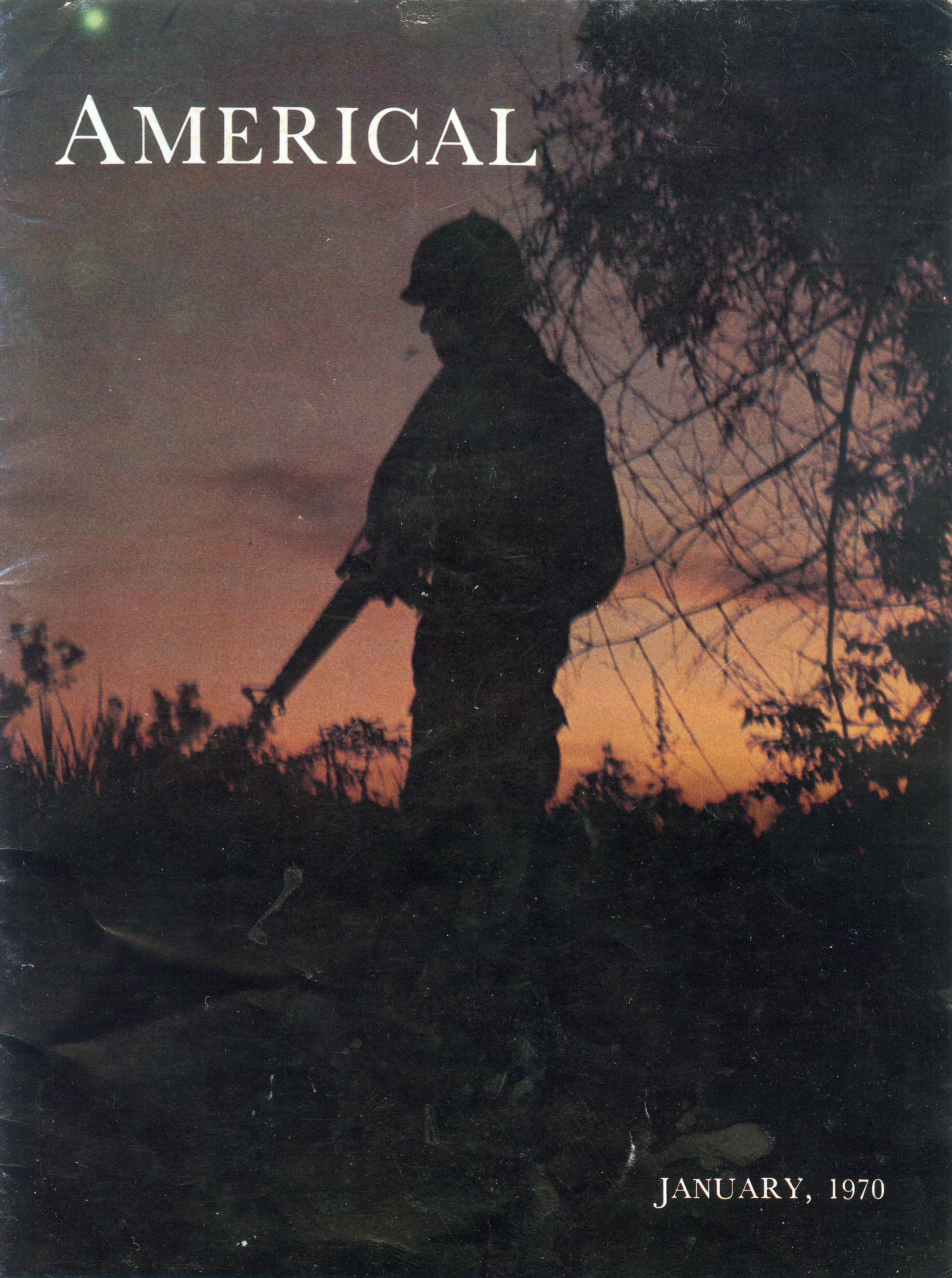
AMERICAL



JANUARY, 1970



Geserick

Reflection Of Battle

In miraculous wonder of green
Infantrymen with calculated footsteps,
Counter-measuring reflexes and strength,
Moving through corridors of time
Upon the huddle of enemy shadows.

Soldiers merge into a single icon,
A magical blazonry of spiralling fire
Transcend the victorious hour
Of battle's essential olympian
Interpret eternal claim to honor.

By SP5 JAMES BROWN

Americal Division
APO San Francisco 96374

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AMERICAL

The Quarterly Magazine of the Americal Division, Vietnam

In This Issue

Articles

Clearing The Way	4	*SP4 Dean Williams*
The Voice Of Command	8	*SP5 Bob Betts*
Buddha Mountain	11	*SP4 Reginald Asplet*
N Is For Nurses	14	*1LT Josef Hebert*
In Defense Of Hiep Duc	18	*SP4 Bill Crawford*
Metal Angels Of Hope & Mercy	22	*SP4 Craig Couture*
Interpreters	25	*SP4 Bill Eftink*

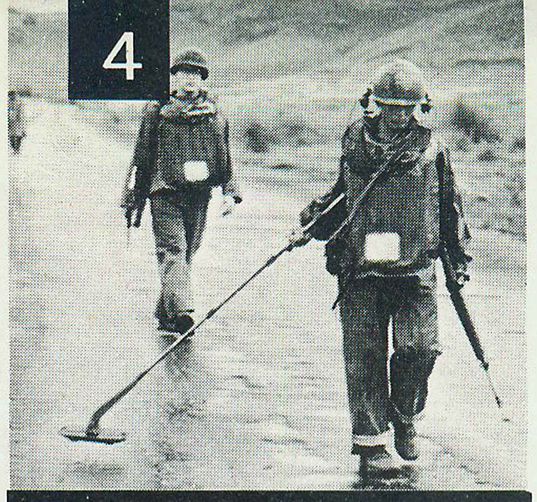
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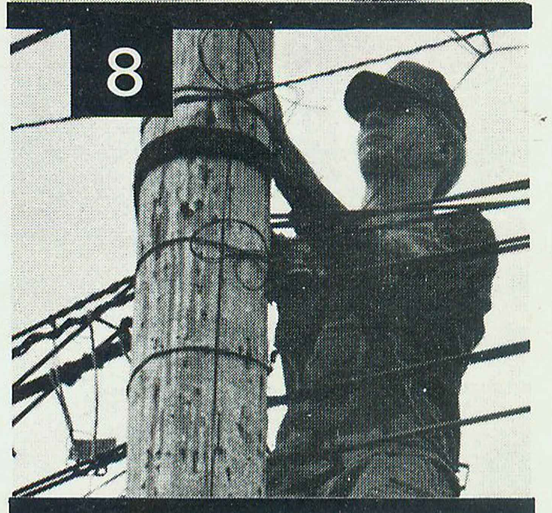
Americal Log	2	*SP4 Harry Baumann*
Americal Mirth	27	*SGT Jim Newman*
Toward A Cultural Understanding	28	*SP5 James Brown*

The Cover

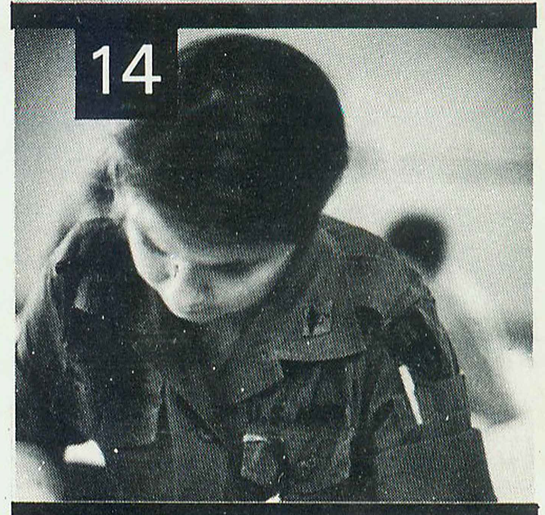
Division soldier keeps a sharp vigil for enemy movement as the sun sets across the Vietnamese countryside. (Photo by SP4 James R. Small, 523rd Sig. Bn.)

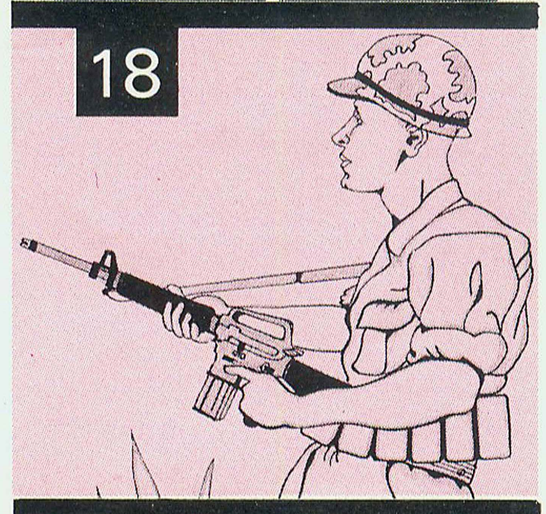
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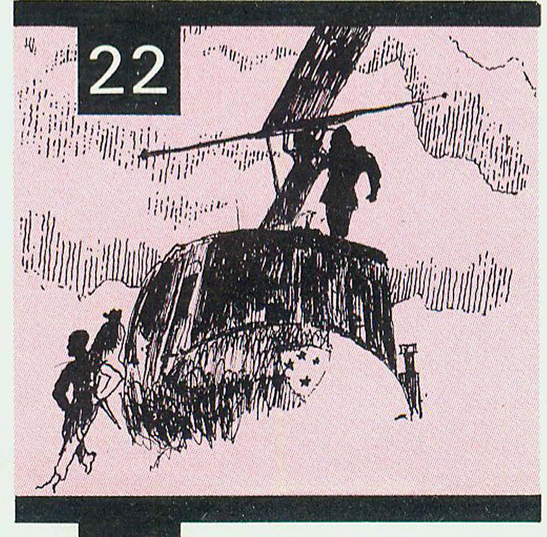












25

THÔNG-DỊCH-VIÊN :
LÀ NGƯỜI TRUNG-GIAN
GIỮA
: NHỮNG NGƯỜI NÓI
NGÔN-NGỮ KHÁC NHAU

AMERICAL LOG

A QUARTERLY RECAP OF MAJOR ACTION

Combat action during the three month period of September, October, and November was characterized by small unit contacts scattered throughout southern I Corps.

Americal troops killed more than 1,049 enemy soldiers, 565 of whom were NVA; captured 104 weapons; and destroyed or evacuated more than 74 tons of rice.

September saw the fighting switch from Hiep Duc Valley to the "Rice Bowl," six miles south of Duc Pho. Also in September was the heaviest fighting as NVA sappers tried to overun LZ Siberia in a vicious fight that resulted in the defenders throwing back the assault and inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy.

October and November were 'quiet' months in southern I Corps as the 'lull' and extreme monsoon rains hampered allied activity. The heaviest fighting of the two months centered around Tam Ky and Duc Pho where Americal troopers struck devastating blows not only to the enemy himself but to his food staple—rice. Americal troops captured more than 60 tons of rice in those two months.

By SP4 HARRY BAUMANN

SEPTEMBER

Fighting tapered off in southern I Corps during the waining days of August. The beginning of September found the bulk of battle switching from Hiep Duc Valley to the "Rice Bowl," six miles south of Duc Pho.

The 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav. moved its base of operation from Hawk Hill to Duc Pho in time to help thwart a possible enemy offensive in the southern reaches of the Americal Division.

Elements of A and D Trp., 1–1 Cav. along with C Co., 4–3 Inf. tangled on and off with soldiers from the 3rd NVA Division's 2nd Regt. During the first days of September, combined Americal forces accounted for 52 enemy killed and 16 weapons captured, three of which were crew-served.

Towards the middle of the month, elements of the 4–31st Inf., 196th Inf. Bde. were once again in heavy contact, this time at LZ Siberia. NVA sappers, armed with flame-throwers and moving under cover of intensive RPG, recoilless and B-40 rocket fire, attempted to penetrate the firebase perimeter. The intruders were repelled in a vicious fight put up by C Btry., 3rd Bn., 82nd Arty. and B Co., 4–31.

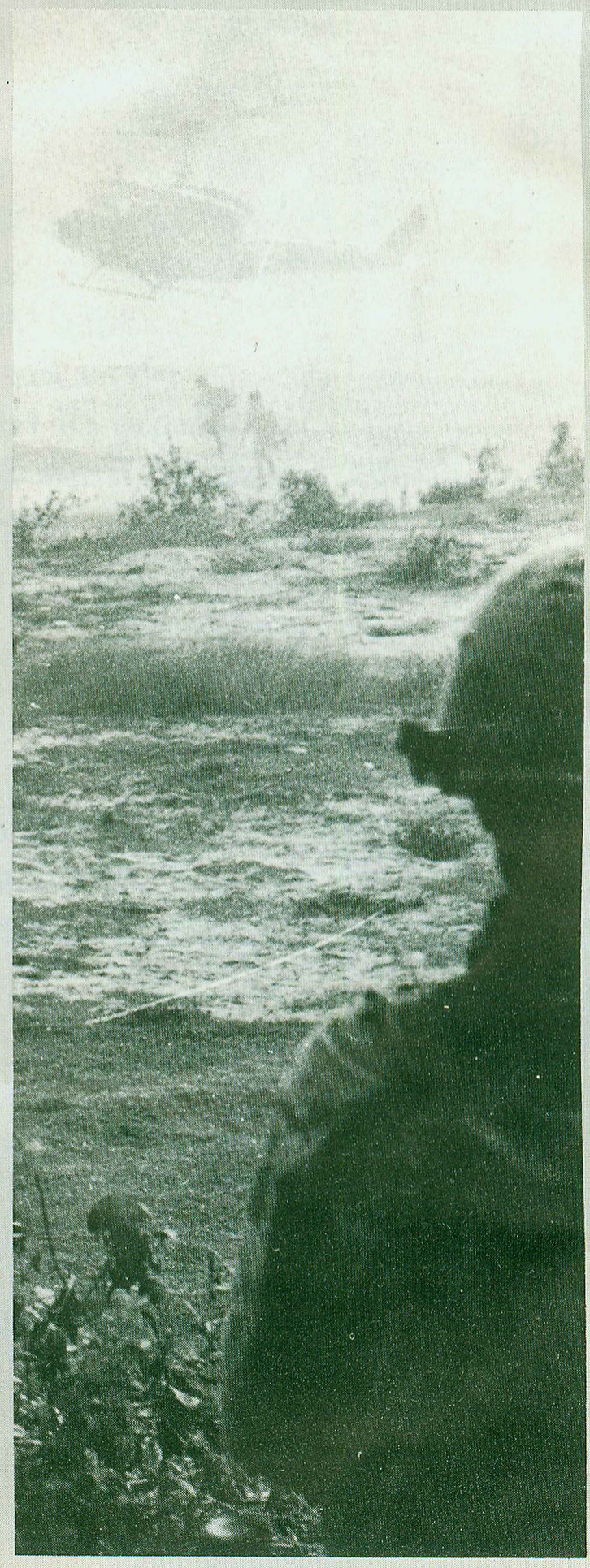
The results of the heavy fighting showed 31 enemy soldiers killed, one captured, 11 AK-47 rifles, one AK-50 automatic, two rocket launchers, and one flamethrower captured.

Sporadic fighting prevailed for the remaining days of September, show-a total of 344 NVA and 170 Viet Cong killed by Americal soldiers.

OCTOBER

The "lull" in fighting continued







to hover over southern I Corps in October as monsoon rains, totaling 50 inches, put a damper on maneuverbility and curtailed the war activity.

Action was extremely light during the first week of October with the only fighting being waged around Tam Ky and Duc Pho.

D Co., 1–46 Inf., working just to the west of Tam Ky, made contact with enemy forces nearly everyday of the first week killing four VC and four NVA soldiers.

While supporting infantrymen of the 4–3 Inf., artillerymen picked up the action by killing 13 enemy soldiers in action 13 miles west of Duc Pho.

Although monsoon rains hampered the allied ground effort, aviation units of the Americal in action on October 11 accounted for 14 enemy killed.

In two seperate actions that day, "Aero Scouts" of the 123rd Avn. Bn. spotted an estimated platoon of NVA in an area 10 miles west of Duc Pho. The rocket and minigun barrage that followed left four enemy soldiers dead. Later in the day, gunships of F Trp., 8th Cav. encountered a group of six VC, 11 miles northwest of Tam Ky. The "Blue Ghosts" filled the sky with fire as six enemy soldiers were no longer.

The following day, Americal units recorded the heaviest fighting of the month with 30 enemy soldiers killed in scattered action throughout the division's area of operations.

The remaining days of the month went out as October had started with small contacts concentrated around Duc Pho and Tam Ky as inclement weather once again handcuffed the allied forces.

NOVEMBER

The month of November was characterized by sporadic small unit contacts in which Americal soldiers killed 367 enemy soldiers.

Southern I Corps was extremely quiet during the first week of November but action picked up on November 6 when C Co., 3–21 Inf. killed seven NVA soldiers 14 miles northwest of Tam Ky.

On November 7, three Americal Division soldiers released by the VC dined on steak, potatoes, chocolate cake and ice cream in their first hearty meal in many months at the 91st Evac. Hospital at Chu Lai.

The soldiers, SP4 Willie A. Watkins, (Sumter, N.C.), SP4 James R. Strickland, (Dunn, N.C.), and PFC Coy R. Tinsely (Cleveland, Tenn.) joked with hospital attendants as they ate.

"This beats the rice and fish sauce," Watkins said as he cut into his steak. The soldiers had been in the Viet Cong hands since January 1968.

In widespread action later on in the month, "Shark" gunships of the 174th Avn. Co. chalked up nine VC in action 17 miles northwest of Duc Pho. Operating three miles north of Duc Pho, A Co., 1–20 Inf. killed seven enemy in two brief encounters.

Taking to the air again, Americal gunships of the 176th Avn. Co., in an early morning battle, killed 12 VC after pursuing them over the rolling hills and thick jungle 11 miles northwest of Quang Ngai.

The heaviest fighting of the month broke during the three day period of November 16-19.

The largest action of the three day period came on the 19th when "Warlord" gunships of the 123rd Avn. Bn. killed 10 VC while operating 12 miles northeast of Quang Ngai City. Later the same day, troopers of the 196th Inf. Bde. combined for a total of 17 enemy kills for the highest total of the month.

"We found 20,000 pounds of rice inside the false walls of the hooch and it was in 55 gallon barrels and in bags hidden under large piles of straw. Everywhere we looked there was rice."

With these words SSG Lon Engwise (Midland, Mich.) described the results of a search 15 miles northwest of Tam Ky which netted one of the largest rice caches ever to be found in southern I Corps.

CLE

ARING THE WAY

Story and Photos by
SP4 DEAN WILLIAMS

The steady pitter-patter of rain on his steel pot made the ears strain a little harder, listening for the BEEEEEEEEEEEE—EEEEEEP, that little break that could mean the difference between life and death.

With the coming of the rainy season, murky rice-paddy water flows freely across the highway link. Vision was hampered by the sweat and pearl-sized raindrops. The usually quiet road was a nightmare of sounds from the





swirling streams and the water splashing on the bare rocks.

The job of rising before the sun is up and battling the elements of Vietnam and its confused weather belongs to C Co., 26th Engr. Bn.

Rain, rain, and more rain. "Alright, men, from now on we will have to wear life preservers on the minesweeps." This is just another cumbersome load the men will have to add to their daily uniform of ammo, weapon, and sweeping equipment. The rain jackets and pants quickly draw perspiration causing beads of sweat to roll down the nose and onto the rain drenched ground. Even though it is raining, the weather is still humid.

Walking the two-mile stretch of road, "can be a drag," said PFC Eugene Corsaniti (Baltimore). "We stay alert knowing that the safety of our buddies and ourselves depends on the effectiveness of our sweep."

Preparation for a minesweep is a careful, detailed process. The delicate modules that make up the sensoring device are very carefully cleaned and methodically replaced in the detector. "Equipment is only as effective as its user," commented SGT William Stewart (Washington D.C.). "These men take good care of the equipment for they know their own lives are at stake as well as those of the people that use Hwy. 1."

How good is a mine detector? SP4 Robert Starret (Houston) answered, "Using a sweeping motion slowly over a road it will detect metal up to 18 inches below the ground, it can even detect tinfoil from a chewing gum wrapper."

The roads in the Americal Div. are the main ground conveyance for the Army's largest division. The enemy has had a knack in the past of mining a particular two mile stretch of road from LZ Liz to Hwy. 1. The road with its many culverts and soft shoulders is ideal for the placement of mines.

Today it is rare that a mine is found. But this fact is no excuse to let up on the search for mines that could, indiscriminately kill, maim or destroy.

More often all the search will uncover is a discarded C-Ration can or an expended round, but there is always that day when.....

An engineer, with his tedious duties, long hours, many times rolling out of bed only a few short hours after an all night job of repairing a collapsed bunker, is not only a minesweeper. An engineer is a demolition man.

When that constant BEEEEEEEE . . . . . STOPS . . . . . "Need a prober here on the double." The rubber suited prober approaches and with precise caution kneels over the contaminated area and starts his probe for wires or the top of a mine with a sharpened bamboo stick. SHHHHH is about the only sound that can be heard as the stick slides through the gravel of the soft shoulder . . . . perspiration beads . . . it drops onto the ground . . . a little scratching and poking . . . all are watching, listening

. . . the rain continues . . . . thump THUMP . . . . metal?? . . . . No just the heart beat! Silence. AHHHH, a low sigh . . . . . nothing. Thump, thump, thump, the heart has started its return from the throat to its normal place in the chest.

If there had been a mine, the prober would have continued his probing and scratching until the device was visible. A demo man would then inch his way to the device and set a charge to blow the mine in place. Most of the men are relieved that such detection and destruction is not an everyday occurance.

Being with the first convoy vehicle down a recently swept road is almost as bad as the initial walk. "Damn rough road," mutters the driver, but better a rough road than no road at all.

The men who sweep roads do not come to Vietnam "wet behind the ears." Rigorous on-the-job training was the order back in the states. Then comes the first time out on the real thing which looks like the longest, densest jungle road in Vietnam. Training does not stop with individual training, for the minesweeping function is a team effort. "The team is the concrete piling that a smooth and efficient operation is built on," said one patrol member.

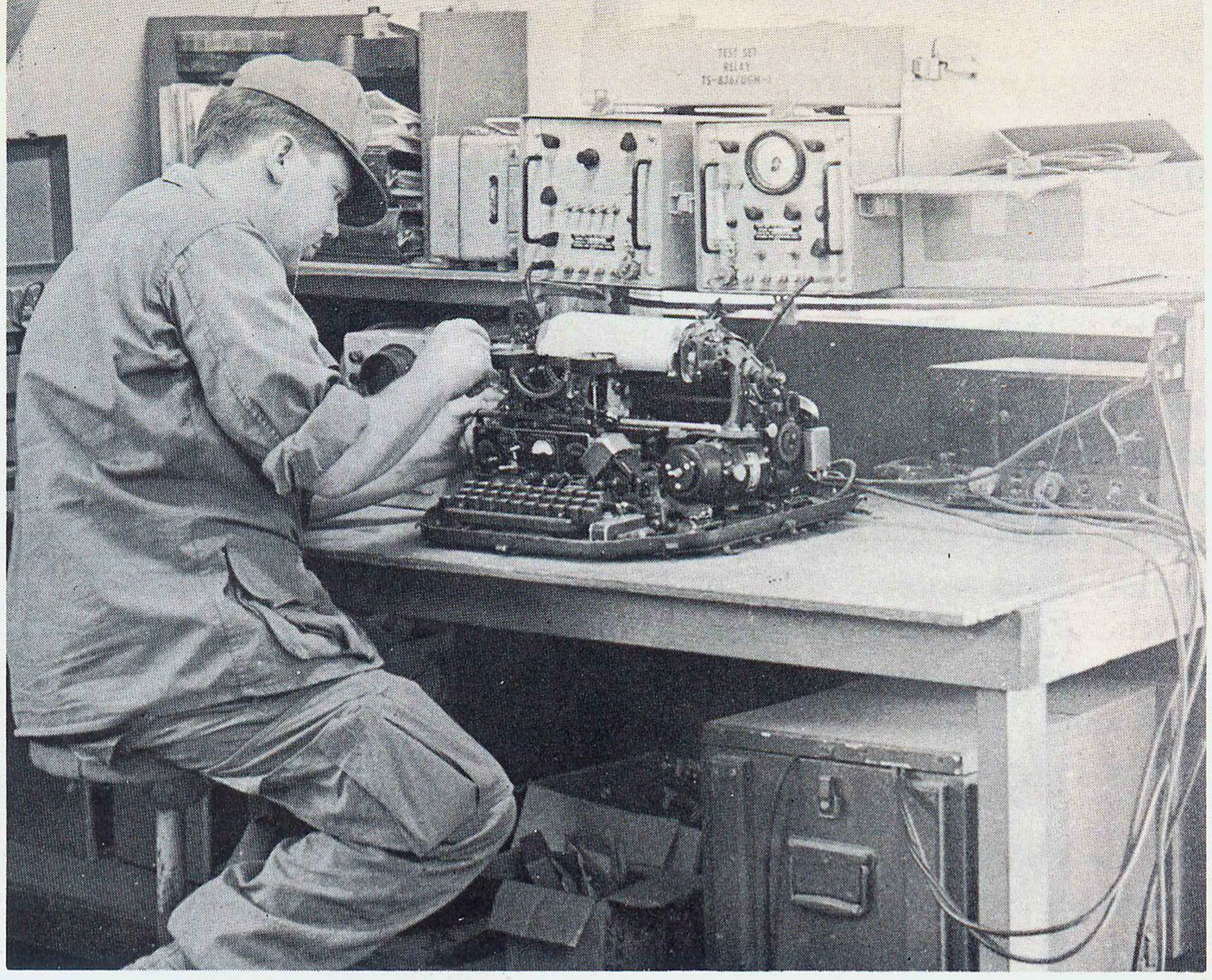
Each team is rotated every two weeks from this tension filled job; whether it be sweeping for mines or building bunkers these men function totally as a team. Eating, sleeping, living, working together talk often turns to their work and experiences. "You know I think we ought to cover the shoulders better," proclaims one, "Yeah with all the rain they could easily hide a mine in one of those little trenches," adds another. Safety and lives seem foremost.

Out in the rain, after a careful sweep and a visual inspection the team returns to the starting point, with but one operation left to perform, the pressure test. A salvaged five-ton truck filled with sand and held together with wire and a lot of luck starts backing down the road to check for any misses. It creaks and groans down the two mile road every morning after the initial sweep. The driver, wearing a steel pot and flak jacket, attempts to explode anything that the sensor failed to discover. With the initial sweep being so thorough, the truck makes his run with "no sweat." The job now complete the men of C Co., 26th Engrs. role back to their hooches, another sweep safely completed.





A member of C Co., 26th Engr. Bn. moves through a washed out section of Hwy. 1 listening carefully for any traces of metal. Above, after a mine detector has located a metal object, a prober cautiously stabs at the ground to check for wires or the top of a mine. Opposite page, the two mile trek from LZ Liz to Hwy. 1 is a daily routine for the engineers.



Photos by 523rd Sig. Bn.

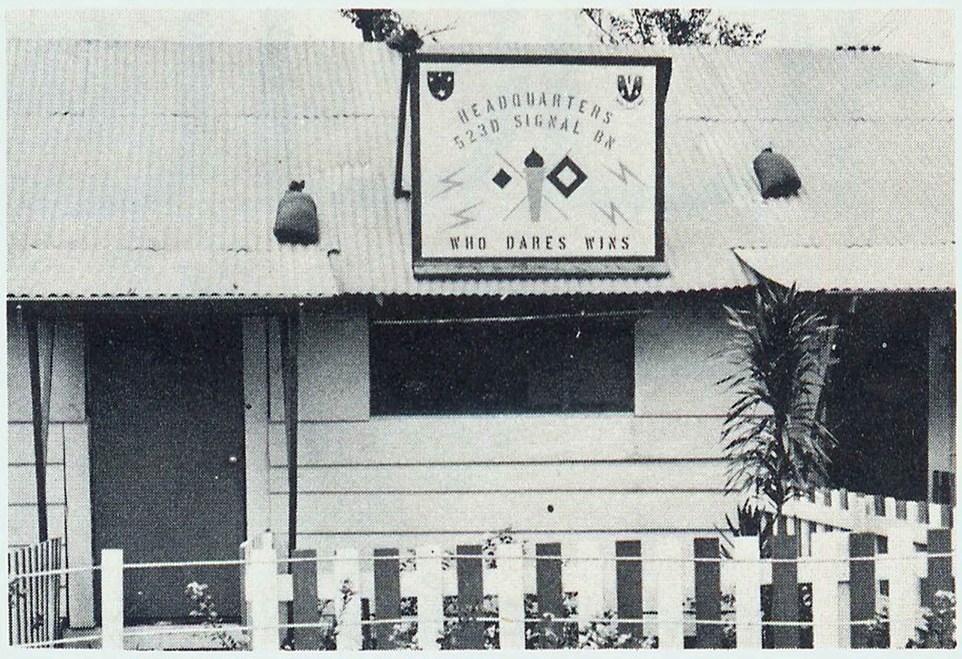


Signalmen are continually making repairs or checking on the operation of equipment. Below, LTC Bartos, the battalion commander, pauses briefly to talk with one of the soldiers at a 523rd installation. Opposite page, control of the 523rd Sig. Bn. all begins at the battalion headquarters located at Chu Lai.



523rd Signal...

...THE VOICE OF COMMAND



By SP5 BOB BETTS

"Hello, Chu Lai may I have Duc Pho please?" A few moments later a voice on the other end of the line answers, "Duc Pho, Sir." And another phone call will shortly be completed. Insuring that the connection is made is just one of a vast array of duties and technical responsibilities that falls squarely on the shoulders of the 523rd Sig. Bn.

The Americal Div. utilizes the 670 men of the 523rd for control of all communications, so vital when fire power, intelligence, and combat support are needed.

Over 265 reels of wire, equaling 67 miles, has been installed and is maintained by the battalion to provide the means of communications for the Chu Lai Defense Command.

A Very High Frequency (VHF) system is operated by 523rd for the 11th, 196th and 198th Brigades. This same service is provided to Americal Support Artillery units located at camps: Minh Long, Tra Bong, and Tien Phuoc operated by U.S. Army and ARVN Special Forces.

Providing photographic service to the division for use in Stars & Stripes, the Americal magazine and newspaper, or for release to servicemen's hometown newspapers is just another of the services provided by the 523rd. "In all of these functions, the battalion is doing a superb job," said LTC Robert E. Bartos (Hammond, Ind.), battalion commander.

"This is the only division signal unit I've seen that operates in a semi-permanent configuration and at the same time can provide quick response mobile communications support," said LTC Bartos when asked about one of the unique qualities of the 523rd.

LTC Bartos holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Indiana University and did post graduate study at Columbia University. He has served as a U.S. advisor to the Chinese Nationalist Army on Taiwan.

Keeping in mind one of President



crest of 523rd signal

Nixon's three criteria for U.S. troop reductions in Southeast Asia, 523rd began eyeball to eyeball contact with the 2nd ARVN Division last July. The Vietnamese have a signal company as compared to our battalion. Exchange tours have been made to give the ARVNs an awareness of other signal equipment and communications management techniques.

One of the most popular functions the signal battalion provides is the Military Affiliated Radio System (MARS).

Every Americal soldier is encouraged to make one free stateside telephone call every two weeks. The program is run on a first-come first-serve basis. There is a three-minute time limit to each call.

The MARS facilities are located at Chu Lai and various Landing Zones. A hospital patient can make a bedside call to his worried loved ones. The only calls that have priority are Red Cross calls and are five minutes in duration.

Since the MARS stations, which average 250 calls per week, are operated on a single sideband short wave system, reception depends on the atmospheric conditions and the time of day. Transmissions are made on the same principle as a two-way radio; therefore, only one person can speak at a time. After completing a statement, you say "over." The operator than reverses the sender and receiver so that the other party can speak. Often you may hear that profound statement, "I love you, over."

Whether it be a soldier calling his loved ones or a platoon leader calling for artillery support, the name of the game is communications and the task of making sure all systems are go belongs to the 523rd.

The nerve center of the battalion, and the division, is the communications system control center. From here, network maps for communications points out the need for "multi-accessibility." While a cable system is adequate for Chu Lai, it cannot be relied on in the field. Thus the 523rd must be a maneuverable, outfit, ready to use a variety of means and locations in order to insure good communications.

Therefore, the network is built on three main plateaus: Freguency Modulation (FM), Amplitude Modulation (AM), and telephonic.

MAJ Bruce Gronich (EL Paso, Tex.), battalion operations officer, summed up the objective of the Control Center. "If someone has a need to talk, our job is to see that he always can." The battalion achieves this broad objective with a hard working staff on a 200 line switchboard. Each operator works a six hour shift and puts through approximately 110 calls per hour.

Every soldier, at one time or another, has wondered what the difference is between an A, B, or C class telephone. Here is the answer to this paradoxical question. Class "A" phones can reach anywhere in the world you dial. On a class "C" phone only a local call can be made. A median between these two classes is the class "B" which is used for local or limited long distance calls.

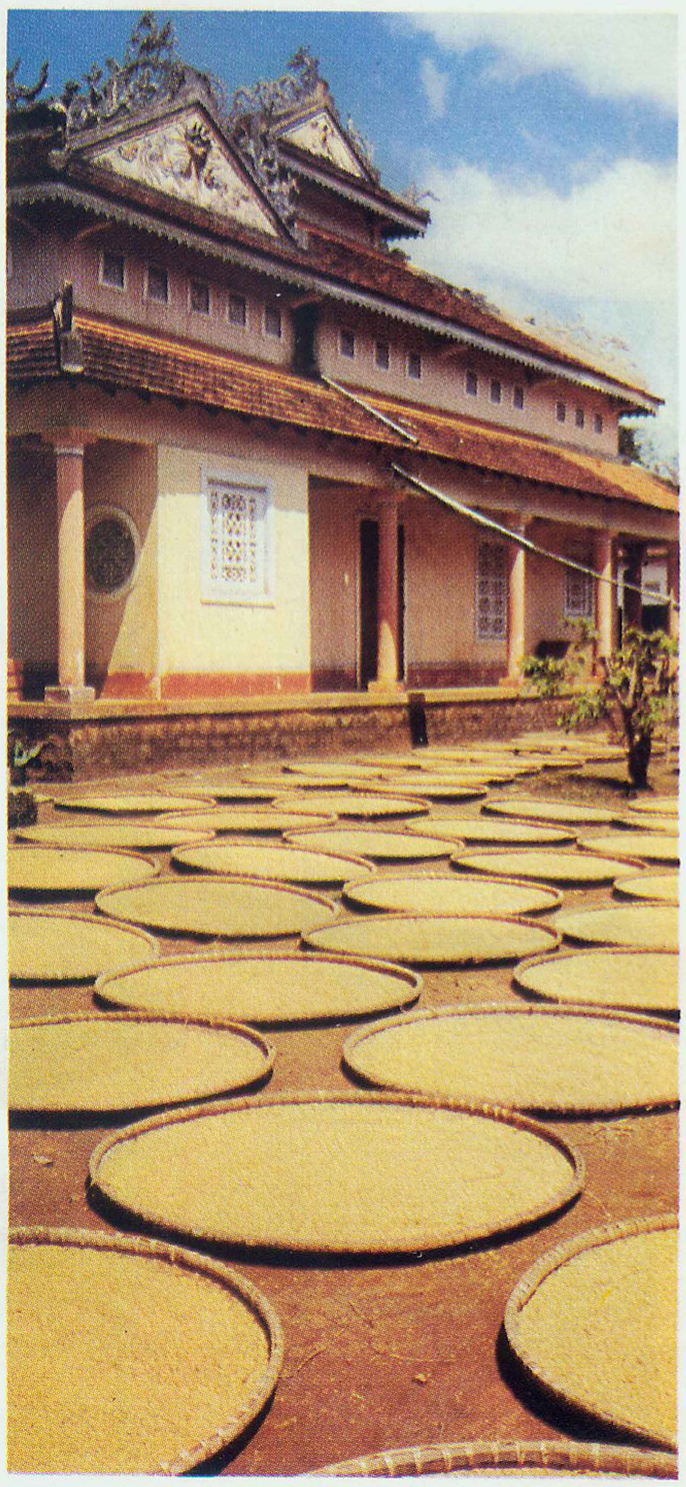
Classified material can only be discussed on a "secure" radio. The telephone systems do not offer security. To achieve the necessary security needed for radio communications, a crypto device is used to scramble the words. Thus radio, considered as one of most unsecure communications means, acquires a greater application.

From Ho An to Sa Huynh, the 523rd Sig. Bn. is providing these services we take for granted. This complacency, on our part, proves their success. MAJ Gronich summed up the essence of the whole story, "We're not Bell Telephone . . .but we sure try."





BUDDHA



By SP4 REGINALD ASPLET

11th Inf. Bde.

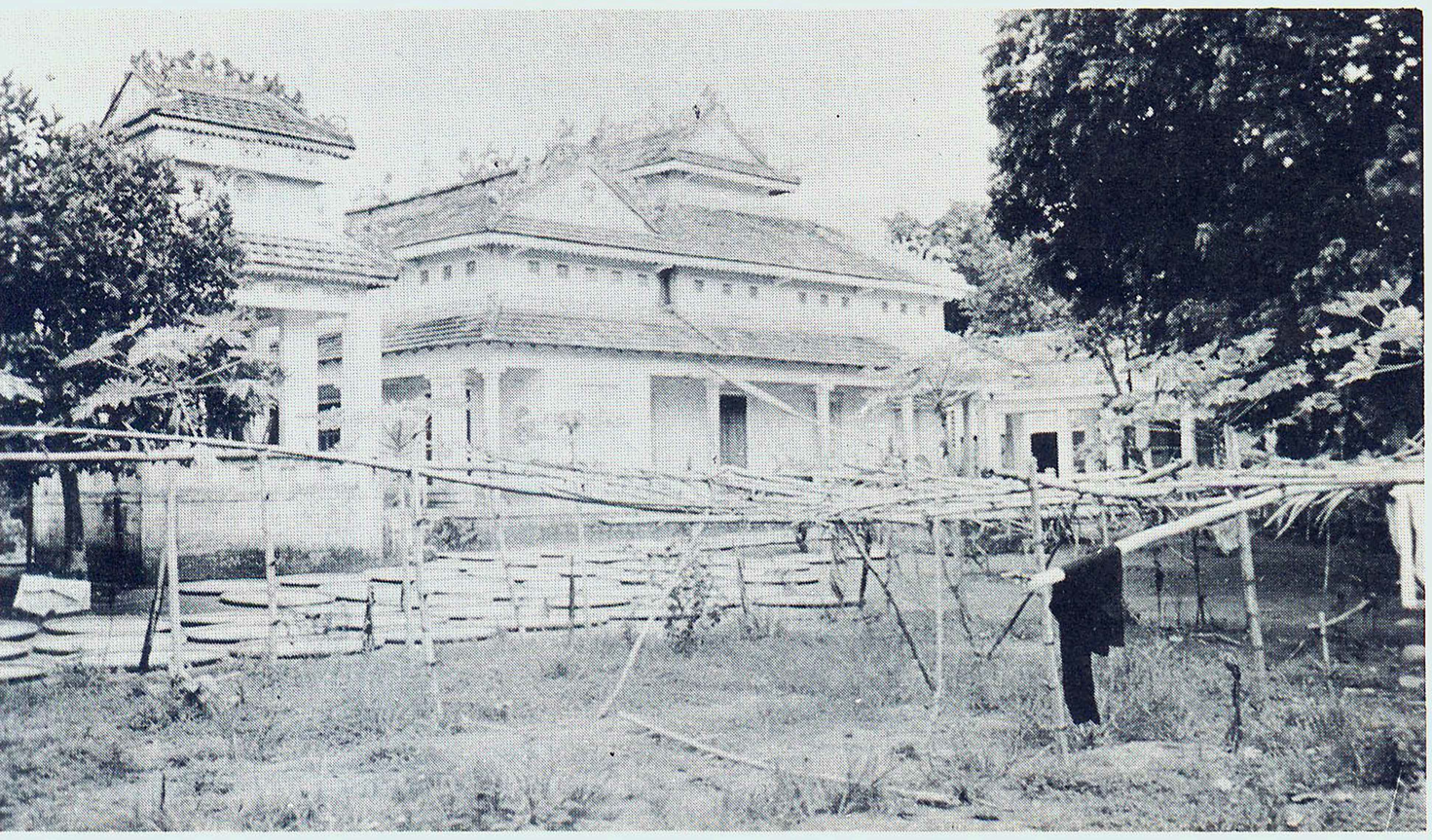
Photos by PFC LASZLO KONDOR



Overlooking the Song Tra Khuc River, Buddha Mountain has been the home of the Tam Chau sect of the Buddhist religion since 900 A.D. The grass covered hill is a quiet spot in the war torn area around Quang Ngai City where school girls dressed in their flowing white ao dais, the native dress for Vietnamese women, escape to tree-shaded trails where they can be seen reading or chatting with friends.

Leaving the noise of Quang Ngai City, the drive to the mountain top is like a trip through history, the gates of the old pagoda, with their dragon facade, lend an ageless romanticism one associates with the timeless orient.

This religious spot, untouched by the present war has 30 Buddhist followers in various stages of the thirty-year training period required to become fully accepted Buddhist





MOUNTAIN

monks. The men come from all walks of life to dedicate themselves to their religious belief, but the majority begin training when they are ten-years-old and spend their lives in the pagoda. The amount of training the monks have received is outwardly displayed by the length of hair and type of robe worn.

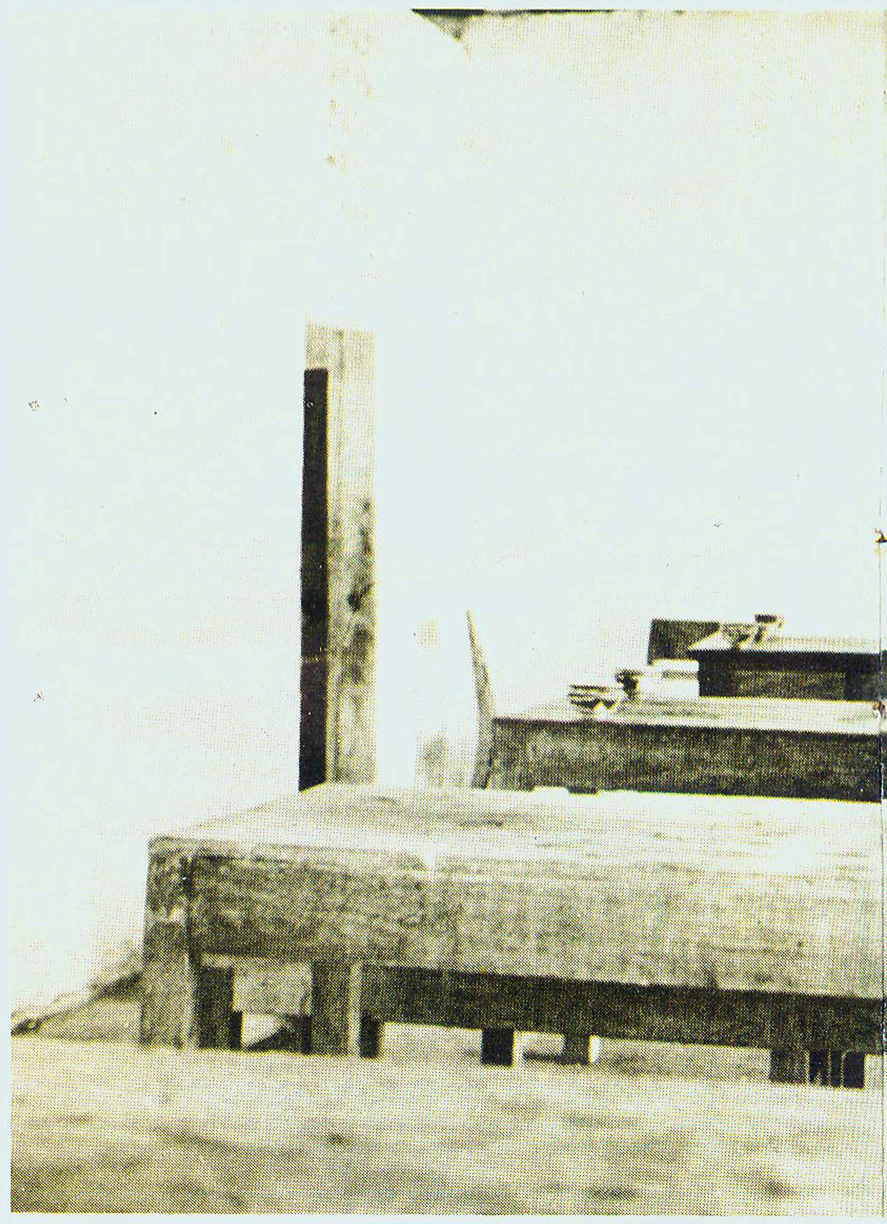
The religious buildings form a rectangular compound which encloses the pagoda, living quarters, gardens, and a well. The beautifully carved and ornate buildings house religious artifacts and statues depicting the different precepts of the Buddhist religion.

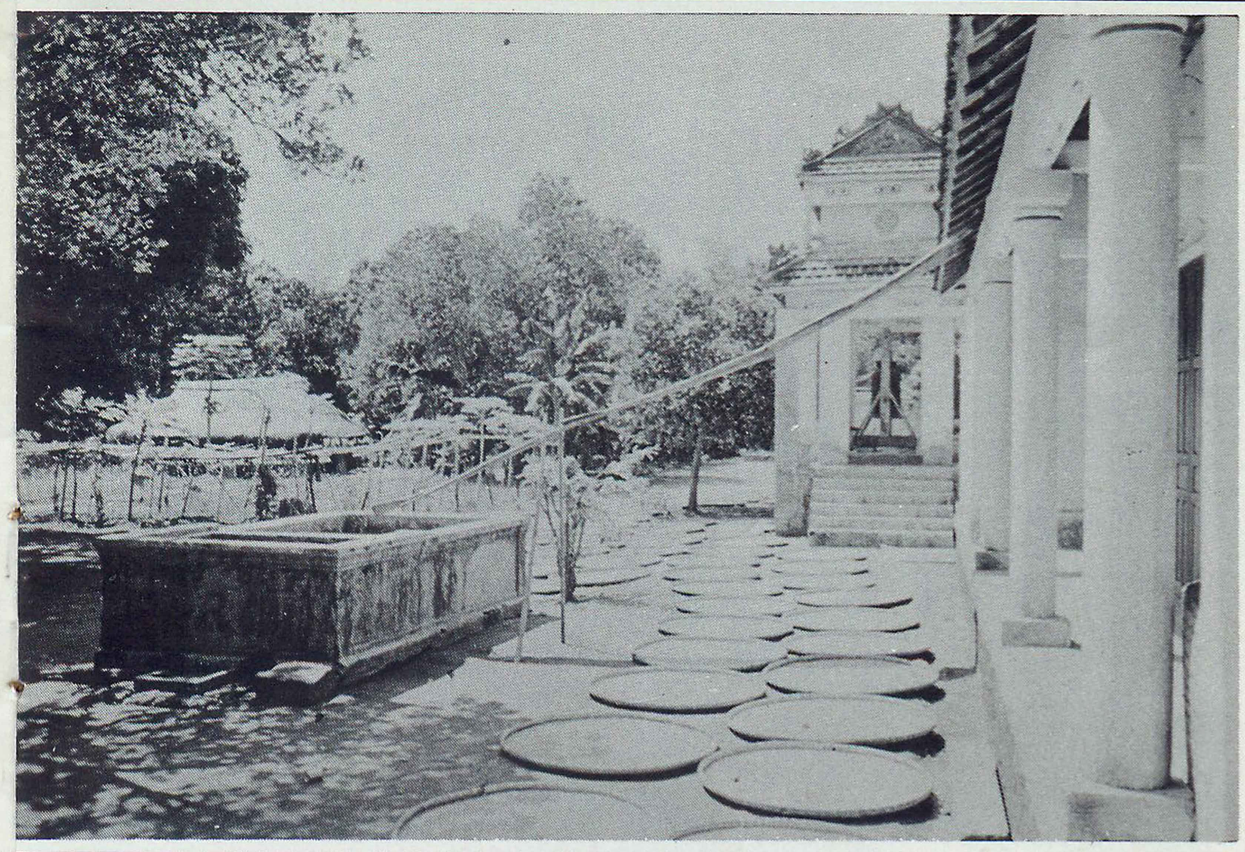
Hard work and diligent effort by the monks tending to the gardens and well make the compound self-sufficient and the inhabitants rely on few of the modern services available in Quang Ngai.

The religious structure of the pagoda is headed by one monk, the cell leader, and he holds this position until his death. Since the building of the pagoda there have been seven such leaders. The first and second cell leaders are considered to have made the most significant contributions to the pagoda.

The first leader, a Chinese monk, initiated the building of the pagoda and also started a journalized history of his activities which has been continued by his successors with each noting important events as they occurred throughout the years.

The history of the buildings and the men themselves is constantly shadowed by dozens of legends and





OF PEACE



tales which are many times easier to believe than the truth. One such story concerns the digging of a well which is still used today.

The legend connected with the well states that with the realization that water was needed if the pagoda and its inhabitants were to exist, the second leader went about the task of digging a well by hand. The first ten meters were easily dug, but then the monk hit solid rock and after scrapping at the rock for several days and not making any progress gave up.

That night a vision came to the monk telling him to continue digging and he would hit water. The next day while chipping away at the rock bottom an old man came to the pagoda and offered his assistance. The two men worked side-by-side for three years, and then, they came to water. The monk ran to tell the others about their success. When he returned to the well the old man had vanished and was never seen again.

Over 1000 years after its initial construction, the beautiful pagoda was nearly destroyed in 1950, when French artillery fired on the mountain.

With patience and skill, the monks rebuilt the walls and roofs and adorned them with carvings and characters of their religion. Their labors in the rebuilding have taken almost 19 years.

The stories about the pagoda, the monks faith, hard labor, and the recent help of Americans giving aid to the people at this religious site has enabled the monks to obtain building materials to rebuild and add to the present structures.

The white-walled buildings offer a refuge from the noise and hustle of the city and a place where Buddhists can worship in peace. The pagoda stands as a living tribute to the beauty of the Buddhist religion and to the hard working monks who have lived and cared for the buildings through the centuries.

N

is for nurse

Story and Photos by

1LT JOSEF HEBERT



The deep, green rice paddies of Quang Ngai Province were not new to 12-year-old Dinh Tam and he strolled among them with confidence and assurance. Perhaps his confidence was not enough this sunny day, however, as suddenly a wild pain shrieked up his left leg. The Vietnamese youngster had stepped on a Communist mine.

About the same time, 30 miles to the north of Tam's home, five-year-old Nguyen Thi Hang stumbled across another Communist booby-trap near Tam Ky. He suffered multiple fragmentation wounds.

And near Tam Ky, Halng Ngoc Linh, a 23-year-old veteran of the South Vietnamese Army, rode his motor scooter up and down Hwy. 1 until he met a civilian truck head-on fracturing a left wrist and both legs.

Linh, like the two youngsters, was medevaced from the scene of the accident by a helicopter of the Americal Div. On one recent day last month the three lay recuperating in the Vietnamese ward of the U.S. Army's 27th Surgical Hospital at Chu Lai.

The ward is not large, taking up only two air-conditioned quonset huts in the hospital complex. The



24-hour care is administered by five American Army nurses who came to Vietnam to treat American soldiers but find treating the 20 to 60 Vietnamese civilians "a real challenge."

Linh, still in traction, enjoyed his two Vietnamese visitors that day for he was well on the way to recovery and already talked about going back to his home in a nearby village.

American doctors had amputated Dinh Tam's left leg but tomorrow he was to go the Quang Ngai City's province hospital and be fitted with an artifical leg. His spirits were high almost as if he were accustomed to the brutalities of war. The U.S. doctors had saved his life.

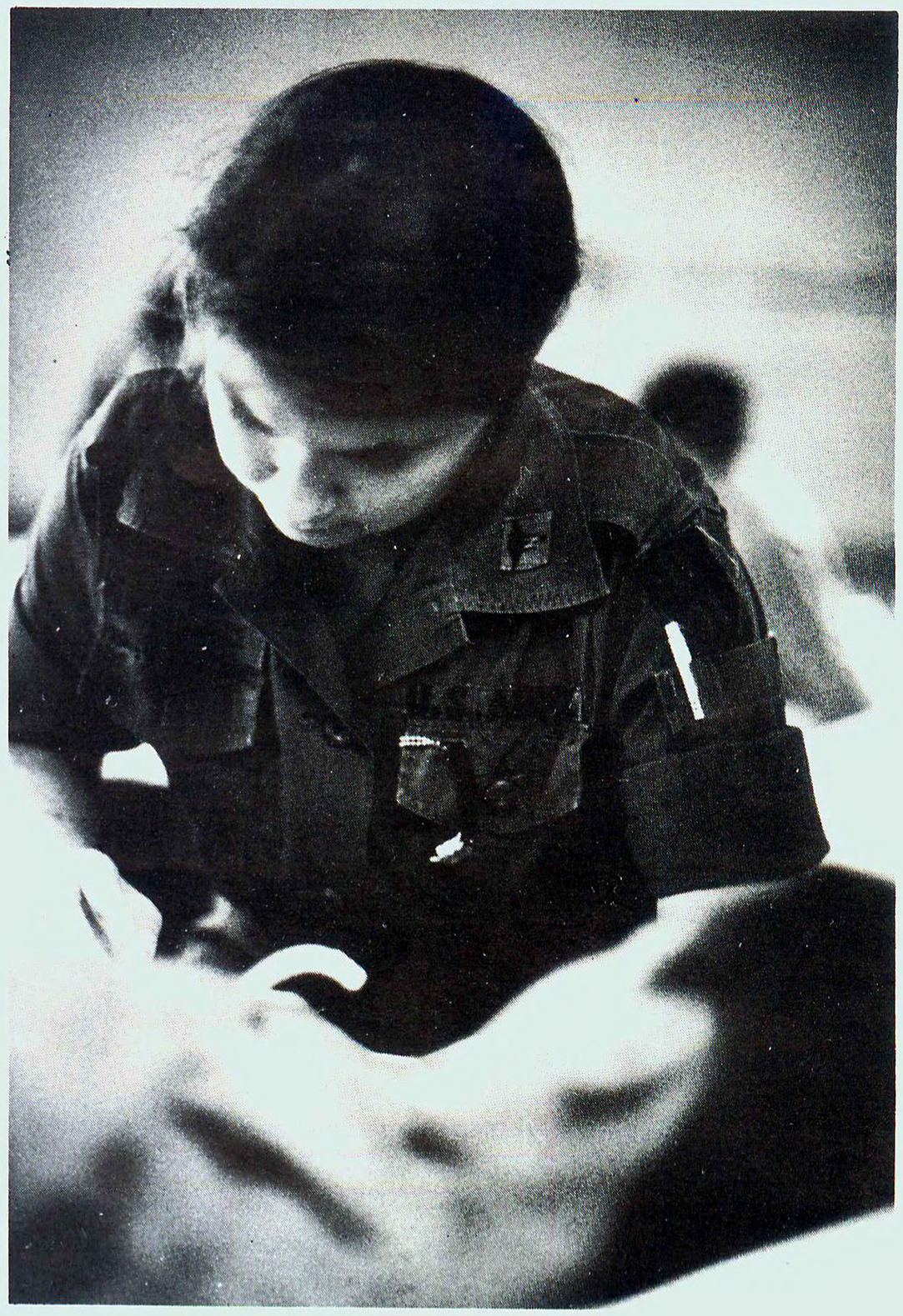
Nguyen Thi Hang too, having almost fully recovered from fragmentation wounds in the leg and abdomen, was soon to go home.

For now, they still were among the 60 patients—women and men, soldiers and civilians, young and old—being treated at the hospital by American doctors and nurses.

"The ward here is a physical example of what we can do to help these people in time of their gravest need. We have been able to save the lives of many civilians



"...working in this ward is easy if you like it, and if you wouldn't, it would be impossible."



who otherwise might have died had they not received prompt medical care," explained LTC Frances Vandiver (Anderson, S.C.), chief nurse at the 27th Surgical Hospital.

LTC Vandiver, who has high praise of the Vietnamese ward, said it is working well, although there are some psychological, cultural, and linguistic problems evident in the day to day operations.

"These people are often afraid when they first come into the ward," explained 1LT Ruth LaChance (Bangor, Maine), the ward's head nurse. "The first time they take a shower, for instance, they are scared of the water spraying down. But after the first time they love it and won't come out."

1LT Phyllis Breen (New Albany, Ind.) another nurse working in the ward, cited the language barrier as the most difficult problem she encountered working with the Vietnamese.

"It's a real challenge to communicate with these people," she said. "We have interpreters to make it easier but often we still use sign-language. You'll be surprised how much that will communicate."

At times—especially during the long 10-hour overnight stretch—some nurses think about the days they worked in a ward with American soldiers, instead of Vietnamese.

"We did come over here to treat our guys," said 1LT Breen, "and I sometimes miss working with them—you know, kidding around with them. You can't do that as well here with the communication and cultural barriers."

But 1LT Breen and the other nurses each volunteered to work with the Vietnamese and they all answer the question of how they like it with three words: "I love it."

"I could have refused it," said 1LT LaChance, "but I didn't and I don't regret the decision." Another nurse

said simply: "I like it. Working in this ward is easy if you like it, and if you wouldn't, it would be impossible."

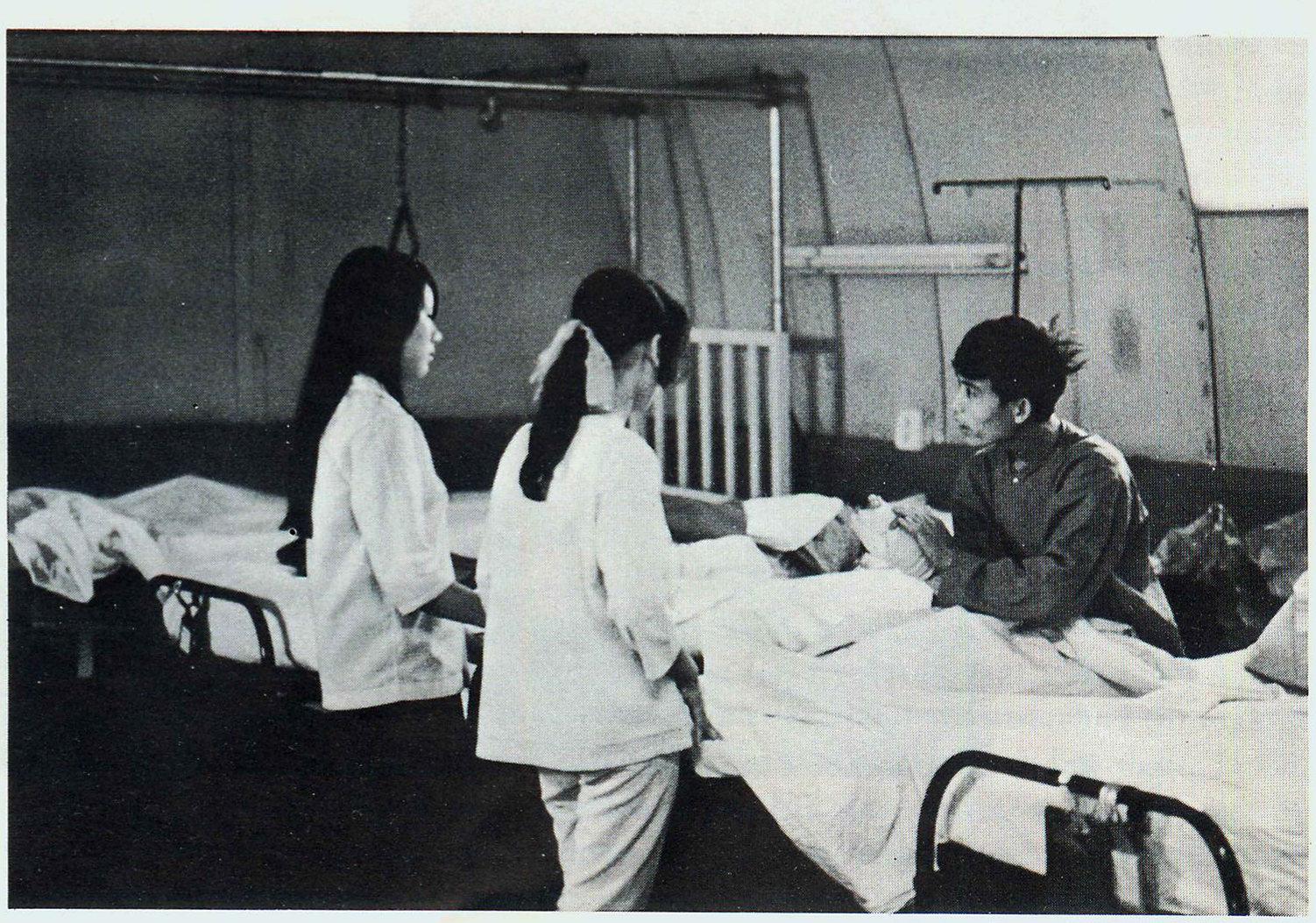
Along with the problems there also are rewards—the smiling youngster who has just recovered from shrapnel wounds and will soon go home, the relieved mother who just gave birth by cesarean section, the old man who will live a few years longer because of a vital operation.

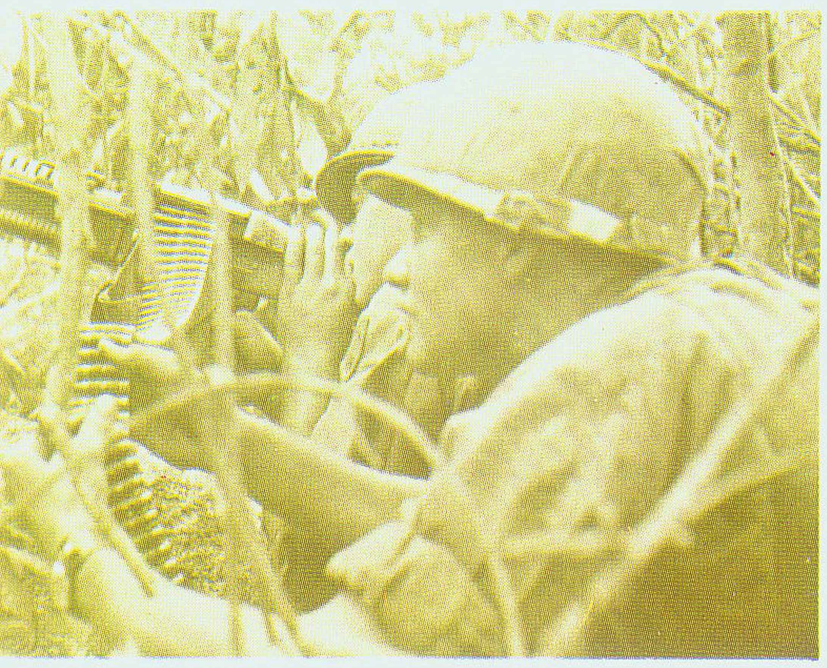
Not only does the ward treat Vietnamese patients but it provides a medium of instruction for Vietnamese to learn the rudimentary facts of caring for the ill through an extensive use of interpreters and Vietnamese aides.

"One of the most significant aspects of this ward is the fact that the Vietnamese (aides and interpreters) are working closely with our nurses helping each other," explained MAJ Alton F. Gross, commander of the 27th Surgical Hospital.

For youngsters such as Dinh Tam or Nguyen Thi Hang—innocent onlookers caught up in the agonies of war—two air-conditioned quonset huts and the gentle hands of five American nurses mean more than that. They mean the chance for survival.









For the first two days field troops of
alone against two powerful North
committed to defend the Vietnamese
of the twelve-day battle fought by

IN DEFENSE







the Americal's 196th Inf. Bde. stood Vietnamese regiments. The troops were refugees at all costs. This is the story elements of the 196th Inf. Bde.....

OF HIEP DUC

Story and Photos by
SP4 BILL CRAWFORD
196th Inf. Bde.

August can be a searing hell for the infantrymen operating in the Que Son Valley. Located in Vietnam's Central Highlands some thirty miles south of DaNang, the valley floor is encircled by numerous peaks which all but cut off any circulation of the muggy, semi-tropical air. Triple canopy jungle gives way to wide expanses of lush rice paddies which allude to the region's agricultural potential. Narrow woodlines border many of the paddies, and small, green knolls dot the region. Summer temperatures often soar above 105 degrees atop surrounding mountain peaks. In the broad valley below, the temperatures average 20 degrees more, and any hint of a breeze all but disappears.

Nui Liet Kien looms high above the Que Son Valley. Its steep slopes seem to preclude any notion of climbing to the top. Known to troops of the 196th Inf. Bde. as Hill 445, or LZ West, the summit is called the "Mountain of the Black Leeches" by the local Vietnamese populace. The steep slopes are far from being insurmountable, however. Daily patrols from 4–31 venture down to the valley. The infantrymen dread the eventual "hump" back up, but there is little choice.

For the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers operating in the area, there is an alternative; but they too make periodic jaunts to the summit. Their mission is one of death and destruction as they come with wicker baskets full of explosive charges and Chicom grenades tied to their charcoal-blackened bodies. AK-47 assault rifles and rocket launchers round out their lethal arsenal.

For the men of D Co., 4–31, the afternoon of August 17 was enough to give the average infantryman a good "case." It was hot and there wasn't enough water. There is never enough water for an infantry trooper in August! Jungle fatigues were drenched with perspiration, and arms and hands cut by the razor-sharp elephant grass smarted under the salty paste of grime and sweat.

D Co. moved spiritlessly from LZ West through the triple layer of jungle growth. The company had recently lost their popular CO, CPT Norman Mekkelson (Miami Shores, Fla.), in an encounter with the NVA in nearby "Happy" Valley. The soft-spoken West Point graduate had suffered a knee wound and was now recovering in a hospital in Japan. If you asked a rifleman or grenadier in D Co. how he felt about CPT Mekkelson, he would probably answer, "He was a squared-away guy," or "he was definitely an uptight CO."

A company commander wasn't all the company had given up in "Happy" Valley. D Co. had lost its first man in combat in over nine months. It was with justified apprehension that D Co. moved through the thick foliage south of LZ West. That fire-support base had been hit by a pre-dawn NVA sapper attack only a few days before. Fifty-nine enemy were killed, and a sizable NVA force was thought to be lingering in the area.

As the unmerciful sun dropped behind the mountains to the west, D Co. looked forward to "setting up" for the night. Maybe there would even be a small "blueline" where an exhausted infantry soldier could relieve his parched throat. Suddenly, the stillness of the jungle was shattered by the cacophony of small arms fire. The firing died away as quickly as it had begun.

The point element spotted NVA soldiers. Shots rang out. The small group of enemy scattered guickly leaving one dead. A couple of men moved up cautiously to search the area. As they did, the woodline ahead erupted with .30 caliber, AK-47, and .51 caliber fire. Automatic weapons fire rained in on D Co. Troops clawed the ground trying to become invisible in the face of the barrage.

The company did not yet realize it, but they had aroused a battalion of the 3rd Regt., 2nd NVA Div. The remainder of the regiment was stretched throughout the valley to the south. For the next few days, D Co., as well as other 196th Inf. Bde. units, would be fighting for their lives in a battle which would make headlines around the world.

Several miles north of D Co.'s besieged position, B Co., 4–31 moved through the dawn mist toward the base of Hill 381, the reported location of a large enemy rice cache. As the company neared the suspected location, they dropped their "heavies" (rucksacks) and left a reinforced platoon to secure the equipment as well as the LZ which would be needed for the resupply chopper later in the day. The remainder of the company moved out toward the objective.

Seven men were securing the LZ, which was off to one side—away from the equipment. SP4 Henry Tafoya (Del Norte, Colo.) was one of these seven men. Tafoya described what took place in the few minutes after the company had moved out.

"We made hooches out of bamboo poles and ponchos. We had to do something to get out of the sun. It was unbearable! Suddenly, I noticed that what I had thought were five small trees growing outside the perimeter were moving toward us!"

Tafoya was hit with the shocking realization that enemy soldiers, expertly camouflaged, were moving into position just outside of their defensive perimeter. It was at that instant that Chicom grenades and RPGs "rained in" on the seven infantrymen. "One RPG roared at me," reported Tafoya. "It hit my poncho, and set it on fire—then it kept going and exploded nearby!"

"We heard the explosions from the LZ," said SP4 Rickie Jay (Athens, Tex.), who was with the men guarding the equipment. "Just about the same time, we started taking incoming mortar rounds."

The call crackled over the "squawkbox" on CPT William Gayler's PRC-25 radio: "They're getting hit back at the LZ!" CPT Gayler, a native of Mineral Wells, Texas, turned his men around and hastened to aid the stricken platoon.

It took some time for the significance of the contacts with the enemy experienced by B and D Companies to become apparent. D Co. was battling the 3rd NVA Regt. to the south of LZ West. The enemy regiment was actually spread out a great deal to the south from the point of initial contact. NVA bunker complexes were found as far south as Nui Lon and Hill 102 in an area which was being patrolled by the 3rd Bn., 21st Inf.

B Co. had encountered the 1st Main Force Regt. northeast of Hill 118 which is located northwest of LZ West. Situated near Hill 118 is the refugee settlement of Hiep Duc. Here, over 4,000 Vietnamese civilians make their homes under the watchful eyes of 4–31 soldiers.

The NVA had been boasting openly that they would "wipe out" Hiep Duc by early September. Communist propaganda agents armed with portable loudspeakers made numerous appearances in Hiep Duc during the summer months. They informed the people that the Government of Vietnam and the United States troops would not be able to provide adequate protection in the event of an attack. As September approached, over 4,000 NVA troops massed in the area to make good their threats.

The 3rd NVA Regt. was positioned to strike two 196th Bde. bases: LZs Center and West. Both of these installations would provide artillery support in the event of an attack on Hiep Duc. Secondary missions of the 1st Main Force Regt. would attack LZ Siberia which could render direct fire support to nearby Hiep Duc refugee center. Another mission was to block any reinforcements that might attempt to reach Hiep Duc by way of Hwy. 534 which links the refugee center with LZ Ross.

"We definitely disrupted the NVA plan to attack Hiep Duc and the surrounding firebases," said LTC Cecil M. Henry (Rome, Ga.), the CO of 4–31. "The first two days were the worst because we were one battalion against two NVA regiments!"

By the third day, companies from the three other infantry battalions in the 196th Bde: 3rd Bn., 21st Inf; 2nd Bn., 1st Inf; 1st Bn., 46th Inf. had been airlifted to Hiep Duc Valley to bolster American manpower. These reinforcements circulated from one end of the Hiep Duc-Que Son contact area to the other.

B Co., 4–31 remained pinned down in the vicinity of Hill 118. Enemy mortars and small arms fire immobilized the infantrymen. A platoon from C Co., 4–31 under the command of 1LT James Simms (Clarendon Hills, Ill.) was dispatched to aid B Co. "Blue Ghost" gunships of F Trp., 8th Cav., helped to prevent the NVA from over-running the company's position.

As darkness fell, 1LT Simms was maneuvering his platoon to assist B Co. "Shell casings from the gunships overhead streamed down on us," said the lieutenant. As the element advanced toward an enemy position which had been hard hit by airstrikes and gunships, they moved up what they thought to be a dew-soaked slope. "The gunships made another pass, and we had to hit the dirt," explained 1LT Simms. "It was then that we found out the ground was soaked with blood—not dew!"

B Co. attempted to pull back to reach their night defensive position, but they were being pounded by enemy mortars. PFC Marion Feaster (Deland, Fla.) took cover instinctively in the tall grass of a nearby stream bed. Exhausted from hours of continuous fighting, Feaster dozed momentarily.

Suddenly, he was conscious of an NVA soldier crouching in the tall grass near him. The mortar fire subsided, and the company began to move out. Feaster lay motionless expecting the NVA soldier to fire at the withdrawing troops. Feaster was powerless to intervene because he had dropped his rifle off to the side in his haste to take cover. The NVA soldier brandished an AK-47 rifle, but he made no attempt to fire on Feaster's comrades. He remained motionless until the Americans had gone, and then moved away into the night..

Feaster was alone in enemy territory armed only with two hand grenades which he carried on his belt. Someone had found his M-16 and carried it off, thinking it belonged to a wounded man. Feaster made his way

along the stream bed in order to remain hidden. Several times he heard NVA soldiers talking on the banks above him. Where the water was deep, Feaster swam beneath the surface to avoid detection.

Finally, he was forced to abandon the stream in order to rejoin his company whose position he suspected to be in another direction. He made his way cautiously down a narrow path. Suddenly, the stillness was pierced by the cracking of AK-47 fire.

Feaster had walked through the middle of an NVA ambush! Thinking that he was a pointman for an American element, the NVA had let Feaster go through in the hope of catching a large force. Realizing their mistake, the NVA opened fire, but Feaster sped away into the night.

Dawn saw Feaster entering the B Co. defensive position amid the crackle of enemy sniper fire. The startled Americans "thought sure the NVA were attacking" when they heard the NVA firing at Feaster.

The NVA were fighting more aggresively and were much better supplied than they had been in recent months. In most cases, the enemy was well-entrenched in bunkers and camouflaged fighting positions. "The NVA seemed to have little interest in conserving ammunition," commented one company commander. Intelligence reports indicated that there was a sizeable NVA force massed in the general vicinity of LZ West.

On the morning of August 19, a UH-1D "Huey" helicopter was shot down over Hill 102 inside NVA-occupied territory, by enemy anti-aircraft fire. Aboard were eight men—among them LTC Eli Howard (Woodbridge, Va.), commanding officer of the 3rd Bn., 21st Inf. Also aboard was Oliver "Ollie" Noonan (Norwell, Mass.), an Associated Press photographer. All eight men died when the torn chopper exploded in flames as it fell.

The push to recover the bodies of the victims of the "Huey" tragedy sparked one of the bitterest engagements of the turgid confrontation. For almost a week the men of LTC Howard's 3rd Bn., 21st Inf. strove against unrelenting NVA fire to reach the crash site on Hill 102.

"It was hell out there," remarked PFC Barry Daniels (McCordsville, Ind.), a rifleman with C Co., 3–21. "The NVA were all over the place with weapons and packs. We couldn't move 100 meters without being attacked." So it went for one long week, the men of 3–21 pushed and pushed.

On Sunday, August 24, men of B Co., 3–21 who were accompanied by their new battalion commander LTC Robert C. Bacon (Falls Church, Va.) fought their way back into the tangled crash site. Hill 102 was won.

Earlier in the week, the decision was made to divide the operational control of the 196th Inf. Bde. troops between LZ West (4–31) for the northern sector and LZ Center (3–21) for the southern sector.

Task Force 4–31 battled the 1st Main Force Regt. near Hill 118 while Task Force 3–21 closed in on the enemy massed south of LZ West. In addition, elements of the 7th Regt., 1st Marine Div. were air-lifted to the vicinity of LZ West and began to drive toward the enemy from the east.

South of LZ West, A Co., 4–31, commanded by CPT James Mantell (Columbus, Ga.), had relieved battered D Co. Joined by supporting troops from Task Force 3–21, A Co. moved stubbornly forward, knocking out the enemy positions which had taken their toll on D Co. As the fighting progressed, Task Force 3–21 ferreted out the enemy bunkers and destroyed them, forcing the enemy to withdraw to the mountains in the west.

The infantry units received immense fire support from batteries of the 3rd Bn., 82nd Arty., situated on LZ's Center, West, Siberia, and Baldy. Throughout the action, infantry units came to depend heavily on concentrated artillery support which proved so accurate in helping to stop the on-rushing enemy.

"We tried to get out the first round as quickly as possible," said PFC Jim Weisbecker (Ventnor, N.J.), section chief at B Btry., LZ Center. "When you know that one of your buddies is out there fighting for you and your first round may save his life, you don't waste any time."

Thousands of artillery rounds pounded the NVA bunker complexes during those last days of August. Scores of tactical airstrikes echoed through the Hiep Duc and Que Son Valleys. Countless times, 196th Bde. infantrymen pushed forward against pockets of fierce enemy resistance. The Marine advance from the east placed an increased strain on the NVA forces. Slowly, the enemy began to withdraw to the north toward the rugged Nui Chom ridgeline. The American units pursued determindly. By August 29, the major sources of enemy resistance in the Hiep Duc vicinity had been irreparably crushed.

Hiep Duc had been spared! No casualties or significant damage had been reported from the refugee center. The 196th Inf. Bde. had preserved Hiep Duc and cost the enemy over 1,000 dead.



16th CAG:

Metal Angels

Of Hope & Mercy

By SP4 CRAIG COUTURE

16th Cbt. Avn. Grp.

Nineteen Hueys cast dark silhouettes against the lava-red South China Sea. The early morning sky was blazed scarlet and clouds formed delicate designs that a carefree mind could mold into anything it fancied. But to a number of men of Americal's 16th Combat Aviation Group (CAG) the significance of their mission left little time for such pleasant diversions.

On this particular morning, 500 infantrymen had to be lifted into an area where the Viet Cong were suspected of hiding. The operation was a fairly large one; there would be two assaults. The first involved carrying over 200 men of the 1st Bn., 6th Inf., 198th Inf. Bde. into a valley 15 miles west of Chu Lai. The second was an assault involving more than 300 men from the 1st Bn., 6th Regt., 2nd ARVN Div. into the same general area.

Gunships approached the LZ first, firing their rockets and miniguns at any suspicious areas. The command and control ship dropped down and marked the LZ with smoke grenades. The smoke ship, affectionately called "Smokey" followed and circled the area with a protective ring of heavy smoke to conceal the approaching troop-carrying "slicks."

Despite small arms fire that kept bursting from the bushes of the surrounding hillsides, both assaults flown by the 176th Avn. Co. were successful in bringing Americal and ARVN soldiers to the enemy's doorstep.

Providing such air mobility and direct air support for the Americal and 2nd ARVN Div. is only one of many services the 16th CAG renders to allied forces in the I Corps Tactical Zone.

The 16th Group was first activated and organized on Dec. 20, 1967 and became operational on Jan. 23, 1968, at the Marine Marble Mountain Air Facility, DaNang. This was just one week before the 1968 Tet Offensive exploded throughout Vietnam. The 16th Group, as their motto implies, was truely "Born in Battle."

Originally part of the 1st Avn. Bde., the 16th CAG was attached to the Americal Div. on Dec. 1, 1968. Within a week, the Group relocated from Marble Mountain to its present location at Chu Lai. The unit has the distinction of being the only aviation group in the U.S. Army assigned to an infantry division.

Intent upon carrying out its mission, the 16th CAG, commanded by COL D. Townsend (Danbury, Neb.), is composed of a Hqs. and Hqs. Co., the 335th Trans. Co., and two battalions: the 14th CAB with units at Duc Pho and Chu Lai, and the 123rd CAB with units in the Chu Lai area.



Anthony



The 14th Cbt. Avn. Bn. moved to Chu Lai from the Phu Bai Valley in 1967 to support Task Force Oregon. The battalion, commanded by LTC Jerry L. Teague (Alexandria, Va.), is comprised of the 174th and 176th Aslt. Hel. Companies (AHC) and the 132nd and 178th Aslt. Spt. Hel. Companies (ASHC).

The 71st Avn. Co. known as the "Rattlers" arrived in Vietnam in 1964. Three years later, the company moved to Chu Lai with the 196th Inf. Bde. as part of Task Force Oregon and have consistently supported that unit in the Americal's northern area of operations. In recent months, the "Rattlers" have supported the 196th Bde. in numerous operations in the Que Son, Hiep Duc, Phouc Chau, and Phouc Cha Valleys.

Commanded by MAJ William M. Price (Fayetteville, N.C.), the 71st set an envious record of 25 consecutive months of flying and over 50,000 combat hours without an accident in 1968.

Another unit with an envious safety record is the 174th AHC, located at Duc Pho. The company has the best accident free record in the Americal Div. with not a single accident in the current fiscal year. The pilots have a combined total of 10,500 accident free flying hours. In that time, the company has carried 75,000 passengers and 2,500 tons of cargo. To the soldier in the field that means a hot meal everyday and a quick trip to the rear when stand-down comes. While compiling its record the 174th has flown nearly 50,000 sorties, including night combat assaults, "dust-off" missions, and emergency ammo resupply.

Under the leadership of MAJ Virgil E. Blevins (Beeville, Tex.), the 174th has three flight platoons and boasts a motto of "Nothing Impossible" in carrying out its mission to support the 11th Inf. Bde. The troop-carrying aircraft are called "Dolphins" and the gunships called "Sharks."

To the infantrymen, the sight of the "Shark" gunships working out on the enemy while the "Dolphins" bring in the much needed ammunition is a vision long remembered. As one infantry officer said, "The Sharks give a morale boost to us and scare the devil out of the enemy. After the Sharks shoot up an area, you can count on it being quiet the rest of the night."

Another constant source of support for troops on the ground are the "Minutemen" of the 176th AHC commanded by MAJ O.R. Hite (Staunton, Va.). Since 1967, the 176th has been supporting the 198th Inf. Bde.

During August 1969, aviators of

the 176th averaged 94 flying hours and was awarded the Americal Accident Prevention Award for the month.

To provide tactical air movement of combat, combat support, and combat service support units in the Americal area of operations is the mission of the 132nd ASHC. The company, commanded by MAJ William Jones (Glendall, Calif.), started operations with its Boeing-Vertol CH-47B Chinooks in May 1968. Since then, the "Hercules" Chinooks of the 132nd fly an average of 1,000 hours a month lifting over 10,000 passengers and over 5,000 tons of supplies. Their motto of "Versatility, Reliability, and Endurance" describes the support the 132nd gives daily to the Americal.

Invaluable support is also given to the combat soldier by the 178th ASHC commanded by MAJ Robert W. Parker (Secane, Pa.). The "Boxcars" arrived in Vietnam in April 1966 and moved to Chu Lai as part of Task Force Oregon.

The 178th have to their credit the distinction of being the first unit to move a complete 155 mm howitzer battery in one lift. Once the troops are safely in a combat area, it is up to the "Hercules" Chinooks to keep them supplied and combat ready.

The 123rd Cbt. Avn. Bn., like its sister battalion, provides air mobility and direct air support to elements of the Americal Div. The battalion, led by LTC Richard K. Dietsch (Manchester, N.H.), prides itself on the professionalism and consciousness in supporting the division. The battalion is comprised of A and B Companies; Hqs. and Hqs. Co. E Co., 723rd Maint. Bn; F Trp. 8th Cav; and D Trp., 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav.

Providing the Americal with general aviation support is the primary mission of A Co., 123rd CAB. While B Co. essentially has the role of an air cavalry troop. Many of B Co.'s missions are visual reconnaissance operations in which a team of four aircraft, one Light Observation Helicopter (LOH), two Cobra gunships, and one Huey "slick" with five infantrymen aboard search an assigned area for signs of enemy activity. During the past year, B Co. accounted for 429 enemy kills.

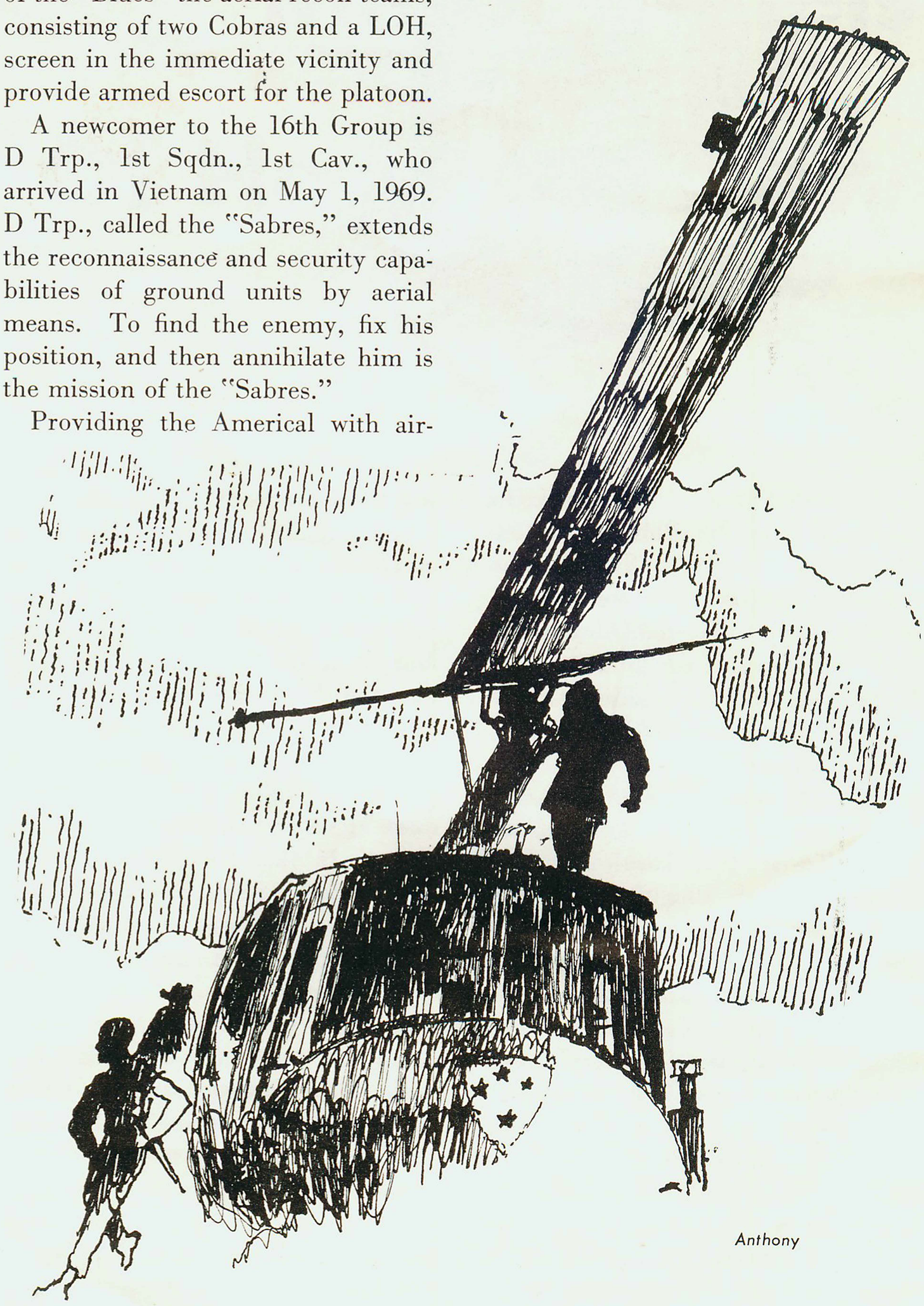
Known as the "Blue Ghost," F Trp. 8th Cav. arrived in Vietnam in October, 1967. Commanded by MAJ Charles E. Ivey (Urbana, Ill.), F Trp. has the primary mission of gathering intelligence. The unit accomplishes this by means of aerial and ground reconnaissance making maximum use of its firepower, communications, and mobility.

An organic infantry platoon, nicknamed the "Blues," is used for insertions to perform detailed searches of an area. Normally with the insertion of the "Blues" the aerial recon teams, consisting of two Cobras and a LOH, screen in the immediate vicinity and provide armed escort for the platoon.

A newcomer to the 16th Group is D Trp., 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav., who arrived in Vietnam on May 1, 1969. D Trp., called the "Sabres," extends the reconnaissance and security capabilities of ground units by aerial means. To find the enemy, fix his position, and then annihilate him is the mission of the "Sabres."

Providing the Americal with aircraft direct support maintenance is E Co., 723rd Maint. Bn. The job of this unit like that of the 335th Trans. Co. is to support and help maintain the aviation units assigned to the Americal.

The officers and men of the 16th CAG pride themselves on the ability to do their jobs well regardless of any difficulties. With courage and determination and the professional competence of its subordinate units, the 16th CAG supports the Americal in I Corps.



Anthony

in·ter·pret·er (*in·tûr′·prit·ər*)

an oral translator who explains or mediates between speakers of different languages.



Để hết một nhịp cầu thông cảm
với đồng bào, không gì quí hơn là
dùng ngôn ngữ chung. Đàn đó là tiếng
Việt - Nam - Tiếng Việt nam là một ngôn -
ngữ nhiều - âm - điệu rõ không phải ai
cũng có thể nói được trong một đôi một
chiều mà nó đòi hỏi một thời gian lâu
dài để nói đúng và thông - thạo

THÔNG-DỊCH-VIÊN : La người trung-gian

Giửa Những người nói ngôn-ngữ khác nhau

By SP4 BILL EFTINK

198th Inf. Bde.

For effective communication and understanding, people must find a common medium, a common language. Vietnamese, a tonal language, is not one that can be mastered in a short Berlitz course. In fact many years of continual use are required for correct and proficient usage.

The Americal Div., to help overcome this complex communications barrier has enlisted the aid of a small band of dedicated ARVN soldiers who possess the special talent of being fluent linguists. The worth of these translators to the whole operation of the Americal Div. has been described as "invaluable and essential."

Despite varied personal backgrounds, these men share a common bond; the challange in working to communicate with men having totally different languages and ideals, and the satisfaction in knowing that through their verbalization there will be understanding.

The average interpreter is in his late twenties, and has won the honor of becoming an interpreter by scoring high in written and spoken English tests before gaining entrance to the Vietnamese-American Assistance School in Saigon. The course is six weeks of grammar classes taught by Vietnamese instructors and classes in speaking and pronunciation taught by Americans.

After graduation, the interpreter may be given a choice of which of the four corps he wishes to be assigned to. SSG Nguyen Dinh Thieu of the 198th Inf. Bde. Psychological Operations Section (PSYOPS) requested I Corps so that he could be nearer his home and family. The 26-year-old former school teacher has been with the Americal Div. since the unit first arrived in Vietnam.

Thieu explained that often the easiest part of being an interpreter is to just relay back and forth what each party is saying to the other. "The hardest part," Thieu said, "is learning your job well enough to be able to watch for the little extra hints that may be important, and learning what things the officer-in-charge would like stressed."

"One of my main duties is translating messages into Vietnamese for printing," said Thieu. "Frequently, because of my knowledge of Vietnamese customs, I am able to suggest a better way of saying the same thing to the people. When I can do this I feel very happy because I know I am really helping to accomplish our goal."

CPT Banta York (Sumter, S.C.), the brigade PSYOPS officer, pointed out the importance of the interpreters. "Our entire operation is dependent upon good communications with the Vietnamese civilians as well as the enemy soldiers, and without our interpreters we would be paralysed."

Just as important and often more immediately crucial is the work performed by the interpreters who travel and work with companies in the field.

SGT Nguyen Duy Khue was formerly an assistant leader and liaison for the American students of the International Voluntary Service organization until 19 months ago when he volunteered to become an ARVN interpreter. Originally assigned to the 11th Bde. as a field interpreter, Khue now works with the 1st Bn., 6th Inf., 198th Bde.

Khue has mixed emotions about being in the field. "When I am out with a company, I know the CO and all the men are depending on me. It makes me feel very good to know that I may have saved the lives of some of the men in my company by finding out about enemy mines or ambushes."

To Khue, being in the field presents unique problems. "Often I get very tired," the small 30-year-old soldier said. "The Americans are very strong and can spend much time in the field before they wear down. I know I must save all my energy so that I can keep up."

"Sometimes the loneliness is worse than the walking," he continued. "Usually there are no other Vietnamese with the company, and my English is not too good, so it is hard for me to have close friends to talk to."

But to the men of the unit that Khue is assigned to he is more than just another member. "He has really helped get us out of some tight spots and I feel a lot better when Khue is along," said a radio-telephone operator, his words speak for all of the men in the company.

After serving more than a year as an infantryman in the Mekong Delta, 32-year-old SSG Nguyen That Bao became an interpreter and was assigned to the 198th Bde. MID. Bao now has an intense pride in the position of trust he has filled for two years.

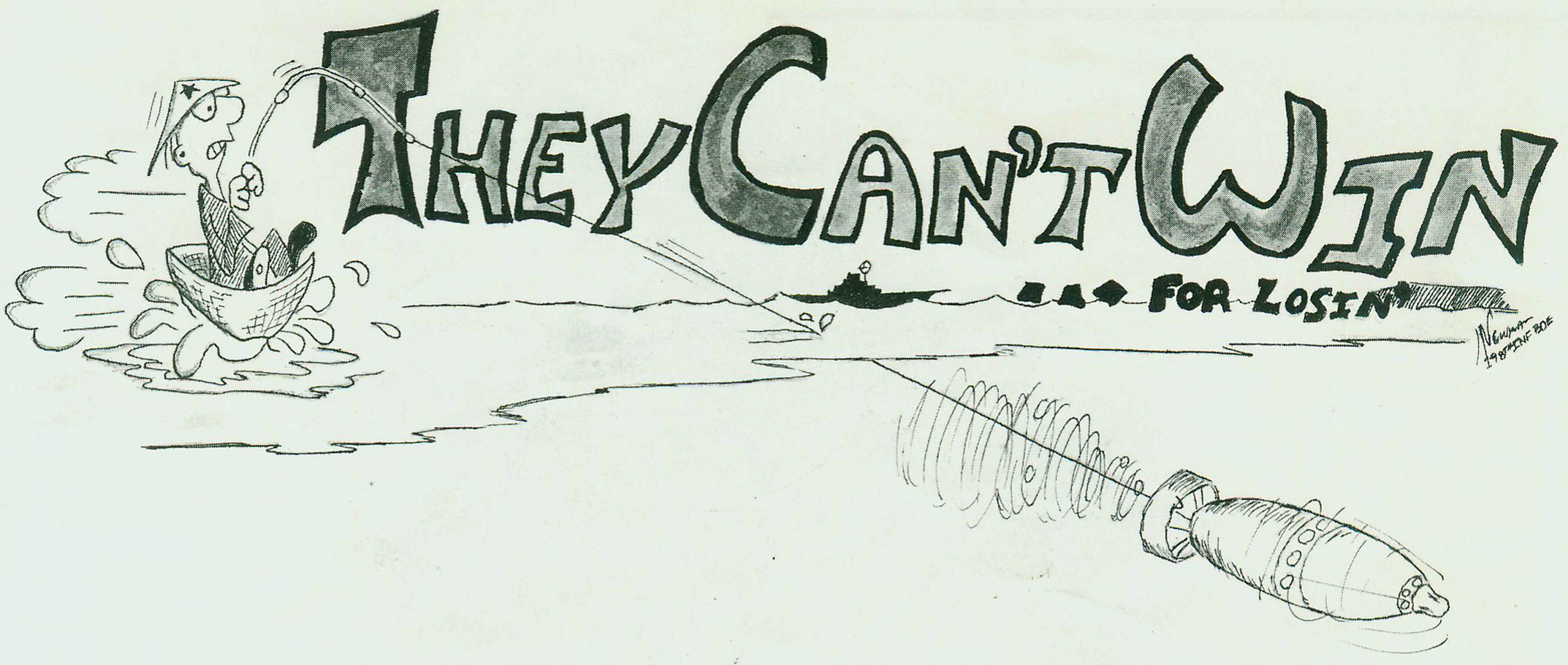
Although much of his time has been spent in the field, Bao considers the brigade headquarters at LZ Bayonet home. "Because I speak English, I have made many American friends and watched them go home 12 months later. I have tried to help them understand my country better, and by living with them I think I have learned much about America."

"It is very difficult to travel much when your country is at war, but when the war is over I would like to travel around the world and see what America really looks like," Bao said.

Regardless of their goals after the war, this small group of professionals continue their daily routine of keeping information flowing between Vietnamese and U.S. forces, a routine vital to both sides.

AMERICAL MIRTH

By SGT JIM NEWMAN
198th Inf. Bde.





"Now cut that out! I heard you the first time."



"I knew I'd put that booby trap around here some place! Yessir, I was sure that I..."



"Oh brother!"



"I'd a thought they would jump at the chance to earn an extra 10 Dong sapper pay."

Architectural Design

By SP5 JAMES BROWN

It is not unique to discover that a people's national personality is reflected in the structure and design of their public artifacts and buildings. Likewise, Vietnam's finest architectural quality and most artistic endeavors are found in its imperial palaces, mandarin residences, temples, pagodas, and tombs—sometimes in wood; sometimes in stone, but nearly always elaborately carved and painted.

Some temples, reconstructed over and over in nearly indentical form, represent very ancient styles. Such an example is the Cao Dai temple near Tay Ninh which has been decorated with embellished wood carvings and hand-hewed stone artifacts.

Whatever the origin of the architecture or the influences that have modified it, South Vietnamese proudly assert their architecture still preserves originality. Huge pillared porches holding a gravity and beauty all their own and great peak gables reflecting their weight against the sky are featured. Vertical lines are rarely accentuated, and Vietnamese architecture blends well with the natural surroundings, an impression fortified by careful landscapping.

Since French colonial architecture took limited account of the native building style, the more modern sections of most Vietnamese cities resemble small towns in southern France. More recently, Saigon has begun to construct city blocks with buildings of six or seven stories and it will eventually lose its distinctly French air. But a certain French quality of forms will remain, such as the numerous fountains and plaza areas in downtown Saigon.

All in all, the historical forms that reflect the Vietnamese people will continue to dominate the land with their timeless essence. Many architectural wonders like the Xa Loi Pagoda in Saigon with its artful grace will stand against the reflections of time.

Perhaps it all lies in the aspects of historical events. The cultural outburst after the conflict between Siam and Vietnam was one of the most brilliant in Vietnamese history. Not only did architecture level advance, but also sculpture, the bronzes, and enamel work which played an important factor in architectural design. And that same creative quality is still ingrained in the people of this land.


Rowland

"When freedom on her natal day,
Within her war-rocked cradle lay,
An iron race around her stood,
Baptized her infant brow in blood;
And, through the storm which round her swept,
Their constant ward and waiting kept."

By John Greenleaf Whittier