

Americal headquarters ETS's

By MSG Bill Pickett

CHU LAI (Special) -- "Four years ago the Americal Division was born in battle ... in one of the most violently contested areas of Vietnam. Today we look back with satisfaction at the complete accomplishment of our mission."

With these words Major General Frederick J. Kroesen, 23d Infantry Division (Americal) commander, set the stage for the standdown of the division headquarters, the last in the division to case its colors.

The division awards ceremony Nov. 11 at Chu Lai climaxed four years of battle for the Americal Division, at one time the largest division in the Army, with the largest Tactical Area of Interest in Vietnam. More than 100,000 men served with the division in the southern portion of Military Region I during that time, helping to drive the enemy out of the populated coastal plain and mountain settlements and training Regional and Popular Forces.

"Those who have served honorably with this division have earned a self-satisfaction and pride that comes from serving with the best, and attaining the most difficult goals," the general noted.

He did not sidestep the fact that members of the division share collectively an unfortunate reputation, "...

caused by the few in our numbers who make mistakes, some tragic, some careless, some notorious."

"But," he added, "we share also the credit for an unexcelled record and uncounted thousands of acts of valor, acts of compassion and a significant contribution to the attainment of the objectives of the United States in this war."

Participating in the ceremony were infantrymen from the three brigades of the division: the 11th, 196th and 198th; artillerymen representing the Americal Division Artillery; aviation personnel of the 16th Combat Aviation Group; and men of many skills from the Division Support Command. Also represented was the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry; 26th Engineer Battalion and the 523d Signal Battalion.

General Creighton W. Abrams, CG, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, was the reviewing officer. Sharing the reviewing stand with General Abrams and General Kroesen were Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Lam, CG, I Corps and Military Region 1; Lieutenant General William J. McCaffery, deputy CG, U.S. Army, Vietnam; Lieutenant General Welborn G. Dolvin, CG, XXIV Corps; and Major General Nguyen Van Toan, CG, 2d ARVN Infantry Division.

Brigadier General Bertram K. Gorwitz, assistant

division commander, was Commander of Troops.

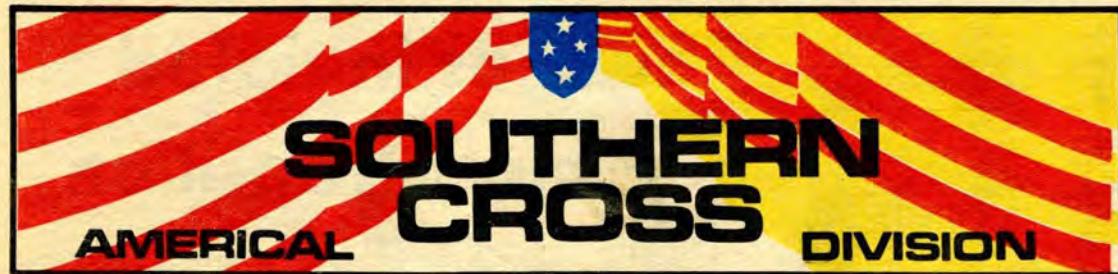
During the ceremony Americal soldiers were presented U.S. and Vietnamese decorations. They were representative of the many members of the division who have been cited for gallantry during their tours with the Americal.

Since the unit was activated in 1967, nine Americal soldiers have earned the Medal of Honor, and the Division was decorated with its second Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm.

Capping the colorful ceremony witnessed by several hundred spectators, General Kroesen, assisted by General Toan, unveiled a monument dedicated to soldiers of the Americal Division "... who joined forces with soldiers of the 2d ARVN Infantry Division to battle a common enemy during the years 1967 to 1971."

A part of the inscription on the bronze plaque mounted on the cement monument read: "This monument stands as a memorial to the sacrifices made by members of the Americal Division during this struggle, and it endures as a symbol of hope for the ultimate achievement of self-determination for all the people of Vietnam."

With the dedication of the memorial, the standdown ceremony for the Americal Division was ended.



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Final division standdown scheduled at Ft. Lewis

By MSG Bill Pickett

CHU LAI (Special) -- The actual standdown of the 23d Infantry Division will not be accomplished until the last days of this month when the division command group will accompany the colors to Ft. Lewis, Wash., for the official deactivation of the unit and the retirement of the colors.

That action will bring to a close an enormous redeployment task which began in earnest with the announcement of the standdown of the 3d Battalion, 18th Artillery and the 71st Assault Helicopter Company on Sept. 8.

Planning for the entire operation began much earlier under the supervision of the

Keystone Operations Center, whose personnel were responsible for the coordination

and scheduling of all standdown activities.

A personnel out-processing center was established adjacent to the Chu Lai Airfield, and this operation, although deferred one day when Typhoon Hester leveled the center, averaged 200 persons per day through its doors, destined for reassignment in-country or return to CONUS for further assignment or ETS.

Also in September, units of the 23d Medical Battalion, and maintenance and engineer companies began standdown, many utilizing the facilities of the Division Combat Center or the former 27th Surgical Hospital area through which most of the division members would pass during their standdown period. These locations were provided exchange and club facilities to serve Americal soldiers during their standdown.

On Sept. 17, H Troop, 17th Cavalry began its standdown, and during October most maneuver elements of the division also began their standdown operations.

It was during this period that Task Force Americal began to take shape under the command of Colonel Robert J. Malloy, former DISCOM commander. Mission of Task Force Americal (TFA) was to prevent the enemy from establishing bases from

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This is the last issue of the *Southern Cross* newspaper, however, a *Charger* newspaper will be published by the 10th Public Information Detachment of the 196th Infantry Brigade beginning Dec. 1971.



STANDDOWN PRESS CONFERENCE--Some 25 newsmen interview Major General Frederick J. Kroesen, CG 23d Infantry Division (Americal), following standdown ceremonies for Headquarters of the Americal Nov. 11. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

\$1400 collected for Carson Scout

DA NANG (196th Inf. Bde. 10) -- Nguyen Quan, a Kit Carson Scout, was "devoted to his job, a damn good man," according to Sergeant First Class Charles Davis, (Uniontown, Pa.) and the rest of the men of the Aero Rifle "Blues" Platoon, F Troop, 8th Cavalry.

Quan had worked with the Blues for about three months and had made about 25 insertions. He had found a couple boobytraps and was responsible for finding and capturing high-level enemy signal documents and signal operation instructions.

He helped the guys in the Blues Platoon with work details and participated in alerts, but he didn't have to.

He lived with the members of the platoon--rarely taking a day

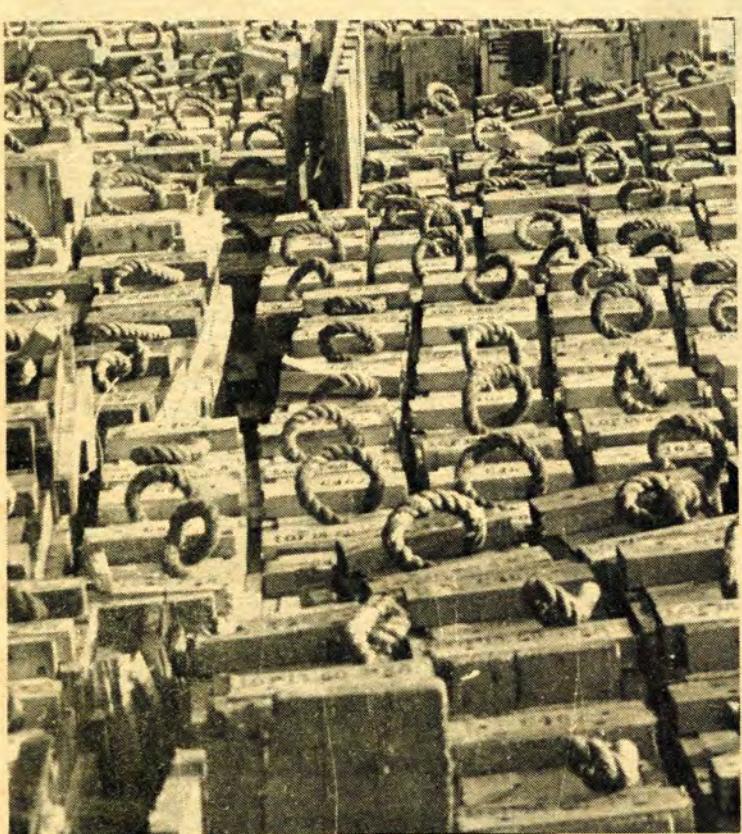
off, according to Sergeant Thomas Hopper (Stayton, Ore.).

On Aug. 14, Quan was badly injured by the explosion of an anti-personnel mine while he and the Blues were on their way to a PZ (pick-up zone) after an insertion. He lost both his legs.

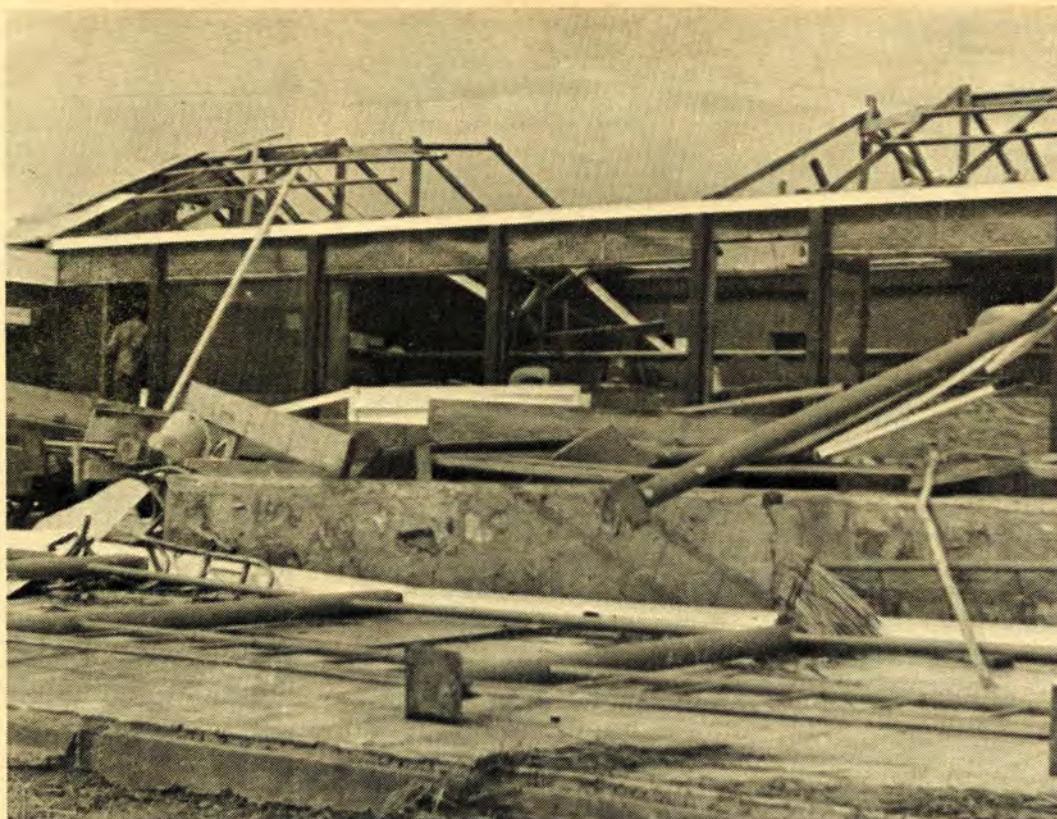
Quan's American friends felt a great sense of loss, and they jointly decided to do something for Quan.

The members of the platoon decided to present Quan with a gift of money raised by members of F Troop. The campaign was soon expanded to include the entire 123d Aviation Battalion.

The efforts of the platoon gained \$1400 for Quan. The money was presented by Captain Thomas M. Hayes (Annapolis, Md.) on behalf of the Blues.



MOVING SYMBOL -- Stacks and stacks of crates and crates are piled high with the equipment and supplies of the 23d Infantry Division (Americal) ready to be moved. Crates such as these have become an increasingly familiar sight to men of the Americal, many of whom have been packing their bags in recent weeks to be transferred to other units or to go home. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)



Hester does her thing—severely

By SGT Mark A. Schulz

DA NANG (196th Inf. Bde. 10) — The 23d Infantry Division (American) quickly recovered from Typhoon Hester which had left one person dead and millions of dollars in damage to the \$50 million Chu Lai Basecamp installation.

The seven camp areas in the 196th Infantry Brigade also recorded heavy storm damage in the Da

Nang area as 294 buildings were damaged and 217 destroyed.

Restoration of electrical power, water supply, mess service and continuation of normal services in the Chu Lai area were given top priority as personnel from the division area continued operations for standdown.

Typhoon Hester's 115 to 120 mile per hour winds had completely destroyed 30 per cent of the Chu Lai buildings and heavily damaged 40 per cent. Fifteen per cent of the remaining buildings were able to be repaired by office personnel, as only light damage was done. The other 15 per cent remained undamaged.

No specific number was given, but heavy damage was listed to aircraft as many choppers were trapped in fallen metal structures.

Approximately 30 persons received injuries at Chu Lai as a result of the storm.

The breakdown of Typhoon Hester's destruction for the Da Nang area was as follows: Camp Crescenzo, 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry's home had eight buildings damaged and 11 destroyed; Camp Reasoner, 3d Battalion, 21st Infantry's home, had 72 buildings damaged and 43 destroyed; Charger South, 196th Headquarters, had 61 buildings damaged and 95 destroyed.

Charger North, Administrative Company Headquarters, had 47 buildings damaged and 20 destroyed; Redhorse, 3d Battalion, 82d Artillery's home, had 31 buildings damaged and 13 destroyed; Camp Purdue, 2d Battalion, 1st Infantry's home, had 33 buildings damaged and 31 destroyed; and Camp Professional, Support Battalion Headquarters' area, had 42 buildings damaged and four destroyed.

Company A, 26th Engineer Battalion was in charge

of the rebuilding task for the 196th Inf. Bde.

Saturday, Oct. 23 was the day Typhoon Hester began hitting the Chu Lai and Da Nang areas beginning about 4 a.m.

The first part of the storm passed over Chu Lai and the calmness of the eye of the storm prevailed from 11:30 to 12:15 p.m. The storm then swirled winds in the opposite direction in the Chu Lai area.

Heavy winds and rains continued throughout the evening. Winds calmed down early that evening but rains continued throughout Saturday night and early Sunday morning.

TOP LEFT — This is what the Officers' Club looked like after Typhoon Hester did her thing at Chu Lai.

TOP RIGHT — These three soldiers begin replacing tin on one of the 30 per cent of the lightly damaged buildings in Chu Lai shortly after Hester passed by.

LEFT — Roofing tin lies around the headquarters area here while a latrine walls lean against senior NCOs' hooches. The latrine was completely blown off its foundation.

BOTTOM LEFT — Vietnamese and GI workers begin replacing the tin roof of the Headquarters, 23d Infantry Division shortly after 120 mile per hour winds ended Saturday evening.

BOTTOM RIGHT — This mess of electrical wires shows why electrical power was placed on a high priority as the wake of Hester left Chu Lai with damage estimated into the millions of dollars. (U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY SP4 RANDY BOMBARD)



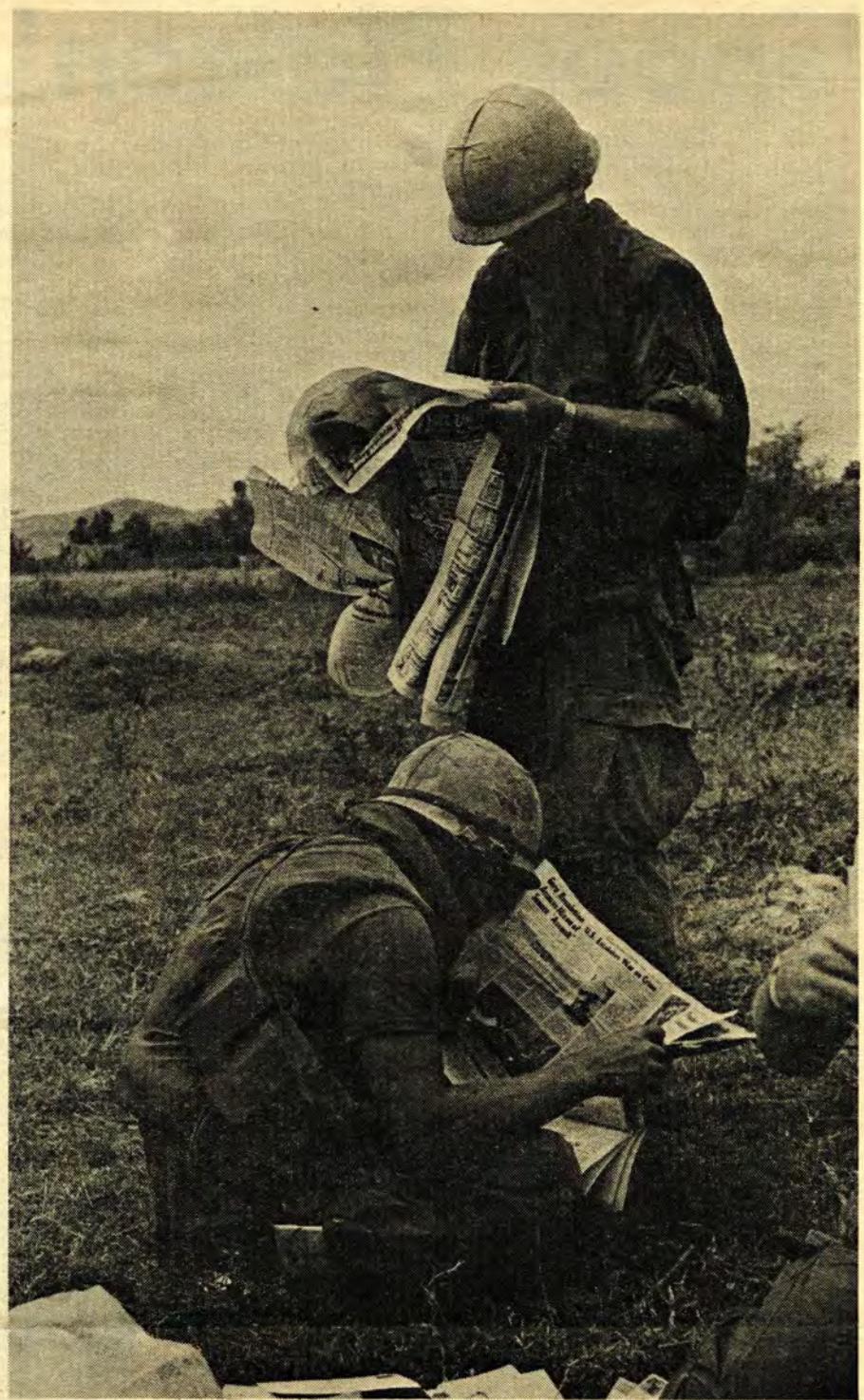


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'Spoon Platoon' keeps serving

By SP4 Mike Cassidy

CAMP CHARGER (196th Inf. Bde. I0) - Can a mess hall that "cooks up a storm" keep on cooking after a storm by the name of Hester knocks out its power and destroys most of the mess hall building?

The answer is yes, if you happen to be a member of the "Spoon Platoon" of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 196th Infantry Brigade.

Typhoon Hester made her presence known in the Da Nang area around 2 a.m., rattling roofing and rocking buildings. By noon of that day, her wind and rain had knocked out electrical power and telephone communications.

Shift leader Specialist Five Harold McBride (Indianapolis, Ind.) and his men came on duty at noon to be greeted with the swelling force of the storm.

The wind gradually worked toward a peak of over 90 miles an hour at the beginning of the afternoon, ripping off pieces and sections of metal roofing. The gusts were carrying the metal up the steeply sloping terrain of Camp Charger.

"Pieces of the roofing slammed into the side of the dining room all afternoon," recalls McBride. "Even though the wall was taking a beating, I didn't think the building would collapse."

Sergeant First Class Sammie Gray (Richmond, Va.) was not as optimistic. His training in Mess Steward School and personal experience had taught him to be prepared for the worst.

Despite their different points of view, Gray and McBride set out to prepare the evening meal. Except for clearing the table so that nothing would be broken and moving the tables away from areas where the rain was coming in, it was business as usual, until 3:30 p.m. when the roof caved in on that idea.

"There was this piece of somebody's roof that wanted to get in the mess hall and it did," explained McBride.

Though the roof started to fall in, it was prevented from hitting the floor by the electrical wiring. The dining hall roof "waved in the breeze," according to McBride, for the next four hours until the wiring gave way.

Other disasters followed, the food had to be cooked in gas stoves and on emergency fire units. Although the food was covered, the typhoon winds stirred up enough dust and debris to ruin most of the meal. Only the ham remained.

It was decided to put the food away until the storm died down. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese kitchen workers and the cooks went to the safety of the walk-in refrigerators at the rear of the mess hall.

Specialist Five Robert Piadade (St. Johnsbury, Vt.) and Specialist Four Billy Mays (Monroe, N.C.) collected sleeping gear for the Vietnamese since it was too dangerous to drive them to the gate, much less drive them home.

Many people showed up for supper as usual at 4:30 p.m. About 100 people were told to return after the Spoon Platoon had a chance to cook a hot meal.

When it became apparent that the storm was not going to let up soon, C-rations were brought out. Specialist Five William Caston (Norfolk, Va.) distributed the rations from the back of the mess hall's truck until 2 a.m. Caston stayed in the swaying truck all night. In the morning the truck had three flat tires, apparently from the flying debris.

Though they were unable to prepare a full meal, they did fill requests for coffee. McBride estimates that the Spoon Platoon prepared 25 gallons of coffee that night.

When the storm had subsided slightly, both the on-duty and off-duty shifts pitched in to get the kitchen back into working condition.

Shortly after 2 a.m. the winds stopped.

With flashlights in hand and stoves blazing away producing

light as well as cooking heat, McBride's shift started preparing breakfast. The flashlights and stoves served as illumination for the job until power was restored several days later.

Even though their efforts were handicapped, a full breakfast was served, including

grits, pancakes, bacon, juice, coffee and the ham that would have been served the night before.

Expecting anything in view of the previous days havoc, the men of Headquarters Company were surprised by an improvised but complete chow line set up in the kitchen.

"Hope you fellows want your eggs scrambled, 'cause that's all we've got this morning," warned Gary Gillette (Johnson City, Tenn.) as he worked the grill that morning.

Not having eggs to order was the only compromise that the cooks made.



KEEP COOKING -- Though the power may have been out, Specialist Five Harold McBride and Specialist Four Gary Gillette, both of the "Spoon Platoon", HHC, 196th Infantry Brigade, keep on cooking. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY CPT GEORGE F. HANLEY)

This dragon deadly to unknowing enemy

By SP5 Gregory Wright

CHU LAI (11th Brigade I0) - According to Webster's New World Dictionary a dragon is a mythical monster, usually a high winged reptile which breathes out fire and wreaks destruction.

Enemy forces about 15 kilometers west of Ha Tanh recently learned they have a dragon in their midst which is far from mythical. It isn't winged and it doesn't move, it isn't even alive, but in the firepower and destruction department Firebase Red Dragon is every bit as formidable as the creature whose name it bears.

Located amid rugged mountains, this hill and its occupant provide artillery support for allied units working in the area, and have long since demonstrated the deadly nature of their guns to the VC and NVA soldiers unfortunate enough to be on the receiving end.

On Aug. 6, two 105mm's and crews of the 4th ARVN

Regiment and two from Battery D, 6th Battalion, 11th Artillery moved in and prepared for operation on the hill. They were joined two days later by two 155mm's and men of the 6th ARVN Regiment. Soon after arrival, both men and guns were ready for any action.

According to Major Broadus (Mobile, Ala.), 6th Bn., 11th Arty. commander, cooperation is the key word, and men from the different units work well together on the small fire base.

Performance here has been very good so far," said Broadus, "especially in the area of fire support coordination. It's rare to have three separate units working a hill this size, but in this case the idea seems to be working out quite well."

Small and remote though it is, Red Dragon is no less a threat to the enemy or source of welcome for allies. It's not much and the men who serve there might occasionally joke about it or complain, but their guns are ready for anything, day or night.

Recognition remedy hit

By SP4 Sam Rousso

DA NANG (196th Inf. Bde. I0) - Lately, the GI here in Vietnam has been suffering, it is claimed, from a lack of recognition, for a number of reasons.

The command of the 196th Infantry Brigade has done something to alleviate this condition for the men of the 196th—the "Chargers".

"It is an incentive for good soldiers," says Command Sergeant Major Lorenzo Rivera, the brigade's top enlisted man.

Two grunts, one artilleryman and one support trooper are

picked by their units, in turn, as Combat Charger, Redleg Chargers and Support Chargers every week.

The men begin their three-day terms on Mondays and Thursdays.

According to an official letter on the program, it serves to "bring the ... soldier to Brigade level in order that he may understand the vital part his unit plays in the combat mission of this Brigade" as well as provide recognition.

Since this program is for outstanding soldiers only, there is strict criteria for the selection of the men.

To qualify, the man must be either an E-3 or E-4; must be assigned to and performing duties in either a service (Support) fire support (Redleg) or rifle or recon platoon (Combat); must not have any derogatory information in his personnel file, an Article 15 or a court martial.

In addition, the soldier must have been in his unit for not less than three months and not longer than ten months.

During his stint as a sort of "King for Three Days," the honored Charger attends briefings, visits brigade units and tours the area of operations with Brigadier General Joseph C. McDonough, commanding general. He also visits staff sections and gets briefings on their functions, and eats with General McDonough.

In addition, he assists in the reception of visitors and takes part in all functions that will make him more knowledgeable of the brigade's operations.

As a bonus, the honored Charger receives a letter of commendation from General McDonough.

Scholarships available

WASHINGTON (ANF)—

The U.S. Army Educational Assistance Program will award four-year college scholarships in 1972 to qualifying dependent children of active-duty personnel.

The U.S. Army merit and special scholarships will be offered to dependent students

selected through the testing facilities of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation in its annual merit program, subject to approval by Headquarters, Department of the Army.

The 1972 program involves candidates who took the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.



Vickii Smith kneels on a surfboard on the beach line at Chu Lai. Vickii was at Chu Lai with the Australian Capers last year. (PHOTO BY J02 J.R. STEVENS)

