still dying. But it was in the countryside—in the paddies and along the distant canal banks—that a subtle evolution was beginning.

As word of each fresh enemy defeat flashed through the district, the iron grip of fear which had held the people for so long loosened a little more. It became apparent that the enemy's days were numbered, as were those of anyone who voluntarily aided their cause.

Even small children and old women would point out enemy weapons caches and booby-traps. The once-familiar blank stare and shrug of helpless ignorance was gradually replaced by the Vietnamese equivalent of "He went that-a-way."

In late March, April and early May, the 1st and 2nd Airborne Battalions of the 501st Infantry each took a crack at the reeling NVA. In the first week of May, the grim process of extermination culminated in the now-famous cordon of Phuoc Yen.

For four days, companies from all three battalions, plus PF's and the "Black Panther" Co. of the 1st ARVN Division lay siege to the stocking-shaped village complex that intelligence sources

said was harboring an NVA battalion.

The paratroopers were joined by the batteries of the 321st Artillery, helicopter gunships and Air Force fighter bombers. By morning of the fifth day the NVA body count reached 419, and another 104 became the largest NVA force to surrender en masse to an American unit thus far in the history of the war.

Except for a few scattered pockets of die-hards, Phuoc Yen marked the end of the NVA in Quang Dien District. Of approximately 1,500 that Lt. H. H. estimated to be occupying the district before Tet, more than 800 were killed and the rest fled west to the mountains to lick their wounds and contemplate the "mean little bird" worn on the left shoulders of the Airborne enemy.

Phuoc Yen was also a beginning. "Our PF's had neither the numbers nor the weapons to fight the NVA," said Capt. Selzer. "But now the enemy is a Viet Cong, and no one can fight the VC better than the PF's can."

In the last week of May, the Quang Dien PF's pulled a coup that shocked the local Viet Cong. Just before dawn with the night mist still hanging over the VC stronghold, a small PF band burst through the hedgerows, yelling and shooting. Twenty of the Viet Cong who tried to fight or run were killed.

Six other VC, plus a small arsenal of weapons were easily captured.

To avoid further bloodshed on both sides, a co-ordinated psychological operations (Psy-ops) program was initiated by the 2nd Brigade psy-ops officer, Lt. David Hendry, East Hartford, Conn. The team dropped leaflets and broadcast appeals from former VC, imploring the hardcore Communists to give up a hopeless cause.

"This district is now ripe for psy-ops," said Capt. Donald E. Smalley, Peebles, Ohio, a MACV co-worker of Capt. Selzer. "The Airborne and the PF's have made the remaining VC want to give up safely."

During the first five days in June, 15 former VC decided there was no future for their line of work in Quang Dien District. Marching timidly forward with Chieu Hoi safe-conduct leaflets held protectively aloft, the VC surrendered in two's and three's to the paratroopers of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. and the government troops.

With most of the enemy dead or on the run, the allies turned their attention to the endless fields of rice, ripe and ready for the spring harvest. Before the Airborne came to Quang Dien, everybody knew that the great bulk of the harvest would be confiscated by the NVA and VC to feed their troops stationed in the villages and mountain base camps.

But now there were no more NVA, and the remaining VC were in no mood to challenge the Airborne companies who threw protective perimeters around the areas being harvested. At the end of May, Capt. Selzer estimated that 90 per cent of the crop was safe in the hands of its rightful owners. By direction of the fiery district chief, Capt. Tran Hhu Hung, the rice was shifted to three secure collection points where each farmer was given a receipt for his crop. Throughout the coming year, the farmers will come to the collection points and receive enough of their rice for their families but not enough to tempt the remaining Viet Cong.

Though he is first a soldier, Capt. Hung is a man of his people. Whenever an important decision loomed, he hop-

ped in his unpredictable jeep with balding tires and drove over miles of unsecured roads to consult with citizens whose lives depended upon his judgment.

Lt. Col. Leslie D. Carter, new battalion commander, gave his medical officer, Capt. David H. Leeper, Padukah, Ky., a free rein in giving the district the best medical service available. The young "Bacsi" discarded the usual one-shot MEDCAP approach and set up a regular schedule for himself and his staff at the district's three hospitals.

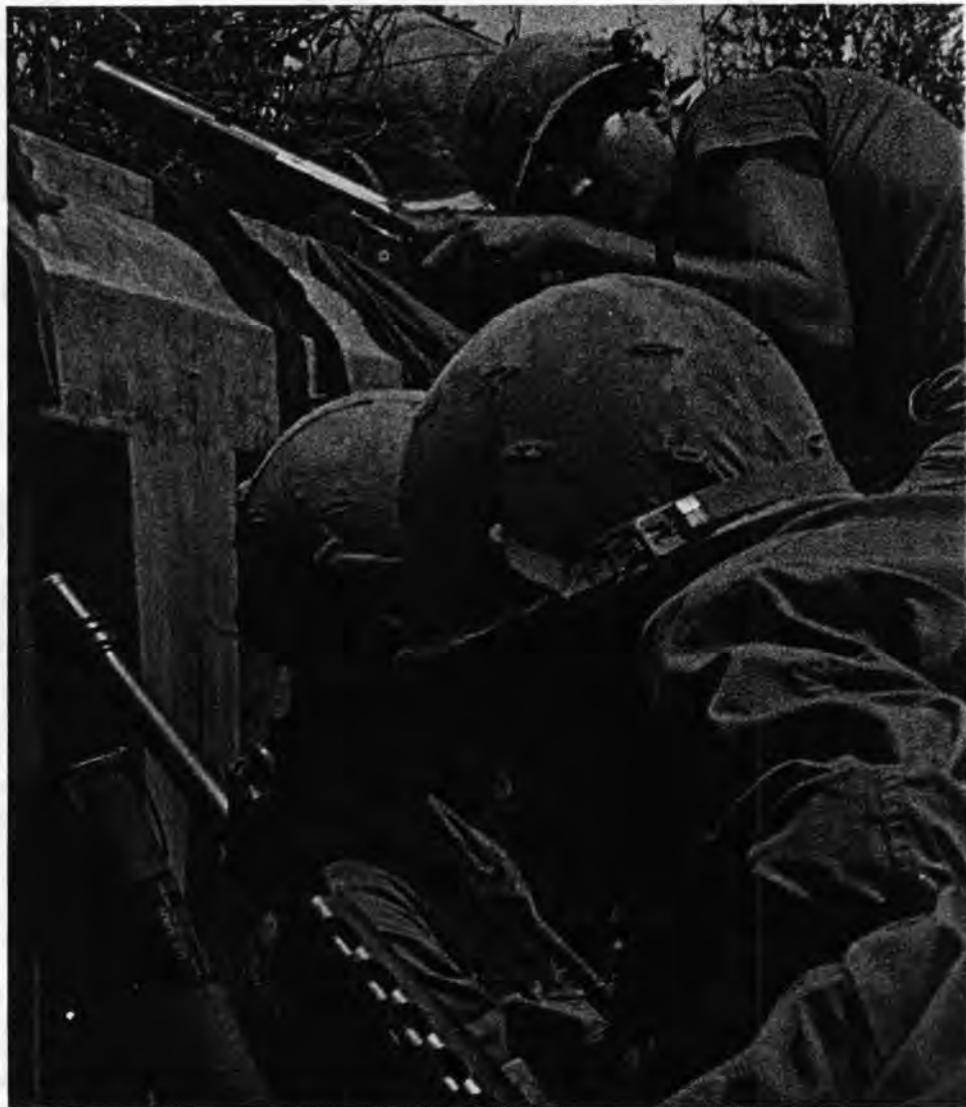
Now Quang Dien District bears no resemblance to the field of terror it became under the heel of the NVA.

The people's smiles, once masks of fear and distrust, became the expressions of good feeling and good times. The "big-footed" Screaming Eagles and the wiry native country folk came face to face, and found not monsters and minatures, but merely international variation of themselves.

Today when the people of Quang Dien District speak of the American soldiers who helped transform their homeland from a hell to a haven, they do not say, "the Americans," "the U.S. Army, or "the GI's." They say, "the Airborne," and they say it with a mixture of gratitude and respect.



Morrow



2nd Brigade paratroopers seek protection of a concrete wall near Quang Dien during heavy firefight with NVA regulars.



## **COMMANDING GENERAL**

**MELVIN ZAIS**

***the*  
LUCKY EAGLE**



More than twenty years ago someone asked Major General William M. Wiley, the Commander of the original 501st Parachute Battalion, what he thought of the future of parachute troops. At that time he said, "If everyone in the world had to travel by parachute, we would soon find a better way."

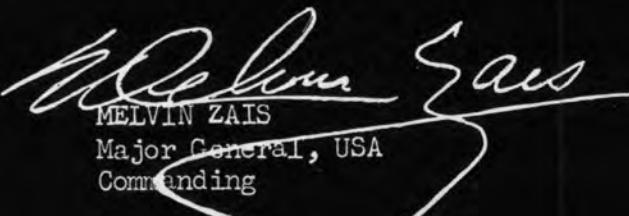
He was then reflecting the views of all far-thinking paratroopers. Having experienced the benefits of airmobility and the introduction of the third dimension in ground warfare, they were acutely aware of the need for further advances in the technique of delivery of men, weapons and equipment by air.

The first exponents of the use of helicopters as an added dimension to warfare were naturally famous paratroopers. In the early Fifties, LTG James M. Gavin, a pioneer paratrooper and CG of the 82d Abn Div during WWII, wrote in an article in *ARMY Magazine*, "Cavalry, and I don't Mean Horses." He was of course referring to sky cavalry. The first Commander of the 11th Air Assault Division, later redesignated the 1st Air Cavalry Division, was LTG H. A. O. Kinnard, a gallant battalion commander in the 101st Airborne Division in World War I. He was followed in command of the 1st Air Cavalry Division by MG John Norton, a paratrooper in World War II with the 82d Airborne Division, and subsequently by LTG John Tolson, a paratrooper with the 503d Parachute Combat Team, which landed in Corregidor. Finally, the detailed concept of the Air Cavalry Division was fathered by General Hamilton Howze, former commander of the 82d Airborne Division and later the XVIII Airborne Corps.

These men all recognized, early, that the helicopter was a revolutionary innovation, but they also believed that the parachute troops continued to play an important role. Therefore, the original Air Cavalry Division retained an airborne capability. Let us hope that someday in the near future we will return to this concept.

The tactical methods used in airmobile warfare are basically airborne doctrine: That is, strike into the enemy's rear by air; land on or very near your objectives; hit hard; stay mobile; train to be the toughest, most aggressive troopers in the business; develop strong discipline and self-confidence. These paratroop qualities characterize the 101st Airborne Division troopers of today.

The Screaming Eagles are proud to have been selected to add lustre to the further application of advanced airborne doctrine and pledge that the indomitable spirit of "Airborne—All The Way" will forever remain with this Division.

  
MELVIN ZAIS  
Major General, USA  
Commanding

Rec. 1-9-69

# rendezvous with destiny

DAVE REINHEIMER - 487-8017



Fall



1968



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**Editor's Note:** With the addition of airmobility to the Division's capabilities, this issue of *Rendezvous* concerns itself with the airmobile concept. *Wings That Work* on page 29 takes us through the many facets of airmobility. The Division's first official airmobile operation is told in *A Shau . . . Somerset Plain*. Not to wander too far from the Airborne trail, *11 Bravo* very vividly describes one of the unsung heroes of Vietnam, the rifleman. Concluding this issue we have added a Division wrap-up telling of Screaming Eagle achievements during the past year in Vietnam.

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**Rendezvous with Destiny** is an authorized publication of the 101st Airborne Division. It is published for the benefit of all members of the Division serving in Vietnam. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army.

# Screaming Eagle Vietnam Diary

*The Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division met their third quarter fighting on two fronts. The 3rd Brigade remained in the III Corps area operating out of Phuoc Vinh in Operation Toan Thang II (Complete Victory) while the 1st and 2nd Brigades continued Operation Nevada Eagle in I Corps with base camps at Camp Eagle and LZ Sally. The following is a daily account of Airborne exploits throughout Vietnam.*



**June 21**—In the 3rd Brigade area of operation Co. A, 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. engaged a VC company 25 km west of Cu Chi near the Van Co Dong River. Co. C of the same battalion made contact with another company 2 km to the south. The Airborne companies pushed the enemy forces together trapping the two companies. Co. A, 1st Bn., 187th Abn. Inf., was airlifted into the area to close the cordon. Artillery and air strikes pounded the enemy while the airborne troopers held the cordon closed. In fighting further to the north, the 1st and 2nd Brigades continued Operation Nevada Eagle. Paratroopers met with light enemy action by killing eight and capturing 11 weapons.

**June 22**—A sweep of yesterday's contact area by the 3rd Brigade revealed 96 enemy bodies, nine prisoners and 20 enemy weapons. The sweep is continuing. The rice denial program of Nevada Eagle continued to be successful for I Corps paratroopers. Second Brigade

paratroopers captured three sizeable enemy rice caches totaling 6300 pounds. This brought the operational total to 168 tons captured since May 17.

**June 23**—The sweep of the area of contact of June 21 continued to yield enemy food and equipment to the paratroopers of 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. During today's search operations the Currahees found a weapon and ammunition cache containing 106 75mm rounds, 110 RPG-2 rockets, 433 miscellaneous mortar rounds, 70 fuses for 60mm rounds, 70 cans of 60mm mortar charges and 1000 rounds of AK-47 ammunition. In addition the hungry paratroopers captured 7500 pounds of rice, 4000 pounds of wheat, 1000 pounds of cement as well as other miscellaneous enemy equipment and documents.

**June 24**—Second Brigade paratroopers from Co. B, 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., and Co. C, 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., seized 8400 pounds of rice after a brief engagement in which they killed two VC

while operating northwest of Hue. In 1st Brigade area of operation Airbo forces from the 2nd Bn., 327th A Inf., captured a small ammunition ca containing 70 rounds of 75mm ammunition, two 122mm rockets, th 122mm rocket warheads, 18 rifle grenades and miscellaneous small ai ammunition.

**June 25**—An allied fighting fc made up of paratroopers from the Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., and the 39th AR Ranger Battalion teamed up to kill enemy, and take 38 prisoners. In ac tion 24 weapons and 3460 pounds rice were captured in the village sw conducted 5 km east of Hue.

**June 26**—Rice denial efforts Nevada Eagle continued to meet v success. Second Brigade troopers ad an additional 18 tons to the captu rice total for the operation. Airbc forces from the 1st Brigade, w operating north of FSB Veghel captu two ammunition caches containing



First Brigade troopers load the "slicks" that will carry them to the NVA nerve center in the A Shau Valley during Operation Somerset Plain.

RPG-2 launcher, one 122mm rocket warhead with fuze, two 122mm rockets, 108 75mm rounds, 95 82mm mortar rounds, 600 pounds of C-3, 140 pounds of TNT, 50 blasting caps and 42 RPG fuzes.

**June 27**—Light enemy contact was prevalent in both I and III Corps areas of operation. The rice hungry airborne forces from the 2nd Brigade continued to limit the enemy rice flow. In today's search operations, troopers from the 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., captured 34 tons of rice in three caches, raising the operational total to 232 tons.

**June 29**—Airborne units from the 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf., set up in a battalion size night defensive position, a rare occurrence in operations around Cu Chi. Later in the night a Viet Cong company assuming that the friendly force was of company size, initiated a ground attack spearheaded by a sapper squad. The enemy force employed small arms, automatic weapons,

RPG and 60mm mortar fire in their futile attempt to overrun the paratrooper position. The battle raged on for more than two hours as airborne troopers fired everything available at the human wave attack. Artillery, gunships and an Air Force 'Spooky' aided the troopers in their defense. The Viet Cong attackers were finally beaten off. A check of the area revealed that some of the VC had been killed just 5 feet short of the paratrooper perimeter. Altogether 38 VC were killed, 23 weapons were captured as well as 20 RPG-2 rounds, 45 AK magazines, 2000 rounds of AK ammo, 40 communist grenades and a pound of documents. The commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division presented impact valor awards to the members of the Screaming Eagle defenders.

**June 30**—Paratroopers from the 2nd Brigade continued to tax the enemy's rice holdings as Airborne units from Co. B, 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., seized an

additional 21,000 pounds of rice. This brought the Nevada Eagle rice total to 253 tons captured.

**July 1**—Today marked the first day of airmobility for the 101st Airborne Division. In light action in the south, troopers from the 3rd Brigade continued Operation Toan Thang II while in the north Operation Nevada Eagle was continuing its rice denial program with the 1st and 2nd Brigades. Co. B, 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. continued to gather enemy rice by capturing six tons 6 km east of Hue.

**July 2**—Action continued to be sporadic in all brigade areas of operation. The lull in fighting was broken with the capture of six tons of rice by paratroopers of Co. B, 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. Increased contact with mines and booby traps prevailed in the coastal plains area of the 2nd Brigade.

**July 3**—First Brigade troopers killed seven enemy when the 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. engaged a small enemy force



McLaughlin



... that beautiful air-support . . .



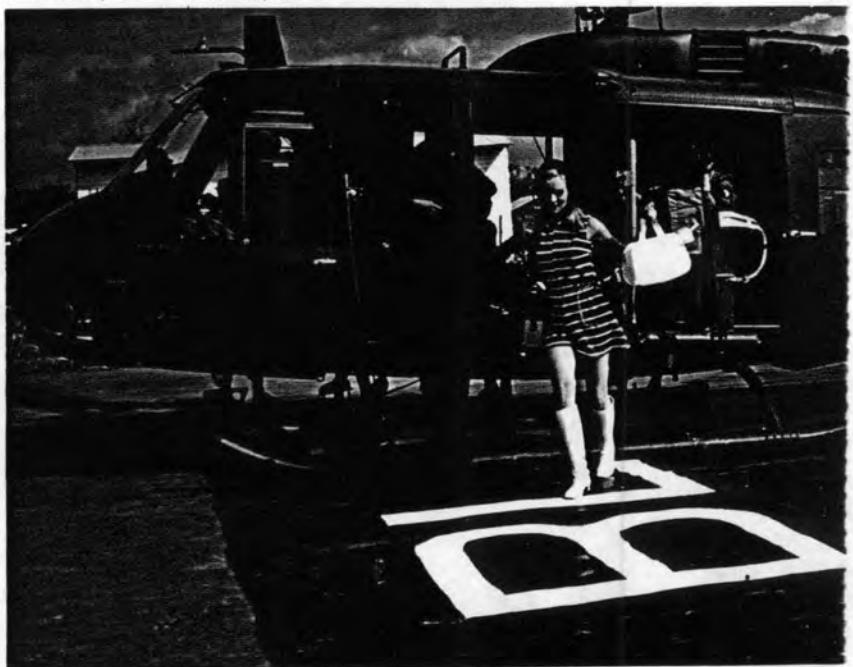
VanAlstine

## EAGLE 'EYES'



Airborne, All the way!

Kef



A brief moment before lift to the  
A Shau . . .

Wilson

## Viet Diary Cont.

moving on a trail through the triple canopy jungles south of FSB Veghel. In the 2nd Brigade, extremely light action was reported as the paratroopers killed eight enemy in four scattered contacts.

**July 4**—Today marked a day of semi-relaxation for the battle toughened Eagles. Bar-b-ques, games, and races were scheduled throughout the Division base camp areas.

**July 7**—Action shifted back to the 3rd Brigade as troopers from Co. C, 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. discovered 3600 pounds of rice. Another company from the same battalion 2 km south found a cache containing 9900 pounds of rice.

**July 8**—Companies B and C, 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. made contact with an estimated VC platoon early in the evening northwest of Cu Chi. The Viet Cong employed small arms and automatic weapons on the paratroopers. The Rakkasans countered with organic weapons while artillery battered the enemy force. A sweep by the two airborne units revealed 21 enemy dead.

**July 10**—Paratroopers of Co. A, 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. destroyed 10 enemy sampans in a no boating zone of the Song Bo River 7 km west of FSB T-Bone. Alpha company also captured

one ton of rice. Moving south to the 3rd Brigade, troopers from the 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. located a Viet Cong company 18 km northwest of Cu Chi. Heavy artillery and air strikes were called on the enemy positions while the airborne infantrymen maneuvered to overrun the enemy position. A sweep of the area revealed 17 dead VC.

**July 13**—Second Brigade troopers continued to rob the enemy of their stolen rice by capturing 8300 pounds of enemy held rice. In other action a night ambush patrol from A Troop, 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry killed four Viet Cong trying to probe the 2nd Brigade base camp of LZ Sally. In the 3rd Brigade area of operation, Airborne forces were busy uncovering two rice caches totaling 12,150 pounds. Co. D, 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. engaged a Viet Cong platoon in heavily fortified bunkers. Artillery and air strikes pounded the enemy stronghold throughout the night. At dawn a sweep by the infantrymen produced 12 enemy bodies.

**July 15**—Rice caches dominated the action for the Division as paratroopers from the 2nd Brigade continued to pour tonnage onto the operational total. Today the rice hungry troopers added four more tons to raise the total to 291 tons. The 3rd Brigade operating around Cu Chi also hit the rice trail as they seized 12,500 pounds of rice.

**July 16**—While conducting a recon-in-force 6 km east of LZ Sally, Co. B, 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., discovered 20 enemy bodies killed in previous airborne action. The bodies were wrapped in plastic covers and buried in the reeds near a river's edge. The 2nd Brigade vaulted over the 300 ton mark in the rice denial operations of Nevada Eagle. Twelve tons of rice were uncovered by 2nd Brigade troopers bringing the total to 304 tons. Further south, the 3rd Brigade uncovered 3000 pounds of rice and 46,000 piasters when they apprehended five detainees without identification cards.

**July 17**—Massive rice caches again dominated the day's fighting in both I and III Corps tactical zones for the Division. For the 3rd Brigade 16,000 pounds were found while operating around Cu Chi. Farther north in I Corps, Airborne units from the 2nd Brigade captured 12½ tons of enemy rice. Division Aviation accounted for the day's body count by killing 15 NVA on two light brushes with the enemy.

**July 18**—Airborne forces from the 2nd Brigade captured their third consecutive rice cache by seizing 10 tons of rice while operating 5 km northwest of Camp Eagle. Today's cache brought the total for Nevada Eagle to over 325 tons or enough rice to feed a 500 man battalion for almost two years.

A unit commander from the 1st Brigade directs his men during a firefight in the triple canopy jungles west of Hue.



McLaughlin

**July 19**—The Division held a change of command ceremony marking the arrival of a new commanding general. Major General Melvin Zais became CG in a ceremony highlighted by a sky diving exhibition in which two swagger sticks were presented to the new and the old Division commanders.

**July 21**—An allied task force made up of Co. C, 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., C Troop, 2nd Squadron, 34th Armor and ARVN forces launched a joint operation on the coastal plains east of Hue. Today's fighting netted the allied forces 10 enemy bodies. In light action around Cu Chi, paratroopers from Co. D, 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. discovered an enemy classroom. One hundred and thirty-eight spider holes and 67 bunkers surrounded the area.

**July 22**—Allied operations continued east of Hue with the killing of 12 additional NVA. The joint operation also netted 22 prisoners in today's fighting.

**July 23**—A lull in enemy action prevailed throughout the Division areas of operation. Troopers from the 3rd Brigade captured 13,500 pounds of rice when they overran an enemy base camp consisting of 19 concrete bunkers, four tunnels and 10 spider holes.



Higgs



A 3rd Brigade rifleman pours surprising fires on an enemy position while operating near Phuoc Vinh.

**July 25**—The lull in ground fighting was broken by the 3rd Brigade troopers when Co. A, 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. engaged an enemy battalion. Action began as Alpha Company made contact during a heliborne assault. Reinforcements were immediately dispatched to assist in trapping the enemy force. The remainder of the 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf., three companies from the 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. and Co. B, 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. joined in the cordon. Artillery and air strikes pounded the area throughout the night as the paratroopers held their positions in the snare. At dawn a sweep of the area revealed that the enemy force had fled the area leaving 28 NVA killed behind.

**July 27**—Airborne troopers from Co. B, 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. combined forces with Popular Forces (PF) from the Quang Dien District to rout the enemy from the area 5 km northeast of LZ Sally. Screaming Eagle forces killed a total of 11 VC while PF units killed an additional five and captured five prisoners.

**July 29**—Increased action within the 2nd Brigade area of operation saw paratrooper forces from Co. B, 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. combine for a joint operation with Popular Forces from the Quang Dien District. The Viet Cong strong-  
A Division pointman wades through a stream keeping an alert eye to his front.

hold was nestled in the village of Tho Bao La 4 km northeast of LZ Sally Artillery and air strikes contained the enemy force as additional 2nd Brigade troopers were air-assaulted to the area. Co. I 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., Co. A, 1st Bn 502nd Abn. Inf. and C Troop, 2nd Squadron, 34th Armor completed the cordon around the trapped enemy force. Allied units held their positions as supporting fires continued to pound the enemy. Results show 11 VC killed, three prisoners and seven weapons captured for the Screaming Eagle Popular Forces accounted for four VC killed. In addition Bravo Company seized 4½ tons of rice to raise the Nevada Eagle total to more than 34 tons captured.

**July 30**—In the 3rd Brigade area of operation, a report from the District Chief said that 15 bodies found in a pagoda near the contact of 25-26 July had been killed in that battle raising the total body count to 49. Troopers from the 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. found a cache of 9000 pounds of rice.

**July 31**—Fighting tapered off for the Division as paratroopers continued to press the enemy with extensive reconnaissance operations. Co. C, 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. killed two enemy just prior to the discovery of a mass grave containing 14 enemy bodies killed in previous fighting.

**August 1**—Paratroopers from Co. I

2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. discovered an arms cache 10 km southwest of FB T-BONE containing 28 individual and two crew served weapons as well as miscellaneous mortar and small arms rounds.

**August 4**—Airborne units of the 1st Brigade kicked off Operation Somerset Plain in the A Shau Valley. (See story page 8) In the 3rd Brigade, action remained at a standstill while troopers found a rice cache containing 12,000 pounds of rice.

**August 5**—An early morning sweep by Co. B, 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. resulted in the seizure of 12,000 pounds of enemy rice in an abandoned hut. Late in the afternoon, the 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. and the 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. conducted a heliborne assault into an area occupied by a Viet Cong battalion. Companies gained immediate contact as they moved out of the landing zone toward the suspected enemy position. Artillery, air strikes, and gunships were called to suppress the enemy fires. Flareships lighted the enemy stronghold through the night as the supporting fires continued to batter the enemy. A first light sweep revealed 14 enemy bodies and various types of equipment including 7000 pounds of rice.

**August 8**—Co. C, 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. engaged a reinforced Viet Cong

First Brigade paratroopers push westward during road clearing operations west of Hue.

McLaughlin

platoon near Cu Chi. Artillery and light fire teams aided the airborne force in their fight. After three hours the enemy unit fled leaving 11 dead.

**August 9**—Action shifted back to the coastal plains around Hue as Airborne forces from the 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. trapped a recon element from two enemy battalions. Naval air cushion vehicles aided in the operation which saw paratrooper forces kill 42 enemy and capture 17 prisoners.

**August 17**—Contact with enemy units continued to be sparse as the Screaming Eagles continued their extensive search operations. Division engineers continued their open housing program by destroying eight enemy bunkers raising the Nevada Eagle total to 3321 bunkers destroyed.

**August 19**—Operation Somerset Plain terminated today with the successful extraction of all 1st Brigade troopers from the A Shau Valley.

**August 25-31**—Two battalions of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division began recon-in-force operations 22 km south of Hue near FB Brick. They struck pay dirt. After ten days of hard fighting in the enemy regimental base area the "All Americans" of the 1st Bn., 508th Abn. Inf. and 2nd Bn., 505th Abn. Inf. had amassed a combined total of 191 enemy killed and 729 weapons

captured. In addition to this, the paratroopers also captured over 5000 mortar rounds and 2250 RPG rounds. Miscellaneous captured items including 1200 uniforms, 1650 blasting caps and 16 tons of rice. Shifting to the 3rd Brigade, 101st Abn. Div., paratroopers of Co. A, 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. made heavy contact in an area of hedgerows and thick woods 6 km north of Trang Bang near Cu Chi on August 27. As the battle raged, companies B, C and D were positioned to cordon off the enemy. Artillery, jets and gunships were called in to strike the enemy who responded with small arms, automatic weapons, RPG's and mortars. Fighting continued until after noon on the 28th when the battalion swept the cordoned area. The Currahees found 103 bodies, 19 POW's, 18 AK-47's, three machine-guns, three RPG's, two SKS rifles, two 60mm mortars and three 82mm mortars. Prisoners said that the unit had been a battalion of the 101st NVA Regt.

The cumulative results of Operation Nevada Eagle are 1822 enemy killed, 327 prisoners and 2248 individual weapons captured. Two hundred and forty-three crew served weapons also fell into Screaming Eagle hands. As this edition goes to press Operation Nevada Eagle continues to limit enemy activity in I Corps.



# a shau somerset plain

by **1Lt. Lewis E. Benton**

The long tight line of Hueys laden with paratroopers slithered between the morning clouds and the treetops of the I Corps mountains. The chilly air from the high altitude brought a shiver flavored with the unexpected, to the paratroopers from the 1st Brigade. The boom of the artillery from the firebases edging the objective echoed through the mountain gaps to that first troop carrying Huey flown by a company commander from the Division's assault helicopter battalion.

The staggered formation of slicks, flanked by gunships and Huey Cobras, weaved their way through the high, mountainous terrain toward their eerie target. Soon the last ridge bordering the famous North Vietnamese stronghold came into view. Craning necks and turned heads eyed the future battle sight. The Screaming Eagles were going to rout the enemy from his secure home. The paratroopers' mission was a raid-in-force into the A Shau Valley.

There was a feeling of uneasiness as the choppers broke through the cloud cover between the confining mountains for a swift landing at the Ta Bat airfield, a small muddy clearing in a crater-marred valley floor. With blades clattering, the choppers whirled into Ta

Bat. Paratroopers leaped from their machines to splash through the sucking orange mud. Spreading out around the clearing, the paratroopers of the 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. secured the landing zone. Simultaneously with the Ta Bat assault, the 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. air-assaulted into the northern airfield, at A Loui. Operation Somerset Plain had begun.

This marked the second time this year that allied fighting units had penetrated the North Vietnamese nerve center, 25 miles west of Hue.

The first official airmobile operation of the 101st Airborne Division went off very smoothly with minimum casualties. The Brigade assault was made without the loss of a single troop carrying heli-



copter. Flying at low altitudes, the vulnerable Division gunships were prime target for enemy gunners and as a result, six were shot down. All but one was recovered.

Once in the landing zone (LZ), the battalion perimeter was established and one company pushed forward toward their objective closer to the Laotian border.

"Our primary mission is to see what is in here and what they have been up to," said the battalion commander. "But we are looking for a good fight if we can get it," he added.

The first night in the valley was uneventful and marked by the discovery of three French mines that were more than 15 years old. The eeriness of the



The first troop carrying "Huey" lifts off from FSB Birmingham to initiate Operation Somerset Plain.

Wilson

valley seemed to dwindle as the imaginary wall of the fabled 'Red Sanctuary' crumbled before the onrushing paratroopers.

Intelligence reports indicated numerous storage facilities, truck parks, anti-aircraft positions, bulldozer operations, and troop concentrations were spotted by aerial reconnaissance. Traffic

on the road network of the valley was also spotted.

On the first day of Somerset Plain, only one significant contact was made by 1st Brigade troopers. The recon platoon and Co. C, 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., engaged a reinforced NVA squad while moving up a ridge line from the A Luoi airfield. A brief exchange of gunfire saw

the NVA force breaking contact and fleeing to the west.

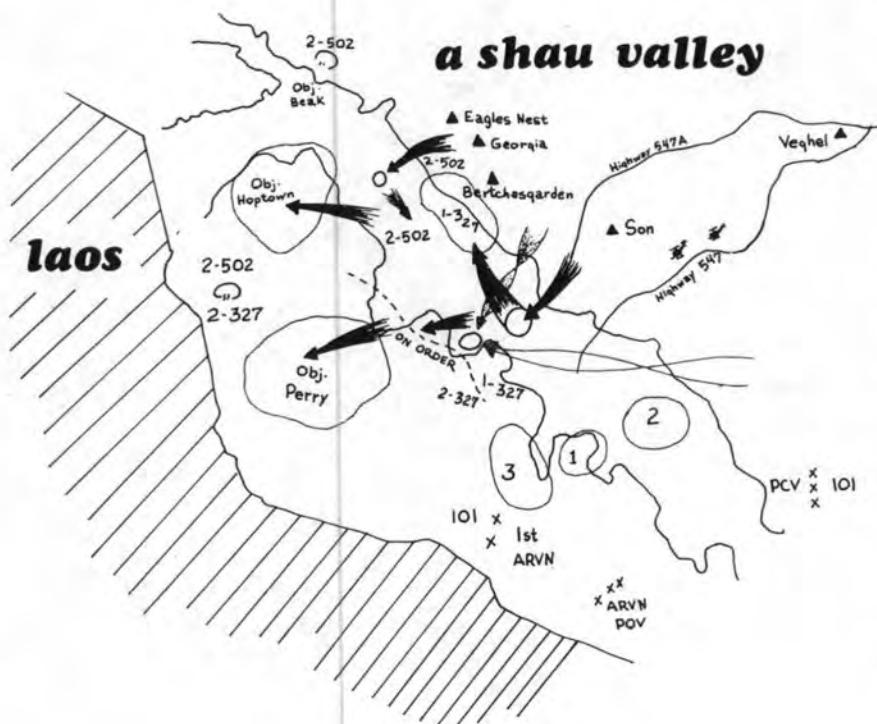
On the second morning of the operation, two battalions from the 1st ARVN Division air-assaulted into the previous day's landing zone at Ta Bat. The ARVN task force moved south, splitting up to sweep both sides of the valley.

In an effort to block the most likely route of eastern escape, the 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. began sweeping towards the A Shau, following Hwy 547 through to the Ta Bat airfield.

During the ARVN assault into the valley, Co. A and Co. C of the 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., became heavily engaged in battle with a reinforced NVA platoon deeply entrenched in bunker positions just southwest of A Luoi. Air strikes and artillery pounded the enemy position while the two airborne companies maneuvered in an attempt to trap the hostile unit. Assaulting the enemy through the entangling jungle, the paratroopers routed the NVA.

Many blood trails, shredded clothes, and other signs indicated that they had been hurt badly. The following day, during a sweep of the area, Alpha Company found fresh graves containing nine NVA bodies.

The lull in the fighting became more evident as the paratroopers pushed toward the western edge of the valley.





First Brigade troopers pause in their sweep as a Division gunship fires on an enemy position during the raid in A Shau Valley.

By the third day, the 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf., finished their drive to the Ta Bat airfield. A defensive position was established while the troopers waited for the next day's combat assault on an enemy infiltration route into the valley from Laos.

Fighting picked up on the 6th day of the operation when the 3rd Bn., 1st Regiment, 1st ARVN Division engaged an estimated NVA battalion. The NVA

Estrada

who had hoped to gain a quick victory over the South Vietnamese, were stopped by the hard fighting ARVN troops. After three days of bitter combat, the NVA broke contact. The enemy was able to escape but only after suffering 40 killed.

A few days later, on August 15, paratroopers of Co. D, 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf., were sweeping near A Luoi, when the humid jungle erupted with

enemy fire.

Mortar rounds blasted craters. R and machine-gun slugs snapped through the foliage at the paratroopers. Artillery, air strikes, and gunships sent high explosives and steel ripping through the NVA position.

Charging through the jungle rocki with the din of battle, Delta Compa drove the enemy from his positio The enemy fled leaving seven dead their wake.

After these two bitter tastes of alli power, the enemy was content to sti with small harrassing attacks, mos in the form of mortar, and artillery f on the supporting fire bases and on t units' defensive perimeters.

On August 21, the allied troops we airlifted from the valley floor. During the 17-day operation, 170 NVA we killed, four prisoners taken, along wi 58 individual and crew served weapon

The paratroopers left the NVA sanctuary in the picturesque valley a shambles. Base camps were destroyed, roa cut, caches uncovered. The remaini NVA were left in a valley ringed wi Screaming Eagle artillery to discour its' future tactical value.

Dismount at Ta Bat. Paratroopers fro the 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. run fro a 'slick' to secure the battalion lan ing zone.



# Rendezvous With Destiny

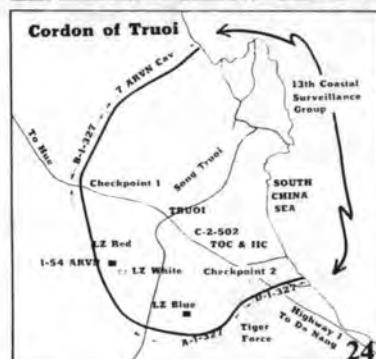
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## EDITOR'S NOTE:

Operation Nevada Eagle ended on February 28. An article on Page 2 of this edition of *Rendezvous With Destiny* tells of the operation and its results. The other articles complement the Nevada Eagle analysis. "Screaming Eagle Vietnam Diary," Page 5, is a day-by-day account of the last three months of the operation. "Thunder From Above" on Page 13 explores the key to our success in battle—Eagle firepower—including two pages of color on 16 and 17. "Looking for Charlie," Page 24, highlights just one of the many successful cordon and search operations that contributed greatly to winning both the hot war and "The Other War," Page 20. In concluding this issue we take a look at one man as he concludes his Vietnam tour and is "Going Home" on Page 28.



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# 288 DAYS OF NEVADA EAGLE



A long, steady period of fighting and tracking the enemy reached its end Feb. 28. Screaming Eagles hurt the enemy bad, kept him from a repetition of the 1968 Tet Offensive, kept him away from the populated coastal plains—and also invaded the enemy's own areas, posting invisible signs everywhere in Thua Thien Province: This is Eagle Country.

By Spec. 5 Alan Magary

The country below is spread out like a giant map. There is the pure blue of the South China Sea, then a ribbon of white sand beaches interrupted in places by the jet black rock that jumps the beaches and plunges directly into the boiling water. As you continue to fly with the sun, there are grand expanses of green checkerboard—here and there lines of brown, here a dike, there a trail. Small houses, gardens, palm trees. Tiny figures moving. Quiet and peaceful, a village. Nearby, another. Then—the first outcrop on the plain, a hill with a row of houses nestled beneath it. Then—streaking north and south, a black line: Highway 1. Off to the right, a large walled city, a child's building blocks scattered around according to some plan: Hue, the Imperial City.

But now, below, the rice paddies blend into scrub land and small hills. Now there are clouds, low clouds hung from the sky, overlapping the hills. A mountain jumps out of the earth, its summit hidden in silent, mysterious mist. Another—another—more mountains. There is no sign of life now. Then—the jungle, the triple

canopy, dark and green, forbidden. On the ground, you would be living in a continual half-light, ghostly—the sunlight filtering down—occasionally a clearing. Now—rows and rows of giant peaks—cloud covered. The Valley—the A Shau—the scrubby, jungled darkened plain covered with elephant grass, tangled vegetation. You don't want to go down there. Finally, somewhere below, an invisible line: Laos, a sanctuary.

This is the I Corps Tactical Zone. Thua Thien Province: Hue and environs, the coastal plains, the jungles, the mountains.

This is Eagle Country.

It was not always so. I Corps has been the scene of some of the fiercest fighting of the Vietnam war. Once you were not safe in very many places on that giant map—you were even not that safe in the sky. For hidden in the jungles and mountains, hidden in the villages and towns that dot the coastal plain was—the enemy. The enemy was everywhere. Hue was held for 22 days in February 1968 by the enemy, and was recaptured

only after bloody fighting by American and Vietnamese troops.

Now the situation has changed. Thua Thien Province does not belong to the enemy any longer—it belongs to the people, and the ground troops are steadily taking a tighter hold on the property deed.

During Operation Nevada Eagle, which ended Feb. 28 after 288 days, Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division, together with the 1st Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam, and other South Vietnamese forces, have dealt the enemy fatal blows.

Here are the statistics, barren as they are:

—Paratroopers of the 101st killed 1,915 Viet Cong and 1,384 North Vietnamese Army regulars, for a total of 3,299.

—Seven hundred and ninety-eight VC were detained, along with 55 NVA.

—Seven hundred and fourteen communists rallied to the Government of Vietnam under the Chieu Hoi (open arms) program.

—Screaming Eagles broke into the enemy's arms room and seized 3,702 weapons, including more than 300 crew-served weapons.

—The Division raided the enemy's pantry and carried off 667.9 tons of rice.

—Enormous, almost uncounted quantities of munitions and equipment were captured.

The figures have to be translated. Screaming Eagles killed the equivalent of eight 400-man enemy battalions. Two battalions more were captured, and the men of two more battalions surrendered as Hoi Chanhs. At the same time, paratroopers captured enough weapons to arm approximately nine enemy battalions. And the enemy also went hungry—enough rice was captured to feed the men of 10 NVA battalions for about a year.

In compiling these statistics since May 17, 1968, Screaming Eagles stunned the enemy in contacts on the populated coastal plain and sent him reeling into the jungled mountains in the western part of the province and even into Laos to lick his wounds. He could not come back to the lowlands without further penalty.

But the paratroopers used their new Eagle's wings—helicopters—and pursued the enemy to his hiding places in the mountains. The enemy was kept running, kept from organizing and moving to any attack.

And so, in Hue and the other cities in the lowlands, people stood up and began to rebuild.

The operation was conducted by the 1st and 2nd Brigades of the 101st and the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division until early October 1968, when the Screaming Eagle 3rd Brigade in III Corps and the All Americans of the 82nd changed places. Nevada Eagle was under the command of Maj. Gen. O. M. Barsanti until mid-July, and thereafter of Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, "Lucky Eagle."

Nevada Eagle started the day after Operations Carentan II and Delaware concluded. In the latter operation, Screaming Eagles of the 1st Brigade and the 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. blocked off enemy supply routes leading out of the A Shau Valley. (And, shortly after Nevada Eagle ended, Division troopers went back into the valley to initiate Operation Massachusetts Striker).

In August, as part of Nevada Eagle, two battalions—2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. and 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf.—air-assaulted back into the valley for Operation Somerset Plain. The 17-day raid netted 170 NVA killed, four suspects captured and 58 individual and crew-served weapons captured.

In another highlight of Nevada Eagle, the 2nd Brigade's 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. and ARVN elements combat-assaulted onto Vinh Loc Island, a self-acclaimed haven for the enemy, and established a cordon. One hundred and fifty-four NVA and VC were killed, 370 suspects detained and 178 weapons captured. The operation was so successful that it became a model for cordon operations everywhere in Vietnam and was even added to the curriculum of the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Ga.

Cordon operations were very frequent after the first week in June, when there was decreasing contact with platoon-size or larger enemy forces. Cordon operations were conducted in Phu Vang District at the end of September, late October and in December and January. Phu Loc and Truoi were cordoned successfully, and further cor-



Griffith  
**853 prisoners captured...**



Steckel  
**...3,702 weapons seized...**



**...667.9 tons of rice discovered.**

**Operation Nevada Eagle**  
**(17 May 1968 - 28 Feb 1969)**



dons were established on Vinh Loc Island.

The enemy was impressed by the skill shown by combined forces and the thoroughness of the tactics. Maj. Hoang Ban Trung, a Viet Cong assigned as a troop proselytizer, wrote in despair to his superiors:

"The enemy is using the 'sweep and occupy' tactics. . . So doing, they cause a lot of headaches to us. . . Most of the military action cadre were killed. . . (After a cordon is established) they push forward the communist denunciation movement, keep pressure and watch closely our infrastructure, some of them already defected, or were detected by ralliers. This caused much trouble among the people; the people now lose confidence in the final victory of the people revolution. . .

"Even our secret agents surrendered to the enemy. It is very difficult to build up new agents or infrastructure now. We could not go into the hamlets to get in touch with our men because the enemy has a very effective control and checking system. . . No one is left now to carry out the military action program, and even if there are some left, it would do no good now. . .

"As to me, I have no problem with my health but I am very thin and tense every moment now. . ."

Three weeks after writing this, Trung was killed by paratroopers of D Co., 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., and his letter was captured.

Trung's comrades in the mountains must have been in despair also. Everywhere they went, there was the Eagle waiting for them. If they stayed too long in one place, the Eagle came down from the sky to find them. If they moved to a safer place, the Eagle found them, and called in artillery, gunships, air strikes.

Shortly after Nevada Eagle terminated, Maj. Gen. Zais paid simple tribute to his soldiers:

"They are truly men to match the

mountains and jungles."

The Eagle flies with the sun, we ward. He passes over the churning sea, the ribbon of beach, the pattern of rice paddies and villages—the hills that become mountains, the continuous clouds. He passes over the mountains, to the valley.

His country, Eagle Country. The people which are not his soon will be.



# SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY

With the enemy withdrawing into their jungle and mountain hideaways, Paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division pursued them and kept them running. It was the "twilight war" with short, fleeting contacts with small enemy groups, with rarely a major contact as Nevada Eagle ended. But the stage was set for another A Shau thrust.

Dec. 1—As the Division was ending its first year in Vietnam, Operation Nevada Eagle was still proving successful in severely limiting enemy activity in Thua Thien Province, including Hue and its environs. From May 7, when Nevada Eagle started, to the beginning of December, 2,759 enemy had been killed and 803 prisoners captured, along with enormous quantities of arms, munitions, equipment and rice. During the first day of the new month, 24 enemy were killed, 12 weapons and one prisoner were captured. Three enemy soldiers on a rice-collection and propaganda-distribution mission turned themselves in to paratroopers of A/2/506 northeast of Firebase Jeanne. Delta Company troopers of 1/327 discovered a small base camp and two weapons southwest of Los Banos. Nearby the soldiers found 15 fresh graves containing NVA believed to have been killed by artillery, tactical air strikes and small arms one or two days before. A/1/502 killed one enemy in one contact, later killed another and captured a third. Currahees of C/2/506 ambushed two sampans, killing three Viet Cong. The other



42  
175  
97

# SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY

enemy in the boats beached the sampans and moved out on foot before being engaged again by Charlie Company paratroopers, who took one weapon. Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, Division Commander, began the month by pulling the lanyard of a 105 mm howitzer at FB Sandy to send the Screaming Eagles' one millionth round against the enemy. One year before to the day, a gun of the 2/319 Artillery had fired the Division's first round in III Corps action. And, in a report early in the month, it was learned the milestone of 10,000 enemy killed by the 101st was reached late in November.

**Dec. 2**—Screaming Eagles added 16 enemy killed, one prisoner and eight weapons to Nevada Eagle totals. West of FB Quick a Ranger team engaged three VC and took a prisoner and four weapons. In reaction to the contact, the Aero-Rifle Platoon of D/1/1 Cav was inserted into the area and killed one enemy soldier and captured another. Two pink teams (each comprised of a Cobra gunship and a light observation helicopter) in support of 3rd Brigade operations killed two enemy with rockets and minigun fire. The brigade also initiated a combined cordon operation along the O Lua River, netting 32 suspects the first day.

**Dec. 3**—Fifteen enemy were killed, three prisoners taken and seven weapons captured in action throughout the AO. A/1/501 engaged six enemy, killing five and capturing another plus four weapons. C/2/506, in a night defensive position north of FB Long, killed two enemy with claymores. A 2/17 Cav red team

(two gunships) and a CAP (Combined Action Platoon) team engaged an enemy platoon near Sandy, resulting in three enemy killed.

**Dec. 4**—A DivArty aerial recon craft spotted three enemy bodies during a day of light contact. FB Brick, on Leech Island, was closed with the extraction of the Delta Raiders of 2/501.

**Dec. 5**—Six enemy were killed and six weapons captured in the AO. Two night ambushes, one near FB Boise by the 2/502 Reconos and the other near Jeanne by D/1/502, were successful, with three enemy killed. Company A of the 1st Battalion Geronimos captured two enemy after engaging an unknown size force near Sandy.

**Dec. 7**—Rakkasans of C/3/187 engaged four enemy in a sampan on the Song Bo River west of FB T-Bone, killing all four and sinking the sampan.

**Dec. 8**—Two enemy were killed and seven weapons captured in scattered action. A 2/17 Cav aircraft destroyed one heavy machine gun after engaging an enemy automatic weapons position.

**Dec. 9**—Screaming Eagles killed four enemy, captured two prisoners and eight weapons in the AO. A/1/327 discovered six German Mauser rifles in a hut south of FB Tomahawk. Recon/1/502 ambushed and killed two enemy northwest of FB Omaha. A/1/501 captured two VC near the coast.

**Dec. 10**—A 2nd Brigade aircraft, fired at southwest of Sandy, returned fire, and an infantry sweep revealed two enemy killed and two AK-47s. C/2/327 ambushed two enemy, killing one, west of Hill 88.

**Dec. 11**—Two combined forces cordon operations were established. With air and amphibious assaults, 1/501 with

ARVN troops, the Hue River Sec Group and National Police cordoned northern part of Vinh Loc Island, an earlier cordon was so successful it served as a model for cordons all over Vietnam. On the first day, 500 were screened, with five classified as In the second cordon, in northern Q Dien District, the 3/5 Cav combined Popular Forces and the Hue River Sec Group. In scattered action throughout the AO, three enemy were killed and five weapons captured.

**Dec. 12**—No Slack paratroopers C Company engaged nine enemy west of Hill 88, killing three and capturing an RPG launcher and miscellaneous ammo. The Tiger Force of 1/327 bushed three enemy south of Old Glory, killing two.

**Dec. 13**—In the day's heavy fighting, near Leech Island, Ranger gaged seven enemy and killed four. 2nd Brigade CO's C&C aircraft killed enemy just southeast of Hue. Elsewhere two other enemy were killed by Screaming Eagles, with one prisoner and two weapons taken. One year ago this day Division's 2nd and 3rd Brigades officially reported for combat in Vietnam. A was reported, almost 2000 Screaming Eagles, mostly in infantry battalions, tended their Vietnam tours by six months.

**Dec. 14**—Two 101st AHB ships teamed up with ARVN troops to kill 13 NVA in Phu Vang District

**Whatever you called him--VC or Charlie you always had to look for him...**



the South China Sea. Nearby, in the second phase of the Vinh Loc cordon, Alpha and Charlie Companies of 1/501 captured seven prisoners and four weapons. Recon/1/506 surprised five NVA near FB Long and killed two, also capturing an SKS. Five other enemy killed were accounted for in the AO.

**Dec. 16**—Two villagers provided Screaming Eagles information that led to the killing of one enemy and the discovery of two other enemy killed near Phu Loc. Recon/1/502—the Chain Gang—engaged two armed VC, who discarded their weapons and fled into a group of civilians.

**Dec. 17**—On the third day of the combined forces Phu Vang IV operation, two enemy were killed. The 3rd Brigade conducted multi-battalion air assaults into landing zones near FB Maureen, initiating a new operation aimed at the 6th NVA Regiment base area. Screaming Eagle units were 1/506 and 3/187.

**Dec. 18**—Six enemy dead were accounted for in scattered action.

**Dec. 19**—In a bizarre incident, B/2/502 reported four enemy dressed as ARVN troops approached their night defensive position early in the evening. One was heard speaking English before opening fire. The disguised enemy fled, breaking the contact. Near Phan Thiet, D/3/506 engaged 15 VC and killed three.

**Dec. 20**—In response to intelligence, C/2/502 engaged an enemy squad, killing seven and capturing seven weapons, later killing another. The 3rd Brigade continued a major effort against the NVA and Viet Cong in the Dong Tam Hanh Mountain area during a combined forces operation. D/3/187, after engaging two enemy near Rao Trang, captured an RPG launcher and later found a submachine gun. An ambush still later resulted in one enemy killed.

**Dec. 21**—It was the busiest day in a month for Screaming Eagles. Three incidents involving gunships netted seven enemy killed in the Phu Loc area, and a dozen enemy were killed elsewhere. 2/17 Cav accounted for six enemy killed in three encounters.

**Dec. 23**—Linda Giese of San Mateo, Calif., sister of a paratrooper killed in action, met members of his company, A/1/327, at FB Old Hickory. When she left Camp Eagle three days later, Mrs. Giese said, "I feel like I have a hundred brothers in the company. I love them all." San Mateo had adopted Alpha Company.

**Dec. 24**—Seven km east of Hue, A/1/501, after receiving small arms fire from a bunker, returned fire and captured three prisoners and two of their weapons. In the evening, paratroopers moved into defensive positions to observe the Christmas ceasefire.

**Dec. 25**—Christmas night, Strike Force troopers of C/2/502 killed three enemy and captured their weapons near FB Anzio when the enemy attempted a probe of the Screaming Eagle perimeter. Paratroopers of the 101st extended their Christmas celebration to the people of Thua Thien Province. The 3rd Brigade, for instance, sent a convoy of presents to Gia Long II hamlet. Among the gifts were 50 cases of canned goods, 80 bags of rice and 200 bags of candy.

Krieger



**Choppers added mobility--and relieved your feet.**

**Dec. 26**—In a running fight with the enemy, A/2/502—Attack Company—engaged 25 enemy soldiers who were leaving a village early in the morning. The paratroopers killed seven in all, captured a prisoner and took six individual weapons. The 2nd Brigade S-3, in a C&C aircraft, engaged two enemy, killing one and capturing another.

**Dec. 28**—The assistant S-3 of 3/5 Cav, on a visual reconnaissance in a LOH, observed seven enemy and engaged them with an M-16, killing one. A sweep by B/1/506 netted three wounded VC as a result of the contact.

**Dec. 29**—An enemy soldier carrying a sketch map and other documents was ambushed and killed 3 km north of Camp Eagle by 2/17 Cav. Four other enemy were killed in other contacts in the AO. 2/502 Reconos found a cache of seven weapons and miscellaneous munitions near FB Boise. While on ambush south of Phan Thiet in II Corps, elements of D/3/506 detonated claymores and grenades on an unknown size enemy force, killing two. The next day, Delta Company paratroopers engaged five enemy, killing them and taking their weapons.

**Dec. 31**—Screaming Eagles initiated a year-end offensive, a combined forces operation in Nam Hoa District aimed at NVA battalions. It was started with multiple air assaults by 1/506 and ARVN troops along the Song Thao Ma. Elements of 3/506 in southern II Corps killed two VC in two contacts and captured large quantities of food and medical supplies.

**Jan. 1**—The recon element and D Company of 1/506 discovered a smoldering cache near FB Mexico that included the barrels of seven individual weapons and one crew-served weapon along with the remains of \$400,000 in

VC tax scrip—receipts to be given villagers by the enemy for seizure of rice and other commodities.

**Jan. 2**—In an ambush near Old Hickory, A/2/327 killed three enemy while the No Slack recon element—the Hawks—killed another after a combat assault. Recon craft of D/1/1 Cav killed three enemy in the Ruong Ruong Valley east of the A Shau.

**Jan. 3**—Seven enemy were killed and two captured in action in the AO.

**Jan. 4**—While searching an area 7 km southwest of Hue, C/1/502 picked up one Viet Cong officer and three weapons. In two contacts near FB Quick, for two enemy killed and four weapons Charlie Company of 2/502 accounted captured.

**Jan. 5**—Paratroopers of 1/501 supported the initiation of a 2/54 ARVN soft cordon of the northern end of Vinh Loc Island.

**Jan. 7**—The 1st Brigade initiated a new operation in the Ruong Ruong Valley aimed at the enemy's rear supply and base areas. The operation started with an air assault by 2/502 into an LZ northeast of the valley and the establishment of FB Dagger.

**Jan. 9**—Twenty NVA engaged an ambush patrol of B/2/327 near the Nuoc Ngot Bridge. The troopers killed seven and captured one prisoner and seven AK-47s and a pistol. Near the coast, artillery fire called in on two enemy sampans killed two Viet Cong. Screaming Eagles accounted for 18 other enemy dead elsewhere in the AO.

**Jan. 11**—Gunships of 2/17 Cav with air support accounted for four enemy killed and an RPG launcher captured 20 km southeast of Hue. One prisoner was captured in another contact. Elements of 3/506 killed three enemy and captured documents near Phan Thiet.



## EAGLE 'EYES'



McCauley



Roderick



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# SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY

**Jan. 12**—Early in the morning, Camp Eagle and Gia Le received seven to ten 122 mm rockets, causing light damage and no casualties. In light action, five enemy killed and one weapon were added to Navada Eagle totals. A/3/506 discovered an enemy supply point near Phan Thiet and destroyed seven structures and eight tons of rice.

**Jan. 13**—Delta Company paratroopers of 2/327 killed three and captured their weapons when they ambushed an eight-man rice carrying element near the South China Sea coast. Enemy movement of supplies was further foiled when Currahees of C/2/506 killed one enemy and sank two sampans on the Song Bo as the communists tried to move south. The soft cordon on Vinh Loc Island was terminated with the extraction of the 1st Battalion Geronimos. The 3rd Brigade's operation ended with good results as 1/506 and two 1st ARVN Division battalions were extracted from locations in Nam Hoa District. The two-week operation resulted in 12 enemy killed and 26 individual weapons captured.

**Jan. 14**—Near Phan Thiet, 3/506 Currahees killed three while supporting gunships killed eight.

**Jan. 16**—In the day's only heavy contact, an element of C/2/327 engaged 25 NVA soldiers attempting to cross QL-1 near Thua Luu Bridge. The No Slack platoon allowed the enemy to get within 30 meters of their position before opening fire. As the North Vietnamese soldiers fled to the south, artillery was called in to block withdrawal routes. An initial sweep revealed 12 enemy killed and six weapons. Six more enemy dead and four more weapons were found the next morning.

**Jan. 17**—As enemy activity continued in the 1st Brigade AO, B/2/327 engaged an enemy squad, killing five and taking a prisoner and five weapons, including a B-40 rocket launcher.

**Jan. 18**—C/1/501 Geronimos sank four sampans on a unauthorized waterway, killing two VC and capturing their AKs. Paratroopers of 2/501 completed air assaults into landing zones north of the Khe Lo Mui Valley.

**Jan. 19**—As the battalion invaded

enemy areas, B/2/501 killed three and captured two weapons. Paratroopers of D/3/506 killed two VC with claymores near Phan Thiet.

**Jan. 22**—In an air strike supporting ARVN Black Panthers southwest of Leech Island, an F-4 Phantom crashed and its pilots were attacked by enemy ground forces. While covering the evacuation of the airmen, 4/77 Arty ARA and gunships from D/101 AHB killed three NVA. Elsewhere, gunships killed two enemy soldiers who fired at sniffer aircraft.

**Jan. 23**—D/2/327 paratroopers engaged 12 enemy near the coast with small arms and artillery, killing two and capturing three AKs.

**Jan. 24**—The 3rd Brigade initiated a new operation in the western part of

Krieger

two VC on a paymaster team. They killed one of them and captured 45,000 piasters.

**Jan. 26**—The 2nd Brigade operation continued with air assaults into LZ Son. In the area, the CO of the 101st AHB spotted several NVA and a 37 mm antiaircraft gun. Delta Company gunships were called in, resulting in two NVA killed and the AA gun destroyed. In the 3rd Brigade operation, C/2/506 discovered a cache of 24 SKS rifles, three RPDs, one RPG launcher, 30 60 mm mortar rounds and 30 RPG rounds in an elaborate hut-bunker complex in the mountains west of Camp Evans. The 1st Brigade's operation continued near FB Quick II with light contact. The 2/502 Recondos engaged an NVA platoon, killed two, and later found a cache of four weapons.



the AO, again aimed at the 6th NVA Regiment base area. It began with air assaults by Rakkasans of 3/187 into LZs Barbara and Mexico and continued with 2/506 and 1st ARVN assaults into Carol, Heidi and Davis.

**Jan. 25**—Continuing a new Screaming Eagle series of offensives in enemy base areas, elements of the 2nd Brigade initiated an operation aimed at cutting off enemy movement out of the A Shau along Highway 547A. Air assaults were conducted into FB Bastogne. Elsewhere in the AO, 101st Paratroopers accounted for 18 enemy dead, one prisoner, one Hoi Chanh and four captured weapons. A/2/501 discovered a sizeable grave complex containing 16 enemy bodies in the Leech Island area. Part of Delta Company of 3/506 Currahees encountered

**Jan. 27**—Screaming Eagle offensives continued, with 11 enemy killed and one prisoner captured. 2/502 killed six enemy while 1/327 troopers killed two enemy near FB Anzio. A Ranger team operating east of FB Strike had three contacts resulting in two enemy killed.

**Jan. 28**—Three contacts by 2/502 in the 1st Brigade operation were reported, with two enemy killed. The pointman of Charlie Company engaged five VC who fled leaving behind two weapons. Elsewhere in the AO, seven enemy were killed.

**Jan. 29**—Strike Force troopers accounted for three enemy killed near FB Quick II. Near Phan Thiet, 3/506 paratroopers killed three VC.

**Jan. 31**—Screaming Eagles killed four enemy and captured one weapon.

# SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY



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with B/2/327 killing one and taking a weapon in a clash northwest of the Nuoc Ngot Bridge. Two prisoners and another weapon were picked up the next morning. Operation McLain, conducted by 3/506 Currahees near Phan Thiet, terminated. The battalion, under the operational control of Task Force South of I Field Force, accounted for 831 enemy killed, more than 300 detained and 490 weapons seized. The operation lasted nearly a year.

**Feb. 1**—The enemy increased his standoff activities with four incidents of mortar and rocket attacks on allied positions and otherwise continued to evade physical contact. Nine 122 mm rockets hit Camp Evans (only four inside the perimeter), causing no casualties and only minor damage. Counterbattery fire was immediately employed.

**Feb. 2**—Bravo Company of 2/327 killed two enemy and captured two weapons southwest of Nuoc Ngot Bridge following a mortar attack on FB Tomahawk. Also attacked was Camp Eagle, where seven 122s landed, causing one minor wound.

**Feb. 4**—In two heavy contacts seven minutes apart near Phu Loc, No Slack paratroopers of B and C Companies accounted for 17 Viet Cong killed, three prisoners and 18 weapons captured. Two more weapons were found the next morning.

**Feb. 5**—The 1st Brigade terminated its operation in the Ruong Ruong Valley. Always First paratroopers killed 80 enemy, captured 10 prisoners, 80 individual weapons and one crew-served weapon in the 30-day operation, which was part of Nevada Eagle.

**Feb. 6**—In three contacts west of FB Quick, A/2/502 killed two and captured three weapons. Also southeast of the Citadel, recon troopers of 1/501 en-

gaged three VC in a bunker, killing them and taking a weapon.

**Feb. 8**—FB Veghel closed as the 2nd Brigade began to phase out its operation against enemy supply routes out of the A Shau. The 1st Brigade's O-Deuce continued to RIF deeper into the 4th NVA Regiment base area southeast of Phu Loc. Near Phan Thiet, 3/506 surprised five VC at a rice supply point, killed one and captured the other four in addition to 2100 pounds of rice.

**Feb. 9**—Combined forces in the 1st Brigade AO engaged two enemy, killing five and capturing the other five. 2/502 paratroopers with 1st ARVN soldiers killed two and captured two weapons. The Ready To Go 2nd Brigade terminated its operation. FB Bastogne, near the A Shau, was closed. In II Corps, D/3/506 killed three NVA in a firefight. At Camp Eagle, the Division Memorial Chapel was dedicated by Maj. Gen. Francis Sampson, Army Chief of Chaplains.

**Feb. 10**—Penetration into enemy base areas and extensive operations on the plains resulted in occasional contacts with squad- to platoon-size elements. As 2/501 pursued the 5th NVA Regiment near Nui Ke, A Company killed two enemy. The 3rd Brigade initiated a new phase of its operation. Camp Evans received two 122 mm rockets, one landing inside the perimeter. In a 20-minute firefight, B/3/506 killed four of 10 enemy and took four weapons and documents.

**Feb. 11**—Nevada Eagle totals were raised by four enemy killed, one prisoner and three weapons captured in scattered contact.

**Feb. 12**—The Screaming Eagle Division's "orphan" battalion in II Corps, the 3/506 Currahees, was in heavy contact. Charlie Company combat assaulted into a hot LZ in support of RFs and

was immediately engaged by the NV. In a seven-hour firefight, the paratroopers killed 20 enemy while D/2/320 A killed five. Other elements of I Field Force's Task Force South accounted for another 28 enemy killed. Back in Corps, the 1st Brigade opened a new offensive operation with a combat assault by 2/502 north and east of FB Bridge. The 2nd Brigade's 1/501 established new cordon southwest of FB Sandy. Elsewhere, Screaming Eagles deployed to complement the disposition of ARVN troops for the Tet holidays.

**Feb. 13**—The new Leech Island operation continued as 2/502 searched for an enemy sapper battalion. 2/501 continued to recon in the Nui Ke area, killing three enemy. 2/17 Cav gunships, while supporting the 9th Marines' Operation Dewey Canyon north of the Shau, killed five enemy. 3/506 Currahees discovered 22½ tons of rice.

**Feb. 14**—The 3rd Brigade initiated a new phase of its operation against the 6th NVA Regiment with 1/506 conducting an air assault and beginning a RIF toward FB Sword. Screaming Eagles conducted extensive patrol and RIF operations aimed at thwarting enemy attempts to position for a repetition of 1968's Tet Offensive. Four enemy were killed and 16 weapons captured during the day. The largest haul, of 12 weapons, was found in a hut near Leech Island by Strike Force troopers. Included in the find were nine M-2 carbines, two Chicom SMGs and a Russian SMG. Near Nui Ke, paratroopers of 2/501 killed two VC and captured an RPG launcher and an AK-47.

**Feb. 15**—Scattered contact with squad-size or smaller enemy forces resulted in 11 enemy killed, two prisoners and 16 weapons captured. 2/502 found seven enemy dead, later discovered five weapons in a tunnel during patrols nor-

and east of FB Brick. In two brief contacts in the rocket belt, 1/502 killed one enemy, captured another and took an AK and an RPG launcher. Rakkasans of Company A engaged a squad, killing one enemy, taking a prisoner and four AK-47s, two machine guns and two RPG launchers northwest of FB Katy.

**Feb. 16**—Screaming Eagles moved into defensive positions in the evening for a 24-hour Tet holiday ceasefire. Earlier encounters with small enemy groups resulted in six killed and nine weapons captured. B/2/502 found seven hooches with bunkers and five weapons. First Strike troopers killed two enemy and captured their weapons.

**Feb. 17**—Screaming Eagles joined with the people of Thua Thien Province in celebrating the Tet holidays. The 501st Signal threw a party at Tay Loc orphanage, inside the Hue Citadel. The orphanage had been destroyed in last year's Tet Offensive but rebuilt with the 101st's aid. Support Command and Division Artillery also gave parties at orphanages, and the three brigades gave a total of 15 parties at schools and orphanages. The Division band played at three locations, and Screaming Eagles were provided with newly minted coins and specially printed holiday greetings to give to the people of the province. The Division also ex-

**Whenever you looked up, there were helicopters, and somebody to bring them in.**



**Not only mountains and jungles, but water too...**

tended the helping hand to the widows and orphans of 1st ARVN Division soldiers who died defending their homeland.

**Feb. 18**—Seven enemy were killed and one weapon captured in scattered action. 1st Brigade paratroopers killed six in the lowlands along QL-1 and in RIFs northwest of FB Brick.

**Feb. 19**—Nine enemy were killed and 10 weapons captured in the AO. 2/501, while patrolling the Nui Ke rocket belt, killed four enemy and captured five weapons. Gunships supporting sniffer aircraft killed three enemy in two contacts southeast of FB Tennessee.

**Feb. 20**—The 1st Brigade initiated a new offensive operation with assaults south of FB Normandy for probes into the 5th NVA Regiment base area. In search and clear operations northwest of Bastogne, A/1/502 killed one enemy and captured one weapon when they spotted a VC installing a booby trap. B/3/506 Currahees found 1200 pounds of rice in an area surrounded by 105 booby traps; the next day, the paratroopers discovered 1500 pounds of rice.

**Feb. 21**—Combined forces in the 2nd Brigade AO killed four enemy and took two weapons, and the allies in the 3rd Brigade AO captured two prisoners and one weapon.

**Feb. 22**—Rockets and mortars hit targets all over Vietnam—except in the Screaming Eagle AO—as the enemy launched its long awaited offensive after the Tet holidays ended. Division Rear at Bien Hoa was hit with enemy rockets and mortars during communist attacks, including ground assaults, in the Saigon-Long Binh-Bien Hoa area. The 3rd Currahee battalion at Phan Thiet was the only Screaming Eagle combat unit to become a target. Enemy mortars buffeted LZ Betty as the offensive began early in the morning. An enemy force estimated at two VC companies attacked the base in two places. Echo Company mortar-men fought the VC sapper teams on the fringes of the company area, repulsing

the ground attack. Contact continued until dawn. The Currahees accounted for 14 enemy killed, one prisoner taken and eight AK-47s and large amounts of explosives and satchel charges captured. Meanwhile, in the Division AO in I Corps, there was light and scattered contact.

**Feb. 23**—The weather broke to permit the 1st Brigade's offensive to continue. Rakkasans conducted a combat assault into LZ Susan in the Khe Lo Moi Valley southwest of FB Brick. While flying support for the assault, 4/77 Aerial Rocket Artillery killed three enemy, and D/101 AHB killed another. The 3rd Brigade's operation continued as elements of 1/506 killed three enemy while repelling an attack on Firebase Sword early in the morning. Sword received mortars, RPG rounds and sporadic small arms fire in what was possibly the only enemy-initiated contact of the new offensive in the 101st's AO.

**Feb. 24**—Ten enemy were killed and 10 weapons were captured in the AO. The 1st Brigade operation continued despite poor weather as elements of 3/187 with ARA and artillery support killed two enemy and captured five SKS rifles and a carbine southwest of FB Brick. C/2/327 killed two and took one weapon southwest of Phu Loc. The 3rd Brigade began the third phase of an operation as 1/506 discovered a hut and four bunkers, two RPDs and an AK, also killing six NVA when A Co. engaged 20 to 30 NVA fleeing the area.

**Feb. 25**—C and D Cos. of 2/502 combat assaulted into LZ Red. In four contacts, 3/187 killed two enemy and captured two weapons southwest of FB Brick. The 2nd Brigade initiated a combined cordon southeast of Sandy, with elements of 1/501, 1/502, C/2/34 Armor, ARVN troops, RFs, PFs and National Police. Elsewhere, B/2/501 engaged three NVA, killing one and capturing two AK-47s, one carbine, a 60 mm mortar tube and 10 mortar rounds.

**Feb. 26**—A and D Cos. of the Rak-

# SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY

***At the end of a long week, a time in the half-light of the jungle to pray, possibly, for safety the next week.***

kasans, in three contacts, killed three VC and captured one crewserved and one individual weapon. B/1/502 captured two tons of paddy rice in the combined cordon near Sandy. A combined cordon was established along the west bank of the Song Bo south of the An Lo Bridge by 3rd Brigade and ARVN elements.

**Feb. 27**—The short Song Bo cordon was terminated, with combined forces netting six members of the VC infrastructure and one M-60 machine gun.

**Feb. 28**—The month drew to a close with an important day in 101st Airborne history: Operation Nevada Eagle terminated at midnight. (See "288 Days of Nevada Eagle," P. 2.) On the last day of Nevada Eagle, four enemy were killed and one crewserved weapon was captured. 2/502 and 3/187 continued to probe deeper into enemy base areas. In rocket belt RIF operations, D/1/502 captured a complete 60 mm mortar. Also terminating with Nevada Eagle was the 3rd Brigade's operation as elements of

1/506 discovered four enemy dead. The 36-day operation, Screaming Eagle accounted for 40 enemy killed, one prisoner and 46 individual and 10 crewserved weapons captured.

**March 1**—The first day of March was also a red-letter day for the 101st. The Division-wide Operation Kentucky Jumper started. D/2/501 conducted combat assault south of FB Tennessee construct Firebase Whip. A/1/327 counted for the first enemy killed during Kentucky Jumper when the paratroopers engaged two VC, killing one and taking his weapon. Elements of the 1st and 3rd Brigades began assuming new positions in expanded AOs in preparation for combined forces thrust by the 2nd Brigade and ARVN troops deep into the A Shau Valley—Operation Massachusetts Strike. The 101st Airborne was going back into the valley, hopefully to strike a fatal blow to the enemy.





***Each new Screaming Eagle was told during jungle training that he had some awesome power at his disposal if he met the enemy. It was the truth--a Paratrooper could always bring in on the enemy***

# **THUNDER FROM ABOVE**

**By Sgt. Wayne Krieger**

# THE STORY D. SCOTT'S VIETNAM BEI HIS RIDE OI BIRD.

When dawn broke over LZ Sally, it was like any other morning in northern I Corps. The sun broke away from the States and home, slid over the Pacific and dropped into Southeast Asia like a giant egg. Like it always did, the gentle morning light grew more intense and by mid-morning, it was a sizzling fry.

Pop drops two on the grill and looks up, "How ya want 'em?"

"Over easy."

This is the last time Sgt. Ronald D. Scott, Delta Raiders, 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., will go through this morning ritual at Sally. Today he is starting an adventure that doesn't happen every day to a "line doggie" in Vietnam—DEROS. He's going home.

Anticipation is far too feeble a word to describe what it's like to wait for rotation. Maybe it's better to say that it has been a long, long year. As a hundred versions of the proverbial "short-timer's calendar" can testify, he has reached his Date Expected to Return from Over Seas.

Sgt. Scott came in from the field only two days ago after nearly twelve months on line. Twelve long months. He thought about this day many times, but this is really it—the last two eggs.

After breakfast there's a short scene at the Raiders' orderly room door as a few friends gather around to wish him well. The sign over the door shows a bow and arrow and reads "Delta Raiders." It's the insignia on the patch on their helmets. Scottie helped design it when the infantry company was organized at Ft. Campbell in September 1967.

He struggles into his rucksack hardly blinking an eye. He's done it enough times before. A steel pot, his weapon

and an AWOL bag complete the load, and he's ready to leave.

As he walks down the dusty road to the main gate, a chopper lands at a nearby pad. A violent column of dust rises into the air. The focus and color of everything fades to a hazy light brown for a minute and Scottie pulls his collar tight, but does not stop walking. This is LZ Sally. You get used to it. Scottie was here even before Sally had her name.

Scottie remembers the day after Valentine's Day, 1968. The Raiders were sweeping toward Hue through the very spot they later knew as Sally when they came across a battalion-size NVA force. There was a firefight; a bad one, he recalls.

The chopper settles and with it the swirling dust, but not the memories.

By March, Sally had begun to take form, and another base camp with its own atmosphere, rules and regulations was born. It was the same Sally he was leaving today, a sophisticated and well organized world of its own. The home of the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division Screaming Eagles.

A sharp MP jeep rolls up beside Scottie.

"Going to the gate?" he asks.

"That's affirm. Jump in," comes the answer.

They pass the familiar laundry stand and barber shop and are soon at Sally's main gate. He can thumb on to the Phu Bai airport from here.

A vehicle with its accompanying plume of dust approaches the gate where Scottie stands. It's a "deuce and a half" loaded with laundry headed for Phu Bai.

Two more men join Scottie for the ride—his platoon sergeant for more than



# GOING HOME

# SGT. RONALD A FEW DAYS IN RE DEROS AND THE FREEDOM

McLaughlin



nine months, James Deland, of Darlington, S.C., and Sgt. Lonnie Nale, of Cedartown, Ga. They lived and fought together the whole year. They were more than friends. They were buddies.

Nestling inside the truck among all the OD green laundry bags, the trio settles down for the 45-minute ride through Hue to Phu Bai and the airport.

Framed by the dirty canvas topping and the truck's rusty tailgate is the last picture of Sally they'd ever have. Scottie looks at his watch. 10 a.m.

Waiting momentarily for their turn to take the old railroad bridge across the Song Huong River, a half dozen little urchins poke their faces in the back of the truck and jabber in a language more "GI" than Vietnamese or English.

"Remember when we ate the boiled eggs with the little ducks inside?" laughs Deland, pointing down a familiar street in the Imperial City.

Scottie nods, raises a corner of his lip and smiles. Then they all laugh. What a year it has been. They'll never forget it.

The vehicle maneuvers through the harrowing traffic of Hue and lumbers on into Phu Bai. It is 10:45. At the airport, just a "bag drag" from where the truck stops, is a sign: "DEROS PERSONNEL REPORT HERE." Through a yellow archway and down taped-off lanes, the trio processes onto the manifest for the C-130 leaving for Bien Hoa.

Airfield personnel have erected tents at the ends of the lanes, and Scottie sits down in the shade with others on their way home. The trio has become a group of 34. Creases of 34 different personalities shape the hats of those waiting. And, in turn, the hats reflect the same number

of different stories they'd tell of their year in Vietnam.

It's 11:10 when they clamber on the plane two at a time through the rear side doors. The big ramp at the back of the fuselage is already stacked with cargo. Eighty-four passengers with rucksacks, weapons and baggage more than fill it up.

Once everyone is on board and seated in rows of eight, the huge rear ramp screams shut. The temperature in here is well above a hundred degrees, but Scottie knows it will cool down as the plane gains altitude.

The flight commander gives the usual briefing about ditching procedures—just like a stewardess on a Freedom Bird. For what seems like a fairly short airstrip, the plane taxies forever, then ascends with a roar and dripping sweat.

The cramped quarters of the fuselage make movement impossible, so some stand for a minute and have a cigarette while others nap or read. Nobody says much.

The flight from Phu Bai to Bien Hoa takes a noisy hour and forty minutes. The time goes fast. The loadmaster wades through the sea of men and takes a position near the door. He puts his head set on. They're about to land.

The door yawns open with a deafening squeal of hydraulics, and Bien Hoa is in view. Bien Hoa is a long way from "the world," but the general atmosphere is more "world-like" than Phu Bai, and infinitely more so than Sally. Scottie already feels a little closer to home.

There are soldiers in the terminal actually wearing khakis. They are waiting for their Freedom Bird, of course, but just the sight of clean, pressed khakis is significant. It reminds Scottie that he's be going to Ft. Bragg after leave, and he

BY SPEC. 5 J. MICHAEL MC LAUGHLIN



wonders, again, what it will be like after all this.

There's another formation and another bag drag as the whole group filters through the busy terminal and loads onto a bus headed for Camp Ray, the 101st's Screaming Eagle Replacement Training School. It's called SERTS. SERTS is also where you go before R&R, leave and DEROs.

Here processing will be done on Scottie's records and he will prepare his uniform for his encounter with the Freedom Bird. His jungle fatigues, clean that morning, have seen several great sweats by this time, and he looks as though he has been out in the field for a week. But he sits patiently through another briefing and silently plots his course through the maze of forms involved in DEROs.

With weapon turn-in, field gear to sort and return, khakis to find, brass and boots to polish, he is busy. There is a special four-building complex for processing that covers everything from awards to finance.

The outprocessing is well organized and efficient. The cadre try to keep close tabs on the processing groups through the various stages, and Scottie's group leader tells them that their stay at Camp Ray will be only 24 hours.

It turns out to be more like 48. When Scottie finishes processing out, the only thing to do is wait for his name to appear on the manifest sheet posted every morning.

But the waiting is not really painful. Scottie feels no pain. Neither do his buddies—most of whom have come down to Camp Ray on subsequent flights. There's an excellent floor show that night, a rock band from Bangkok, and movie after that, all provided by the Division for its home-

ward bound paratroopers.

The whole scene is filled with excitement, old friends and fun. Only once does a shadow fall over the crowd of homeward-bound paratroopers. Just after midnight, sirens blast to warn of a mortar attack, and Scottie finds himself in a bunker once more. A few painful memories come back to him then. The night he got his Purple Heart is among them.

At six o'clock in the morning after the attack, there is a police call and then the final formation and briefing at SERTS. Scottie's name finally appears on the manifest. With bags, tickets, and khakis all ready, they line up for a haircut check. A fleet of OD buses pulls up to the formation.

There is a short speech by Brig. Gen. Richard Allen, a spontaneous cheer of "AJRBORNE!" and the group is dismissed. They melt into the waiting transportation. Even the band, which came down from Camp Eagle, is there playing "Rendezvous With Destiny," the Division song, and Scottie can't help being excited.

As the bus pulls away in a swirl of dust, he looks back at the area he just left, still swarming with his OD-uniformed buddies, still processing, still waiting. Looking back at the last two days he thinks just how much time must have gone into making the processing so quick and easy.

The bus goes to the 90th Replacement Battalion in Long Binh just a few minutes away. They are halted at one of the many gates, and an MP very officially asks when they are going. The pressure that has built up to this point finds its outlet, and the poor man hardly knows what has hit him. They drive by.

At 90th Replacement, the last rem-



McLaughlin





McCauley



McLaughlin



nant of field gear is turned in and lots of forms and lengthy explanations are handed out. Scottie has to have his port call and three copies of his orders ready to hand in to be included on the flight list. There are also last-minute checks on his paperwork.

It's noon, and he goes over to the mess hall to get something to eat. It will be his last meal in Vietnam. At one o'clock, the processing continues through another series of buildings where all the baggage is checked and finally his Military Payment Certificate (MPC) are converted to good old "greenback" dollars. It's nice to see it again.

Scottie's plane ticket reads: "Flight time: 1:30 a.m." It means a wait of almost 12 hours before he'll see that Freedom Bird—his Freedom Bird.

There is so much happening and so much to talk about that the time goes very fast. Everyone has to stick close to the formation stand, as announcements are always being made that might pertain to Scottie's flight. Scottie skips dinner; he's too excited. Before long it's nine o'clock.

The loudspeaker blares: "Attention all personnel manifested for Flight Q71..." This is it. Now they'll leave for the airport. Scottie gets on the bus with a completely new spirit. It seems only minutes away—going home.

Through the darkness, the short drive to the air terminal and the final wait, Scottie sees very little of his last glimpse of Vietnam. It looks just like any other military base in the world, maybe even Ft. Bragg. It's still balmy and the air is heavy with humidity. That much, at least, is Vietnam.

Those manifested with Scottie are restricted to a certain area of the terminal.

They can't even go to the snack stand. Nobody really minds. Nobody wants to be gone when that last call comes.

Then it happens—12:30 a.m. The great silver Freedom Bird, a Boeing 707, gracefully touches down and everybody's heart pounds a little. Man, it's beautiful. That gleaming feat of modern American technology was never more heralded for its beauty, wonder and symbolism that right now as it is reflected in Scottie's eyes.

It seems almost too easy now to just walk out and get on the plane, but after all the processing and waiting, there's nothing else to do. The men on Scottie's flight to San Francisco are in khakis. They file out from under the large steel-roofed terminal and walk to the plane's passenger ramp. The maximum of darkness and flashing navigational lights on the plane make it seem unreal, as in a dream.

Scottie is with the others on the ramp and he stops long enough to glance back once before he disappears into the warmth inside the plane.

The plane taxis away into the darkness, then there is a marked increase in the jet engines' noise. With a roar, the heavy bird lifts its sleek hull into the night sky. The blinking red lights dim and disappear with the sound. Soon it is gone. Scottie is on his way home.

That's the way it was for Sgt. Ronald D. Scott, RA18956224, 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. Hue, Cu Chi, Phuoc Yen and the whole of Vietnam and his part in its history are now totally behind him.

So long, Scottie. See ya back in the world.

