AMERICAL

MAY, 1969

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AMERICAL

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The Cover

FRONT: Soldiers from the 4th Bn., 3rd Inf., 11th Bde., cross a clear mountain stream during Operation Vernon Lake II which ran from Nov. 2-Feb. 28.

BACK: Deadly accurate shells from an 8-inch self propelled howitzer of the 3rd Bn., 18th Arty. support Américal infantrymen in combat operations.

The long, hard-fought battle sounds like it was taken from the pages of a World War II Americal history book, but a 196th Inf. Bde. battalion lived it just a few months ago—

The rain had stopped about 10 a.m. on Nov. 17, 1968, but the grass and vines on the ridge were wet. The point element of Delta Co., 4th Bn., 31st Inf. slashed a trail with machetes up the steep ridge. The men got soaked from brushing against the foliage.

One way or another, an infantryman gets wet and stays wet during the monsoons. If it's not the rain, it's the rain-soaked jungle he cuts his way through; if it's not a river-crossing, it's an assault across a rice paddy; or it's simply his own sweat soaking into his jungle fatigues as he climbs a rugged mountain trail.

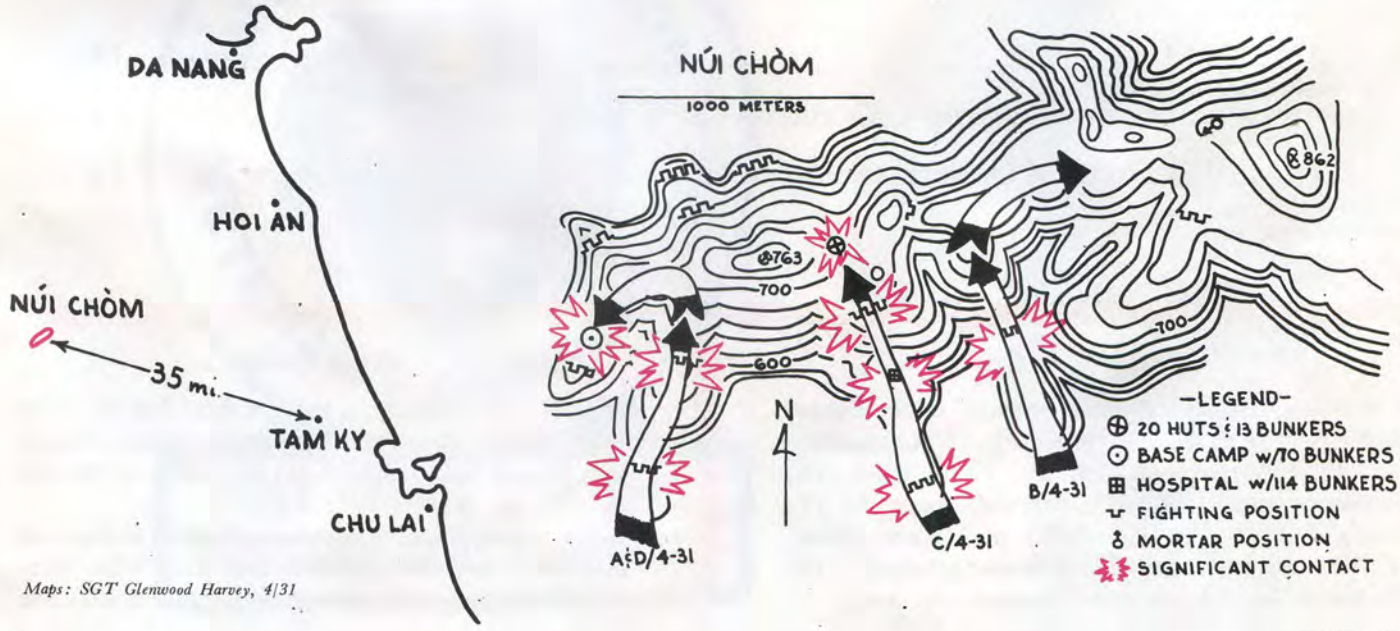
The "squawk-box" on the radio barked out its message to the Delta CP group resting on their packs nearby. CPT Sidney Ordway (Anaheim, Calif.), CO of D Co., listened patiently with the handset pressed to his ear. The Delta point element had walked into what looked like one of their own night defensive perimeters, but with a few variations—they had found two camouflaged anti-aircraft positions and numerous Ho Chi Minh sandal prints in and around the perimeter of fighting holes.

CPT Ordway and his Vietnamese interpreter went to check it out. They agreed that the area had been used recently by a company-size North Vietnamese Army force.

After searching the area, the captain elected to follow what appeared to be a wide, well-used trail leading north from the abandoned enemy laager position. He looked at his "funnypaper" (map) to see if the trail was mapped. It wasn't, but the direction of the trail and his location indicated that it went north-northwest to a group of high jungle peaks—collectively known as...

NUI CHOM MOUNTAIN

By SGT GEORGE HAWKINS
196th Inf. Bde.



Maps: SGT Glenwood Harvey, 4/31

A Co., commanded by CPT Billy Braswell (Henderson, N.C.), was operating approximately 1,000 meters west of D Co. CPT Ordway called CPT Braswell on his PRC-25 radio and told him what he had found. They decided to search out the canyon where the trail led.

As Delta maneuvered up the trail, the terrain got steeper, and the landscape turned from thick elephant grass and vines into triple canopy jungle. The D Co. pointman spotted what appeared to be a squad of NVA coming down the trail. Seconds later, the NVA saw the advancing Americal soldiers...both sides opened up.

The NVA pointman fell and the rest of the enemy squad ran back up the trail. Continuing 200 meters further up the trail, Delta walked into an NVA base camp.

CPT Ordway described what they found. "I had my men spread out and set up security. The base camp was built on both sides of a draw with a stream flowing through the middle of the camp. What we could see from the south side were mostly hootches and spider-hole fighting positions.

"The hootches were made of bamboo with thatched roofs. There weren't any fighting bunkers like the kind we were to run into later, higher on the mountain. I had my machinegunners recon by fire, but we didn't receive any return fire, so I moved two platoons in to search the camp."

The apparently deserted camp came alive as the 196th soldiers reached the north end. The CP group was hit by machinegun fire and both searching platoons received automatic weapons fire.

CPT Ordway was wounded when a bullet creased his forehead above the right eye. Minutes after he got hit, he lost consciousness. Then FSG John Neely was severely wounded in his right hand. The "Chargers" were in the middle of a fierce firefight.

While medics worked on the captain and first sergeant, CPT Ordway's RTO, SP4 Jessie Harris (Indianapolis),

got on the horn and called LTC Robert Wetzel (Harrisburg, Va.), 4/31 battalion commander, who was flying closeby in his C&C helicopter. Harris requested a medevac for the two wounded leaders, then briefed the lieutenant colonel on the enemy situation.

LTC Wetzel instructed the specialist to move CPT Ordway and Top Neely back to the rear security platoons and have an LZ prepared for the medevac. Harris also was told to move the platoons out of the base camp and to set up a defensive perimeter.

Assuming command with cool efficiency, Harris radioed the platoons and relayed LTC Wetzel's orders. Instructing the forward platoons to mark their positions with smoke grenades, he then coordinated with "Blue Ghost" gunships of F Trp., 8th Cav. for air support.

The helicopters came in with miniguns and machineguns blazing, and after they hosed down the area expending their ammo, artillery fire was called in.

Meanwhile, a retreating NVA element ran into Alpha Co. on the west flank of the camp. Two of the enemy soldiers were killed and the rest of the element were forced back into the base camp.

"We couldn't prepare a good LZ for the medevac because of the steepness of the mountainside and the triple canopy jungle," recalled SP4 Harris.

"It seemed like everything happened just after CPT Ordway was wounded," Harris said. "He got hit in the open. I ran to him and started dragging him to cover when a friend of mine from the 1st Plt. (SP4 Jim 'Homeboy' Williams, Detroit) started running through the exposed area to our front.

"I kept yelling, 'Get back, Homeboy, get back, I got him,' but Homeboy kept firing at the fighting position where machinegun fire was coming. He kept their heads down long enough for me to drag the captain to safety. Homeboy was one of the last to pull back.

"He only had eight days to go in

the field, and I kept thinking, 'Don't get hit now, Homeboy, not now.' When he finally pulled back to the rear security platoons he had two AK-47 bullets lodged in an M-16 magazine in the bandolier slung over his shoulder. I remember we both smoked about three packs of cigarettes that afternoon."

After several earlier attempts, a medevac helicopter made a landing on the LZ secured by Delta, and extracted CPT Ordway and FSG Neely late in the afternoon.

That night Delta and Alpha Cos. set up in night defensive perimeters while batteries of 105mm and 155 mm howitzers of the 3rd Bn., 82nd Arty. hammered at the NVA base camp.

Early the following morning, Nov. 18, D and A Cos. moved in again. They met no resistance as they stalked through the camp, finding three AK-47s, two Chicom machineguns, 20 NVA packs, and five dead enemy soldiers. Much of the captured equipment had been rendered useless by the earlier artillery barrages.

The infantrymen completed the job by destroying 20 hootches, 2 mess halls, and 10 tunnels. The NVA mainforce had withdrawn further into the dense coverage of the mountains during the night.

"Intelligence reports of the past few days confirmed our suspicions that the 21st Regt. of the 2nd NVA Div. was operating in the mountains in and around Nui Chom," said 1LT Barry Kubler (Long Island, N.Y.), the battalion S-2.

On the 19th, Charlie Co., commanded by 1LT Dickie Dixon (N. Liberty, Ind.), moved into the Nui Chom area and linked up with the other three companies. They began a three-pronged advance up Nui Chom Mountain, with A and D Cos. on the western flank, C Co. in the center, and B Co. on the eastern flank.

Delta Co., now commanded by 1LT John Dolan (Syracuse, N.Y.), once again made contact as they sprang an NVA ambush. The enemy was well entrenched in camouflaged fighting positions and sunken bunkers 10 to 15 meters off the main trail. The bullet-spitting fortifications had bamboo covers camouflaged with dirt and foliage.

The Delta pointman was wounded during the initial contact, which was to last four hours before the enemy was routed from their bunkers. A "Polar Bear" machinegun team moved up to the front when the action started and put heavy suppressive fire on an enemy .30 caliber machinegun position. While the 4/31 gunner popped off 100-round belts of ammo, Delta riflemen maneuvered in close to the .30 cal. and silenced it with grenades and M-16 fire.

"We more or less leap-frogged up the trail knocking out the enemy bunkers as we went," stated SSG Phillip Madlin (Joseph, Ore.), 1st Plt. sergeant.

"One of our biggest problems," he continued, "and one that really slowed us up, was that the enemy bunkers were always above us. They were about three-fourths below ground, and when you first looked at them they looked like an ordinary rise in the ground. Our pointmen usually couldn't spot them until they were fired upon."

Monsoon clouds moved in, and the peaks of the mountains were shrouded in gray mist. A light rain began to fall, which together with the ground fog, severely limited visibility. Supporting "Blue Ghost" gunships, which had flown into Hiep Duc Valley to support the 4/31 infantrymen on the mountain, were forced to abort their mission and return to their base.

That afternoon, Alpha Co. spotted a small complex of bunkers used by the NVA as an observation post. As the company slowly moved up the trail to the OP position, the bunkered NVA opened up with automatic weapons and machinegun fire killing two pointmen and pinning down the lead squad.

Alpha's advance was stopped. Enemy fire hit all around the lead

Crawford

squad. A 19-year-old rifleman, PFC Mike Crescenz (Philadelphia), who was in the middle of the 2nd Plt., seized the nearest machinegun and charged uphill toward the enemy bunkers.

Enemy fire sprayed around him as he assaulted their positions. He ran toward the first bunker firing continuously in the front gun port, killing two NVA and silencing their .30 cal. machinegun. He assaulted the second bunker, entered it from the rear, and killed two more NVA.

At this point, Crescenz was under fire from the remaining NVA positions, but he continued up the hill firing his M-60 machinegun. His advance was slowed when an enemy bullet ripped through his right thigh, but he continued on and knocked out the third enemy bunker, killing two more enemy.

The way was thought clear for A Co., but automatic weapons fire opened up from an unseen enemy fortification. Crescenz quickly realized the danger to his buddies and, with his machinegun under his arm, attacked a fourth enemy position. Before he could silence the NVA, the courageous GI was hit again by machinegun fire five meters from the bunker and mortally wounded. A little later, the 3rd Plt. of Alpha moved into the bunker complex and knocked out the few remaining enemy positions.

PFC Crescenz had killed six NVA and saved the lives of many of the men in his company at the cost of his life.

On the following morning, Nov. 20, the downpour stopped and the visibility was relatively good, although the ground was wet and slippery from the heavy rains. A Helix aerial observer spotted company-sized NVA elements on the summit of the mountain, which near the top became much steeper.

"Parts of the mountain were so steep and rocky that we had to crawl hand over hand, sometimes taking more than an hour to move 100 meters," SGT Bob Jackson (Los Angeles) recalled.

The three advancing companies continued to meet strong enemy resistance. Each strategically-placed NVA machinegun position took several hours to clean out before the companies could continue their climb.

At one point, the 2nd Plt. of A Co. had just started up a ridgeline when automatic weapons and machinegun fire stopped them, wounding two men in the lead squad. The platoon leader, 1LT Stephan Rice (Ames, Iowa), moved up to the front and directed fire on the enemy, then administered first aid to the two wounded men until a medic arrived.

The bullets were coming from a bunker and trenchline 50 meters up the trail. 1LT Rice maneuvered his platoon to the right flank and closed on the trenchline firing M-16s and M-79s. Three NVA were killed in the charge and two more were added when two platoon members were

Crawford

An RTO makes an urgent call for gunship support against well-entrenched enemy forces, as other "Polar Bears" (left) battle against the terrain as well as the NVA.

able to get close enough to throw grenades into the bunker.

SGT John "Mac" McFarland (Los Angeles), who along with his weapons squad provided machinegun cover fire for the maneuvering platoon, remembers, "We ran into a lot of .30 calibers during that week, and they were really bringing smoke on us. The NVA always had an advantage over us because we had to climb up those trails where he was waiting in good fighting positions firing down at us."

On Nov. 21, the lead platoon of Charlie Co. came into contact with an enemy force in a complex of bunkers that seemed to be part of a perimeter. As Alpha and Bravo advanced they too came in contact with enemy forces securing perimeter bunkers and fighting positions. It signaled the beginning of the final two days of the heavy fighting on Nui Chom Mountain.

C Co. called in "Blue Ghost" gunships to rake fire over the area, followed by tactical jet air strikes. The fighter-bombers dropped 500- and 750-pound bombs on the top and north side of the mountain to thwart any attempt by the NVA to move in reinforcements and to cripple an enemy retreat.

A platoon from Alpha Co. on the 22nd had penetrated the bunker complex in their area, and were advancing when machinegun and automatic weapons fire caught them by surprise. Squad Leader SGT James Larrick (Alexandria, Va.) and the pointman were wounded. Larrick, hit five times, crawled into one of the enemy bunkers his squad had knocked out a short time before, while one of his men dragged the wounded pointman to safety.

SP4 John Shields (San Francisco) went back for his wounded squad leader, and had him half way out of the bunker when a burst of automatic weapons fire caught him in the back. Shields managed to crawl back to his squad.

Two more men tried to reach Larrick, but were stopped by heavy fire. The sergeant yelled at them to pull back and leave him where he was before someone else got wounded or killed. Reluctantly, his squad withdrew, leaving the bleeding sergeant in the bunker.

Alpha tried again to take the bunkers, but again they were checked. It started to rain and was getting dark, so A Co. pulled back down the ridge to set up a night defensive position. Bravo Co. also met strong resistance that day on their way up a ridgeline, and as darkness fell, the NVA still held Nui Chom.

All during the night, batteries of 105mm and 155mm howitzers pounded the peak of the mountain stronghold. As dawn broke on Nov. 23, the seventh day of contact began.

The NVA forces had been seriously weakened the day before, and the artillery barrages during the night had found their mark. Many destroyed enemy fortifications were to be found throughout the day.

Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie Cos. began their siege again, but this time they met light resistance as they penetrated the perimeter bunker complexes and moved into the main NVA base camp.

Then what some men described as a miracle happened. As Alpha Co. moved into the bunker complex where the soldiers had fought so hard the previous day, they found SGT

Crawford

M-60 machinegunners and "Charger" riflemen (opposite page) fire at NVA soldiers beneath triple canopy jungle.

Crawford

Larrick still alive. He was in the same bunker into which he had crawled the day before.

Everyone excitedly passed the word along—"He's alive! Larrick's alive!".

Though seriously wounded, the sergeant was conscious and could talk. He had lain in the bunker with two dead NVA through the night without food, water, or a weapon. Leeches and maggots had infested his wounds, but they were credited with stopping the spread of infection. During the night two enemy soldiers entered the bunker and searched his pockets, but believing the GI was dead, left shortly thereafter.

A medic made a litter and two men helped carry SGT Larrick to the LZ. As he lay there waiting for the medevac to arrive, one of his buddies, SGT Allen Shermers (Duluth, Minn.), went over to him.

"I got one of my canteens, offered him some water, and asked him how he was doing. I held the canteen and gave him just a sip, because I wasn't sure if he should have any water. When I took the canteen from his mouth, he looked up with a grin and said, 'Hell, don't be bashful. I haven't had anything to drink for a day and a half!' Everyone standing around knew he was going to be all right then," Shermers said.

The three companies advanced into the base camp, while pushing back two companies of NVA in the open as they moved. Charlie Co. captured a large, well-supplied NVA hospital, plus an NVA doctor and two female nurses trying to escape. The doctor, who had received orders from his high command to leave everything behind and move north, mentioned he had treated more than 60 wounded NVA during the past week.

Charlie Co. Senior Aidman SP5 Tony LaPalio (Huntington Beach, Calif.) described what the NVA hospital looked like:

"It was about 20 by 50 feet, with a storage tunnel connected to it. It was made mostly of bamboo, but had a green canvas over the roof. Inside there was an operating room and table, a well-stocked pharmacy, and an area for sterilizing surgical equipment.

"We found more than 30 different kinds of medicines ranging from morphine to penicillin, four complete sets of surgical equipment, and dozens of medical texts and journals, some written in Chinese and others in Vietnamese.

"The NVA doctor told us he was resupplied every five days. There were many bloody bandages and pieces of torn clothing laying about, so they must have treated a lot of wounded. They had more than 50 bamboo hootches nearby, each with two beds, and there were about 120 fighting bunkers encircling the hospital."

Alpha Co. had found a command post and headquarters a few hundred meters west of the hospital. "The command post bunker was about 50 by 50 feet and was completely underground," explained CPT Braswell.

"We found numerous papers and documents in their high command post, plus a telephone switchboard and a small motor, which was probably used as a generator," the A Co. CO continued. "There was commo wire running all over the mountain, and each of the more than 200 bunkers were connected."

By 10 a.m. on Nov. 23, the 4th Bn., 31st Inf. had control of Nui Chom.

The 196th unit had killed 66 NVA and captured 3 prisoners, 3 .30 cal. machineguns, 4 Chicom RPD light machineguns, 25 AK-47s, 2 82mm mortars, 10 B-40 rockets, and 550 rounds of .50 caliber ammo. Four small ammunition caches were uncovered, and more than 40 fresh graves were found. The hard fighting had cost the "Polar Bears" four dead and 33 casualties.

Like an earlier generation of American soldiers cannot forget places like Guadalcanal, this group of proud division infantrymen will long remember Nui Chom Mountain.

THE NOOSE AROUND BATANGAN

By 1LT CECIL GREEN

Norland

Wary infantrymen and watchful cavalrymen move into place in the tangled underbrush to seal off the Batangan Peninsula.

The morning of Jan. 13 was an infantryman's nightmare.

The angry, silver-black clouds covered the sky with an ominous glow and unleashed monsoon deluges, which soaked everything and made rain gear useless.

The mud was already there from earlier storms, but the new rains gave it a life that infantrymen dread. One rifleman described it as "trying to walk through a mountain of C-ration peanut butter."

But the day was D-Day, and the hands on the clock were nearing H-Hour—0800.

Things began to happen rapidly:

- Infantrymen from the 5th Bn., 46th Inf., 198th Inf. Bde. moved into action like foot soldiers down through the ages, slogging across the muddy hills and flooded lowlands toward their goal.
- The 4th Bn., 3rd Inf., 11th Inf. Bde. moved from their encampment near Quang Ngai City to waiting helicopters that would churn through the lowering skies in a massive combat assault.
- Marines, two battalions strong, arrived aboard a flotilla of ships in the South China Sea. Two companies climbed down the nets into landing craft, while others swarmed over the decks of the USS Tripoli into helicopters that would carry them ashore.
- Two battalions of soldiers from the 2nd ARVN Division also shouldered their packs and headed into the region.
- Navy swift boats roared into life and plowed through the swelling sea, forming a water blockade.

The fighting men from the two countries had a common objective: the Batangan Peninsula, a mushroom-shaped VC stronghold for the past 20 years, jutting into the South China Sea about 20 miles southeast of Chu Lai.

Their tactic was a textbook example of a cordon— an 11½-mile solid ring of men and firepower across the neck of the peninsula. The circle was completed with Navy ships. At the action's peak, almost 8,500 men choked off the Batangan Peninsula. This was the start of Operation Russell Beach.

The Marine participation was called Operation Bold Mariner, but after the ground troops reached a phase line on Jan. 25, the maneuver became Operation Russell Beach entirely. BG Howard H. Cooksey (Alexandria, Va.), Americal assistant division commander, was the overall commander of the Army and ARVN forces forming Task Force Cooksey.

The phases of the combat/pacification program were clearly defined: deception, establishment of the cordon, psychological operations (PSYOP), collapse of the cordon, and pacification.

Intelligence experts reported that the area was a popular

VC supply route. Tacticians learned that enemy troops in the area, when running from a pitched battle, always headed for the peninsula's heart.

"The deception phase of the operation actually began about 10 days before D-Day," explained BG Cooksey. "The 5/46 and the 2nd ARVN Div. began conducting sweeps far away from the peninsula, working their way closer as the starting time drew near. We were taking advantage of the enemy's tendency to head for his sanctuary when faced with combat."

The rain, cursed by the GIs on the ground, was actually an important consideration in the opening moves of the operation. "We wanted the start of the operation to coincide with the monsoon rains, so the enemy's tunnels would be flooded and no good to him," the task force commander stated.

The weather tactic worked. "Although we were uncomfortable, I believe it was worse on the VC," said LTC Ronald R. Richardson (Colorado Springs, Colo.), CO of the 5/46. "My men were near a river during the PSYOP phase, and we had a number of suspects come out of flooded tunnels and holes just in front of us. They had been in water so long that their skin was shriveled up like a prune."

"By D-Day we figured there might be a good-size VC force trapped out there," related LTC Jack C. Davis (Maudlin, Ark.), CO of the 4/3. "But even if there were just a handful, the plan was still to clear the area on foot, step by step, to locate every tunnel and bunker, destroy the minefields and empty 'Charlie's' breadbasket."

Noon of D-Day found the soldiers of the cordon line still chest-deep in water in the flooded rice paddies with mud as their toughest enemy. The men, less than 10 meters apart, were in visual contact along the entire route. By late afternoon, the weary infantrymen got the order to dig in for the night. The human wall was formed.

But for more than 20 days, night did not come to the Batangan Peninsula.

"There's just no such thing as night out here," a rifleman noted. "Those flare ships do a good job."

The flare ships remained on station overhead throughout the night hours of operation, dropping an average of 600 flares per night.

"The flares were very significant in this operation," said CPT John R. Blanks Jr. (Macon, Ga.), the commander of D Co., 4/3. "They took the night away from the enemy and made any fighting on our terms. The light also made the infantrymen more secure and boosted morale."

After the cordon was established, the operation reverted to a battle of words for four days as PSYOP crews went to work on the ground and in the air with broadcasts and printed leaflets.

The most important phase of the operation was beginning—evacuation of as many people as possible from the peninsula before any fighting actually began.

"There were no reliable statistics available on how many people made their homes on the peninsula," related CPT Banta York (Sumter, S.C.), 198th PSYOP officer, "but we were concerned with evacuating as many as possible because Russell Beach is a pacification operation. And

Schwarz

Green

'Brave and Bold' soldiers of the 198th Brigade's 5th Bn., 46th Inf., always expecting the unexpected on Batangan, use everything from rifles to mine detectors to make certain that Charlie's vital supplies and deadly mines and booby traps are located.

Shingledecker

CPT Banta York examines 'home-made' transmitting rig that later called many Vietnamese from their tunnels and hiding places during frequent psychological operation broadcasting.

Hebert

to be successful, you must have the people."

A helicopter specially equipped with a homemade 1,000-watt transmitting system was rigged up at the 198th S-5 office. It cruised over the peninsula area up to eight hours a day, sometimes as low as 400 feet. The Kit Carson Scouts and interpreters aboard each flight told the people over and over where to move, how to move, and what to bring (clothing, identification papers, and one day's supply of food).

As the refugees moved through pre-arranged check-points on the cordon line, they were gathered at temporary detention centers located at each battalion CP.

A medical team was stationed with each battalion for emergency treatment, and each refugee received an initial inspection to insure that none with serious diseases were housed with the larger groups.

"The first refugees to arrive were, very naturally, confused and scared," CPT York recalled. "They told our interpreters that the VC had threatened them and warned that anyone who went to the Americans would be put in labor camps at Cam Ranh Bay.

"As the first helicopter loads of refugees were taken from the battalions to the Combined Holding and Interrogation Center (CHIC) near Quang Ngai City, they were positive that they were at Cam Ranh and refused to leave the helicopters. When the province chief heard this, he came out personally and talked to the people until they realized they were less than 12 miles from their homes."

The CHIC was a key factor in the success of Russell Beach. "This is where many of the refugees first became aware of the South Vietnam Government," CPT York stated.

At the CHIC, each refugee was carefully interrogated by GVN officials to locate and isolate VC prisoners of war, members of the VC infrastructure, VC suspects, possible Hoi Chanhs, and innocent civilians.

As the slow process to determine and separate each group continued throughout the operation, the GVN provided medical care, clothing, and hot food, in addition to drama teams, speakers, newspapers, and music, all stressing patriotism and unity.

"The success of the PSYOP operation became a reality after we convinced the first doubtful refugees that they would be well treated and safe with us," CPT York said. "After they saw what was happening, many of them gladly made tape recordings to their families and neighbors which we played from our helicopters over the areas they indicated. Those tapes were invaluable."

To show the people that they could trust and believe the American and GVN forces, CPT York personally landed his chopper in insecure areas.

"One man was obviously wounded, but was waving a white flag on a pole at us," the captain recalled. "When we landed to pick him up, his entire family trooped out of a nearby bunker to go aboard."

Several large groups—one of them numbering more than 700 persons—requested to be moved out, and Chinook pilots also landed on beaches and in insecure areas to get them all.

By late February, the population at the CHIC was near the 12,000 mark, with 257 Viet Cong infrastructure, 190 VC suspects, 104 prisoners of war and 32 Hoi Chanhs. Of the 11,377 innocent civilians moved to the CHIC, 1,057 were men, 3,354 were women and 6,966 were children (under 15 years of age).

Officials at the CHIC reported that their population continued to grow even when no new refugees were coming in; more than 30 babies were delivered there by U.S. and Vietnamese doctors.

After the first four days of PSYOP, combat operations started on the peninsula as the cordon line began to tighten.

The tactical situation had the 2nd and 3rd Bns. of the 26th Marine Regt. in the northern sector of the line, the 5/46 and the 4/3 in the middle, the ARVNs to the south and Co. D, 4/3 and a platoon of ACAVs from H Trp., 17th Cav. anchoring the right flank of the line.

The idea behind the entire operation was to move slowly and carefully, and the goal was no more than 500 meters per day.

"Ordinarily, this figure would be very insignificant," said BG Cooksey, "but on the Batangan Peninsula, it

took quite a while just to move a yard because the men literally looked under every rock and behind every bush."

And there was plenty to find. "Just like a big Easter egg hunt" was the way one rifleman described it.

Tunnels were everywhere. By the time the combat phase of the operation ended on Feb. 9, more than 14,000 meters of tunnels had been blown up, mainly by 26th Engineer Bn. teams assigned to each infantry platoon.

Nearly every village had a large tunnel complex honeycombed under its simple huts and dirt paths. Many tunnels were hundreds of meters long with sleeping niches cut out of the walls every four or five meters, and every tunnel had to be checked out before it was blown to locate any hidden enemy or civilians.

"If some of the refugees and Hoi Chanhs hadn't volunteered to show us some of the tunnels they knew about, we may never have found them," LTC Richardson stated. "In one case a Hoi Chanh took us to an area we had already swept through. He then pointed to a dirt embankment where he said several VC had covered up the entrance to protect their friends below. Once we explored it, we found that it had four different levels with a winding staircase-type entrance hole. It was very elaborate."

Several hundred "homemade" mines and booby traps were encountered during the 27 days of the combat phase of the operation, either by early detection or accidental detonation. Most U.S. and ARVN casualties were due to mines.

"I've been over here in the field for about eight months now, and this is the most treacherous area I've seen," said 1LT Mark S. Richards (Los Angeles), a platoon leader with A Co., 4/3. "Some mines were found less than 10 meters from our encampments, where we had been walking back and forth for several days."

On Feb. 3, the units had completed their slow search and clear and were on the South China Sea coast. Then, after a week of back-tracking and more searching, the combat phase of Operation Russell Beach officially ended (Feb. 9), and the pacification phase began.

More than 210 VC were killed in action on the peninsula by late February, besides the prisoners of war, VCI, and VC suspects held at the CHIC.

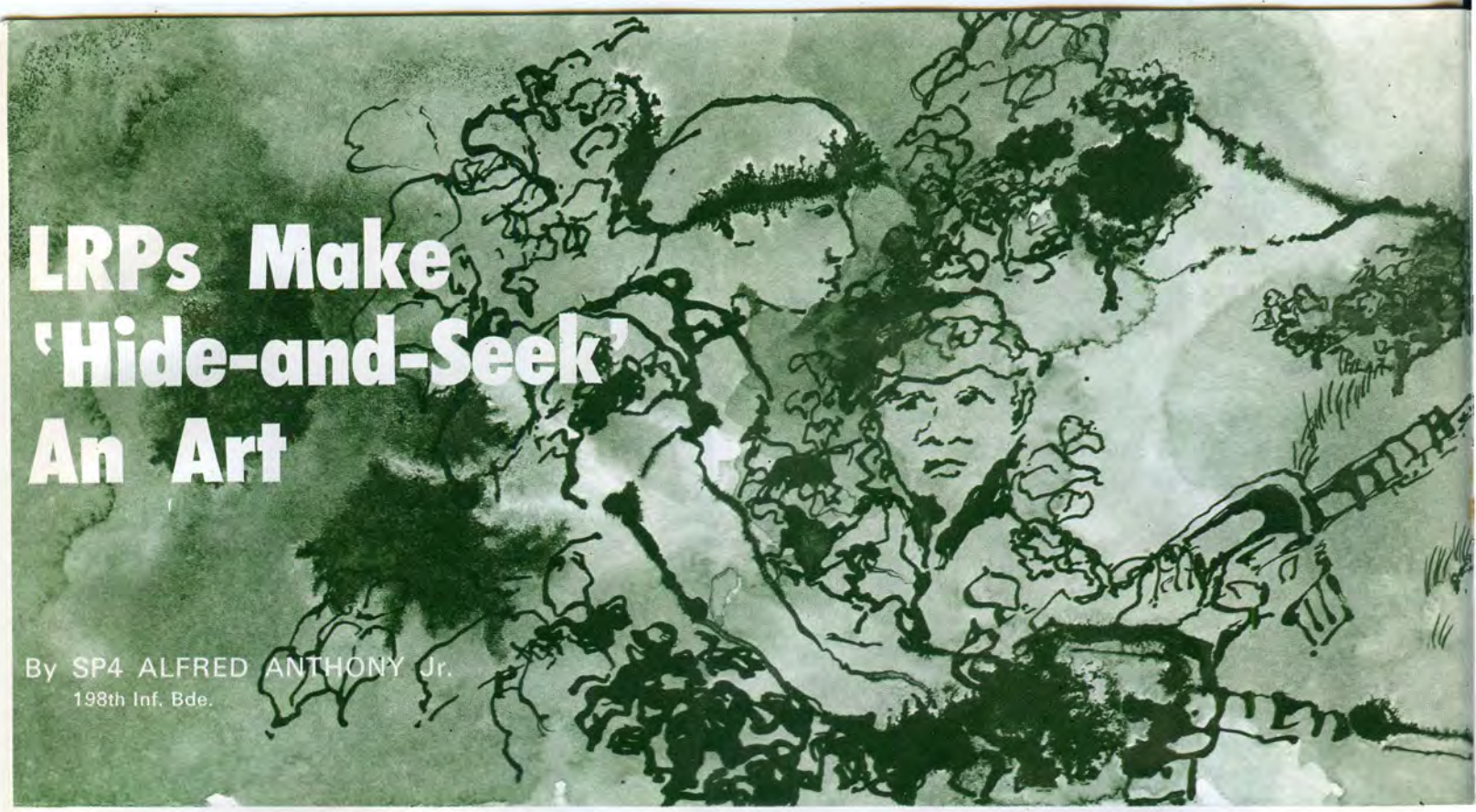
Also in their totals, the allied forces captured 15.5 tons of salt, 2 tons of corn, 13 tons of rice, and 59 individual and 6 crew-served weapons. Twenty-three sampans were destroyed as they tried to evade through Navy craft patrolling the peninsula waters.

"The resettlement of the peninsula and indoctrination of the people may take a long time," CPT York concluded, "but we can already call Operation Russell Beach a definite success as we've effectively separated the VC from the people. There's no more VC strongarm rule on the Batangan now."

Green

A 4th Bn., 3rd Inf. 'Old Guard' patrol examines one of 59 individual weapons found. Below, another 11th Brigade platoon reaches the South China Sea coast as the operation's cordon phase concludes.

Green



LRPs Make 'Hide-and-Seek' An Art

By SP4 ALFRED ANTHONY Jr.
198th Inf. Bde.

In the midst of an endless sea of bright green, a small group of men sit hiding. Like animals of the forest, they look no different than their surroundings. Their clothes, their boots, even their skin is colored green. Bush hats are pulled low on their heads.

Each carries 60 pounds of gear and has rations for five days; each holds a Russian weapon or M-79 grenade launcher and AR-15. One man looks down at the radio by his side, checking the frequency. His friend takes a compass reading with his map to get an azimuth. Another, his eyes peering through the foliage, watches for the enemy.

They are LRPs—Long Range Patrol members who know their job and wear their black berets with distinction. These teams of elite guerrilla fighters penetrate terrain where in the past only the enemy has stalked. Their assignment: find, report, and, if necessary, fight "Charlie."

Two of these teams, working for the 198th Inf. Bde., wait on Chop Vum Mountain, well to the northwest of the "Brave and Bold" AO. They are on a "hunter-killer" mission.

One team is called Ohio; the other, 500 meters to the west, is Kentucky, and the enemy is familiar with them both. Ohio has been here before, and knows the terrain as well as the enemy. Kentucky is new to this area, but has outwitted "Charlie" before in other places.

Ohio's men, led by SGT John Dane (London), an ex-British Army commando, sit looking down the slope of the mountain. In the center of the broad valley they see an ordinary Vietnamese reed and bamboo hootch. An aerial reconnaissance team the day before noticed an unusual concentration of military-age males in the area.

"Traffic seems a little too organized," observes Dane. "Let's have a look."

Quickly, expertly, silently, they are down and in, just eight meters from the hootch's walls, close enough to read "Charlie's" tired face. Kentucky, led by SGT Tom Robertson (Jackson, Mich.), closes in from another angle.

Ohio's men tread softly; their lives depend on their stealth. The small hootch is not as innocent as it appears. It contains an enemy hospital. It is empty, but the LRPs are extra cautious—no reason to get careless now.

Assistant Team Leader SGT Clarence Avery (Anniston, Ala.), probing the ground outside of the hootch, discovers a hollow spot. Inside are medical instruments, detailed surgical instructions, and documents. With few words the well-trained men complete their search and turn to leave.

As if with a stage director in the wings, the teams act as one man and move across a rice paddy. They have radioed for extraction. Five of the men spread out into a perimeter, deep in the heavy muck.

In minutes the throbbing sound of the "bird" filters through the heavy canopy surrounding the men. It appears over the trees and begins to settle on the LZ. Suddenly, from deep within the thick leaves, two enemy machineguns open up on the men and the helicopter. The pilot drives the chopper hard into the sky, although he takes seven hits. With a broken oil line, the helicopter aborts the extraction and limps back to LZ Bowman and safety.

The LRPs are pinned to the mud, getting heavier fire each minute. CPL George F. Moreno (Tucson,

Ariz.) lifts his head long enough to fire an M-79 smoke round into the enemy position. The 198th's command and control chopper flies in to the rescue, blanketing the marked VC with its M-60s.

"The ship's all that saved us," Moreno later said. "The chopper kept them down just long enough for us to get back out of the paddy."

Five men are wounded, and, with the coming darkness, they must spend the night in this forsaken place. Their heavy return fire now gets them from the edge of the paddy to the safety of the mountain's shadow, and its foliage closes behind them. Moving up the narrow trail, climbing higher, they contact the enemy again. Firing LAWs (light anti-tank weapons), one VC is killed and one wounded.

Team Ohio sets up a protective observation post; Kentucky climbs Chop Vum. Nosing through the triple canopy, they find the bush gives way to a clearing, and there, right at the mountain's peak, they discover a fortress of giant wooden planks. A strange structure compared with the delicate hamlets dotting the valley's floor—there are no windows or doors.

SGT Tom Steele (Chelsea, Mich.), assistant team leader, and Moreno climb in through a thin slit between the walls and roof. What they have come across is a building formed like a safe. "Recoilless rifle rounds!" shouts Steele's excited voice, muffled by the enclosure surrounding him. "Armor-piercing rounds, HEAT rounds, mortar fuse caps."

Ohio moves up to join Kentucky, and they set up a hasty night laager. During darkness, the Viet Cong are relentless with their M-79 fire. Steele bravely stays atop the captured ammo bunker, under fire, guarding the prize.

The morning of the next day turns the spiteful blackness of the sky to a hazy gray. The 198th Inf. Bde.'s Co E, 1st Bn., 6th Inf., led by 1LT Warren G. Randolph (Charleston, S.C.), is coming to help. SGTs David Swires (Bayard, Colo.), Dane, and Steele, along with CPL Moreno, volunteer to remain behind when the other LRPs are finally extracted. The four battle-toughened soldiers lead the infantrymen to the ammo cache and the hospital.

Once again atop Chop Vum, Dane and Moreno plant two pounds of C4 explosive, amid the thump of M-79 rounds and the staccato of machine-guns. In the wake of the giant blast, the four LRPs again try for extraction.

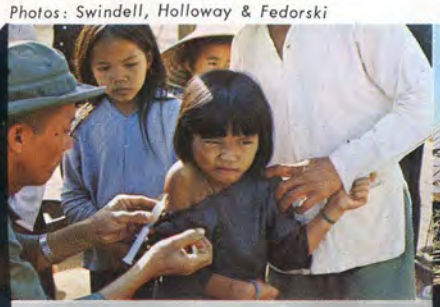
Gunships rip across the sky now, as the quartet dodges across 600 meters of rice paddies to the chopper's LZ. They crouch in the center of the wet field, again taking everything the determined enemy can throw their way. E Co. tries to protect them from the surrounding woodline.

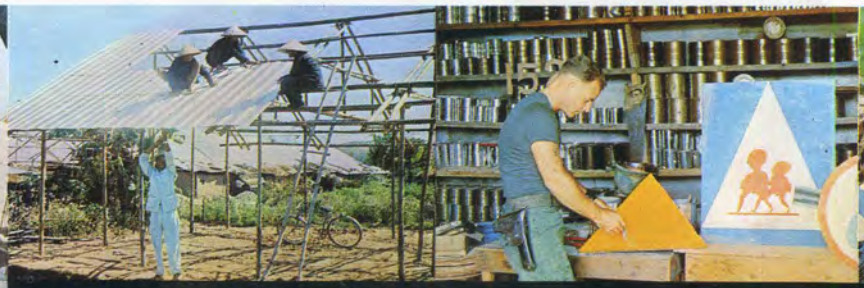
Nobody knew whose helicopter it was that dropped down into the middle of this hell, but as Moreno later remarked, "Man, am I thankful for that 'bird' that got us out."

The mission speaks for itself. The LRPs leave Chop Vum Mountain and the valley below, having destroyed the enemy's supply of heavy ammunition, a number of documents, and killed 14 Viet Cong.

On the trip back to LZ Bayonet, a tired, but satisfied SGT Swires speaks with a slight smile on his face: "Those VC were shooting at us, not at the company out there... We must have got them mad."

Photos: Swindell, Holloway & Fedorski





The Pacification Program

By
SP4 TONY SWINDELL
11th Inf. Bde.

Call it "the other war," "pacification," "environmental improvement," or any other name, but it still boils down to the same thing—helping people. As the Government of Vietnam expands its control into remote, contested areas, programs to improve the conditions under which people exist receive as much consideration as battle plans. U.S. citizens, especially the military establishment, sponsor thousands of projects under the authority of GVN. Many fall within the term "civic action," which is "the participation by an agency, organization, or group in economic and sociological projects that are useful to the local population but for which the sponsor does not have primary governmental responsibility." Also, the formal program is augmented at all levels by the generous nature of the individual GI. The following article illustrates an Americal unit's objectives, activities, and methods in lending assistance to the Vietnamese people.

ACIFI

Just as important as defeating the enemy on the battlefield is neutralizing his influence over the people. This is the objective, the focal point for all the efforts of the 11th Infantry Brigade in carrying out its pacification program. It typifies the overall Americal Division concept of winning and keeping the support and respect of the Vietnamese people and aiding the extensive activities of the Government of Vietnam (GVN).

The brigade S-5 section, headed by MAJ Russell D. Cox, manages the pacification program with the direct support of teams from the 29th Civil Affairs Co. and the 7th Psychological Operations Bn. It is the delicate task of the S-5 to maintain coordination and liaison between the Vietnamese people and officials and the units helping them, as well as handling any problems that may arise as a result of these relationships.

One aspect in which the ability and expertise of the S-5 section is particularly crucial is psychological operations (PSYOP). It is a powerful adjunct to the battlefield by persuading the enemy to surrender, lowering his morale, or planting seeds of doubt about his insurgency. The S-5 regularly conducts leaflet drops, anti-VC, anti-NVA, and pro-GVN broadcasts in surrounding villages and hamlets, and other intelligence activities which remind the enemy of his hopeless position and the government's advantages.

The loudspeaker broadcasts are especially effective as a means by which two other important parts of the PSYOP program are brought to the attention of the people—Chieu Hoi and VIP.

The Chieu Hoi program is a GVN-sponsored campaign which is actively supported by the S-5. It enables Viet Cong to rally to the government and, as Hoi Chanhs, become members-in-good-standing of Vietnamese society. (A complete discussion of the Chieu Hoi program appears in the January, 1969, AMERICAL.)

As well as for rallying messages, the loudspeakers are used to tell the populace about the Voluntary Informant Program, which has reaped rich rewards in ordnance and information in the 11th Bde. area. During its regular forays into the countryside during 1968 and early 1969, VIP teams have collected several hundred tons of explosive ordnance and 63 individual weapons. Two Montagnard boys also led one group of "Jungle Warriors" to a buried, complete 105mm howitzer.

A vitally important and often unsung phase of VIP involves Vietnamese people who serve as informants about enemy activity and movement. The Duc Pho District Chief, MAJ Buu Tuong, conducts this aspect with the support of the brigade S-5. "We administer a complex organization through our S-2, which receives information from military, National Police, and civilian sources," he noted. "Not only do we collect information about armed enemy activity, we also try to uncover the local VC infrastructure and neutralize it. This includes observation of any suspicious activity by civilians who may be supporting VC units in our area."

Aiding MAJ Tuong is MAJ Alfonso E. Garcia, MACV senior district adviser, who provides technical assistance for the Vietnamese intelligence net. "The Vietnamese are

ICATION

setting up a system encouraging the people to supply information about the enemy to the government as well as the military and police units. Right now, their system roughly parallels our military intelligence."

On Oct. 24, 1968, an elite Vietnam-wide intelligence group was organized for the purpose of neutralizing the VC infrastructure. Named "Phoenix" (Phung Hoang), after the legendary Asian bird, the group symbolizes the highest ideals of the GVN movement against the VC, and since its inception has uncovered 148 confirmed VC in southern Quang Ngai province.

SGT Gary L. Taylor, team leader of the 7th PSYOP Bn. group at LZ Bronco, elaborated on the task his men are doing to aid the Vietnamese program. "We have been increasing our intelligence activities in response to increased VC activity. We often work as an intelligence force with the Vietnamese Popular Forces (PFs) and the people themselves in an attempt to find out anything we can about the enemy—his supplies, movements, and weapons."

Another broad area of S-5 responsibility is support of the civil affairs program. Its main objective is to instill within the people a desire for a higher standard of living, and this must be done by making them aware of their own needs. The job is not to do for the people, but to provide the means by which they can accomplish the task themselves.

Directly handling this extensive program in the 11th Bde. AO is the 4th AA Plt., 29th Civil Affairs Co., led by 1LT Hugh H. Covington. The majority of their projects involve construction of permanent structures such as schools or wells, but they also supply help in such fields as animal husbandry.

Members of the platoon monitor the distribution and use of materials at a brick factory in Duc Pho which can manufacture more than 2,000 bricks daily, and have involved themselves in the cross breeding of imported American with native Vietnamese pigs to improve the stock.

As the pacification of selected villages and hamlets accelerates, the coordination of all groups working with or supporting the 29th CA team becomes crucial. Since many other units have developed local programs of their own, great care must be taken to avoid duplication of effort.

SFC Edward Lawrence, 4th AA platoon sergeant, remarked: "We have to make sure that we reach as many people as possible. At a refugee camp in Duc Pho, the people are in great need of food and clothing after having been driven from their homes. My men regularly gather C-rations, food from the mess halls, clothes, soap, and other discarded but still useful items and distribute them in the camp." His men distributed more than a quarter of a million pounds of food and soap in 1968.

If the Vietnamese feel that they have a need in any particular area, they are encouraged to bring it to the attention of the CA platoon, and anything that will improve the lives of the people will be considered. Fresh vegetables had long been a scarcity in the Duc Pho refugee camp, and the CA men, after consultation with local officials, helped to supervise the establishment of garden plots, distributing boxes of bean, lettuce, tomato, and other seeds.

SGT Lawrence feels optimistic about the progress of the pacification movement. "The situation is much better than it was last year at this time. The people have begun to show an active interest in the program, and they are showing appreciation for our concern about their welfare."

Nguyen Phong, Duc Pho district agricultural adviser, commented on the assistance of the CA teams. "These men have been much help in showing us new agricultural methods and new vegetables. To many of the people in Duc Pho, the ability to

raise different kinds of vegetables for their families means that they will be better able to take care of themselves. Now they will be able to eat the food which they have grown instead of buying it, as they have done before."

If the concept of "self-help" is a watchword for civil affairs, it is also the cornerstone of the GVN program Revolutionary Development, echoing a theme of a better Vietnam created by the Vietnamese people themselves. It parallels civil affairs very closely, but also adds the necessity of providing self protection, called Popular Self Defense Force (PSDF).

Much of the growth of the PSDF is directly attributed to the bitter resentment of the enemy left by the 1968 TET offensive. Despite political obstacles, large and viable self-protection organizations have been created by the people in most of the populated areas of southern I Corps. Visible evidence is seen of the program in the form of static guard posts, training sessions, road barricades, and hamlet fences and gates.

The PSDF has a critical role in the current pacification effort because it increases the security provided to the population and encourages the people themselves to actively participate. Other benefits arising from the program are the acquisition of a commitment by the people to the national government, activities that bring the people in frequent contact with the government, and the development of a dynamic political leadership on a local level.

In the Duc Pho area, support for the PSDF is constantly growing. Presently, 14 hamlets with 37,066 inhabitants boast a strong program, and most are strategically located to provide protection along Highway 1 north and south of Duc Pho.

With the hamlets and villages defended and the people working toward their economic and social betterment, some efforts can be turned to the important job of education. Two projects in particular emphasize the support the 11th Bde. is giving in this endeavor. The first is the General Walt Vietnamese Scholarship Fund, which was established to assist needy and deserving children in I Corps.

It originally began because it was found that only a few children ever graduate from high school due to a lack of sufficient funds within the families. In the 11th Bde. area, students chosen to receive the scholarships are awarded 500 piasters a month throughout the school year for books, school supplies, and the teachers' salaries, since in Vietnam, instructors receive their pay from the students. Those chosen are often the children of Vietnamese soldiers killed by the enemy.

Another aspect of aid to education is for American soldiers to volunteer to teach in the Vietnamese schools when the need arises. One example occurred in Duc Pho, when one of the orphanages asked the 4th AA Plt. if they could help in obtaining an English instructor. Several members of the team eagerly volunteered and began conducting classes. So far, the men have taught 316 classes, reaching a total of 5,845 students.

The "Jungle Warriors" also help the pacification effort through the extensive MEDCAP program. Teams from the 4th Bn., 3rd Inf; 1st Bn., 20th Inf.; 174th Aslt. Hel. Co.; 75th Med. Det.; 11th Bde. HQ Co.; and Bde. Surgeon's office make regular visits to the surrounding countryside. During 1968 and early 1969, more than 55,000 patients were treated.

The results of the pacification program will not be measured in money spent, food distributed, or resources expended, because a materialistic approach to pacification cannot provide an effective yardstick of success. It will have succeeded when we can see in the Vietnamese people a sense of self-sufficiency, determination for a better life, and dynamic political leadership on a local level.

AMERICAL LOG

A QUARTERLY RECAP OF MAJOR ACTION

After almost three months of sporadic contact with enemy forces in southern I Corps, Americal troops met head-on the enemy's newest offensive and routed NVA and VC battalion-sized units in major action in late February.

As the quarter ended, the enemy offensive was in its sixth day, but reports of contact with enemy troops had subsided after the 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav. scored impressive victories in defense of Tam Ky and, patrolling throughout southern I Corps, turned up enemy launch sites.

Three major division operations—Vernon Lake II, Fayette Canyon, and Hardin Falls—were concluded Feb. 28. From Jan. 13 to Feb. 9, Operation Russell Beach threw two Americal battalions, plus Marine, Navy, and ARVN forces against the VC stronghold on the Batangan Peninsula.

DECEMBER

Action on Dec. 3 accounted for 44 VC and six NVA killed, one VC body found, and more than five tons of rice captured. F Trp., 8th Cav. killed 15 VC in two contacts.

Americal units combined to kill 41 VC and two NVA on Dec. 6, and captured five individual weapons. That day the 198th Inf. Bde.'s 1/52 Inf. accounted for 16 VC and two NVA, plus two weapons captured near Tien Phuoc.

In mid-December, BG Wallace L. Clement assumed the position of Assistant Division Commander.

Americal soldiers combined to kill 55 VC and capture two individual weapons on Dec. 13. Co. A, 3/21, 196th Bde. killed 20 VC in a three-hour period 16 miles northwest of Tam Ky. In the same area, "Blue Ghosts" of F Trp., 8th Cav. killed another nine VC.

During the last half of the month, another 391 VC and 200 NVA were killed, with an added 29 VC and 70 NVA bodies found, at least 118 weapons captured, and more than 12 tons of rice captured or destroyed.

On Dec. 18, Americal forces accounted for 72 NVA and 29 VC killed, six individual and two crew-served weapons captured. Most of the action took place in the Hoi An and Tam Ky areas.

The 196th's Cos. A, B, and C, 2/1, aided by air strikes, artillery, and helicopter gunships, accounted for 66 of the NVA killed that day.

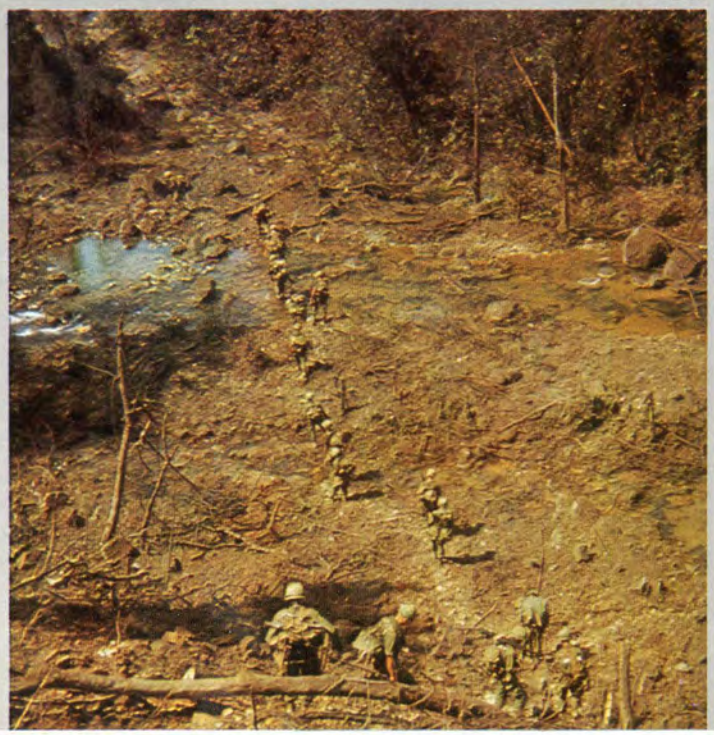
Within 24 hours, the same 196th units killed another 42 NVA during contact with a large force near Hoi An.

The 198th Bde. killed 21 VC in scattered action throughout their area of operations on Dec. 21. The same day, 11th Inf. Bde. troops reported one NVA and 15 VC killed, the bodies of 17 VC and one NVA discovered, and 56 VC suspects detained during heavy fighting in southern Quang Ngai Province.

On Dec. 24, Bob Hope and his troupe arrived at Chu Lai and entertained an estimated 18,000 Americal

Green

Preuse



soldiers, Marines, Seabees, and sailors at the Chu Lai Amphitheater.

JANUARY

Action picked up in January as division forces accounted for 821 VC and 126 NVA killed, 23 VC and 28 NVA bodies discovered, 166 individual and 37 crew-served weapons captured, and approximately 73 tons of rice captured or destroyed.

From Jan. 10–12, Americal units killed 89 VC and four NVA, found six NVA bodies, captured four individual weapons, and found more than eight tons of rice.

Operation Russell Beach began on Jan. 13 on the Batangan Peninsula, 10 miles northeast of Quang Ngai City (see story on pages 8-11).

Acting on a tip from an NVA prisoner, on Jan. 15 Cos. C and D, 2/1 Inf. combed an area 23½ miles northwest of Tam Ky to uncover a cache of 14 individual and nine crew-served weapons.

FEBRUARY

Prior to the post-TET offensive at the end of the month, action rarely fluctuated from day-to-day with few large contacts reported.

The 198th Bde.'s 1/52 uncovered 52 individual weapons on Feb. 9 in a VC classroom area 12½ miles southwest of Tam Ky. Task Force Cooksey and Marine elements began to leave the Batangan Peninsula concluding the combat phase of Operation Russell Beach.

On Feb. 11, 3/18 and 6/11 Arty. units killed 18 enemy when an 11th Bde. OP spotted 60 armed VC in the open, 11 miles west-northwest of Quang Ngai City.

Early in the month, two soldiers from the 11th Bde. and one from the 198th Bde. received the nation's second highest award, the Distinguished Service Cross, from the commander of the U.S. Army Vietnam, GEN Creighton W. Abrams.

After a lull during TET, more than 40 Allied positions in southern I Corps on Feb. 23 were attacked by enemy elements using rockets, mortars, recoilless rifles, small arms, and occasional ground probes.

Led by the 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav. and "Shark" gunships of the 174th Aslt. Hel. Co., Americal forces rebounded sharply to kill 159 VC and 10 NVA and captured 32 weapons.

The "Dragoons," aided by gunships of F Trp., 8th Cav., killed seven NVA and 77 VC in fierce fighting in the Pineapple Forest west of Tam Ky. "Shark" gunships killed 23 VC moving on the Duc Pho airstrip and netted 27 more at a rocket launch site six miles northeast of Duc Pho.

Longwell

After a one-day gap of mild action, the third platoon of B Trp. and all of C Trp., 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav. caught an estimated NVA battalion entrenched on a hill five miles south of Tam Ky and killed 167 in a six-hour battle. On the same day, gunships of the 123rd Avn. Bn. netted 12 VC in support of an ARVN element 1½ miles southwest of Quang Ngai City.

On Feb. 28, Operations Vernon Lake II, Fayette Canyon, and Hardin Falls ended. The three campaigns combined for a total of 860 enemy kills, as compared to 26 American casualties.

Operation Vernon Lake II began Nov. 2 last year and involved the 3/1 and 4/21, 11th Bde. Aimed at pushing the 3rd NVA Div. out of a long-held bastion southwest of Quang Ngai City, the operation accounted for 455 enemy kills during its 119 days.

Launched Dec. 2 last year, the goal of Operation Hardin Falls was to clear out and pacify six hamlets in the Thang Binh District that had been under VC control for more than four years.

Hardin Falls involved the 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav.; A Co., 1/46, 196th Bde.; and D Co., 26th Engr. Bn. Besides accounting for 78 enemy killed and 17 enemy suspects detained, the operation also attracted two Hoi Chanhs.

Operation Fayette Canyon was underway Dec. 15 last year after intelligence reports indicated an estimated 1,000 NVA were securing a hospital complex and supply depot atop Hill 953, 25 miles northwest of Tam Ky. The campaign was composed of the 2/1 and 4/31, 196th Bde. and 1/46, 198th Bde., and netted 327 enemy dead and 70 weapons, 14 crew-served.

The "Legionnaires" of the 2/1 saw the heaviest action, netting 101 enemy kills against only one friendly casualty.

Combat Medic

His Brother's Keeper

By SP4 DEAN NORLAND

"Medic! MEDIC! !"

All heads in the platoon snap toward the direction of the blood-curdling yell. A lone man with a quickly executed move grabs a canvas bag, leaps to his feet, and starts running to the wounded man. He is the guy they are calling for—the combat medic.

He looks no different from the soldiers he serves. Carrying an M-16 rifle, a full compliment of field gear, and two small canvas bags containing medicine, scissors, and forceps, he moves through the rice paddies and mountains of Vietnam with the infantrymen.

Civilian backgrounds may range from studying architecture to mowing lawns, but these soldiers have gained enough medical knowledge and self-confidence to accept the responsibility of saving lives under combat conditions.

The classroom training for most aidmen is condensed into a 10-week course; other working knowledge only can be acquired in the field.

Some corpsmen complete a 48-week session that covers not only the field aspects of being a medic but also qualifies them to work in an operating room. SP5 Michael Purvance (Provo, Utah), a corpsman with the 3rd Bn., 1st Inf., 11th Inf. Bde., was a pre-med student at the University of Utah before he entered the service and finished the lengthy medic's course.

"When you complete the course you are supposed to know as much as a licensed practical nurse and you are qualified to apply for an LPN license back in the States," Purvance noted.

The daily routine of a combat medic includes treating sundry scratches and rashes that could develop into serious infections. Malaria must be defensed against, and drinking water must be given a visual check. Overall sanitation at a campsite must be given constant attention.

When the platoon or company stops at the end of the day and establishes an overnight camp, medics can be

seen using an entrenching tool, scratching out a ditch or building a temporary bunker.

But the commonplace comes to a screeching halt when a sniper discharges a few well-aimed rounds, a firefight bursts from nowhere, or the sickening sound of an exploding mine ruptures the silence.

At that moment the combat medic stands as the solitary human link between a wounded GI's despondent prayer and his next heartbeat. If the aidman does not know his business or if his self-confidence waivers, the patient stands to be a big loser.

"You really don't have time to think about it when it happens," reflected SP4 Douglas Saxon, 18, Miami, who entered the Army after he graduated from high school. The 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav. medic continued, "It's after the fight is over and you have a chance to think about it that you're scared."

Saxon, who is airborne qualified and speaks Vietnamese, rides on one of the "Dragoon's" armored cavalry assault vehicles. "If I'm on line in one track and another ACAV gets hit I usually have to jump to the ground and run to where the casualties are."

During a skirmish the medics will devote every life-saving second to reaching and treating the wounded rather than laying down their own field of fire. "The grunts cover their 'doc'," explained one medic.

SP5 Lawrence Bracy, 19, Philadelphia, who came in the Army shortly after high school and is now a medic with 3/1, probably will never forget his 19th birthday spent on the job near Quang Ngai City. "We were pinned down by AK-47 fire in front and were getting mortared from the rear. One medic was killed and another wounded, leaving me as the only aidman left in the company. I treated 16 or 17 guys that day, and the only one lost was the medic."

Even the best surgeon using the finest equipment under ideal conditions loses patients so it stands to reason that the combat medic working with limited equipment under combat conditions will not win every battle with death.

"I feel terrible about it," said SP4 William Drake, 23, Cheyboygan, Mich., an aidman with 4th Bn., 3rd Inf., 11th Bde.

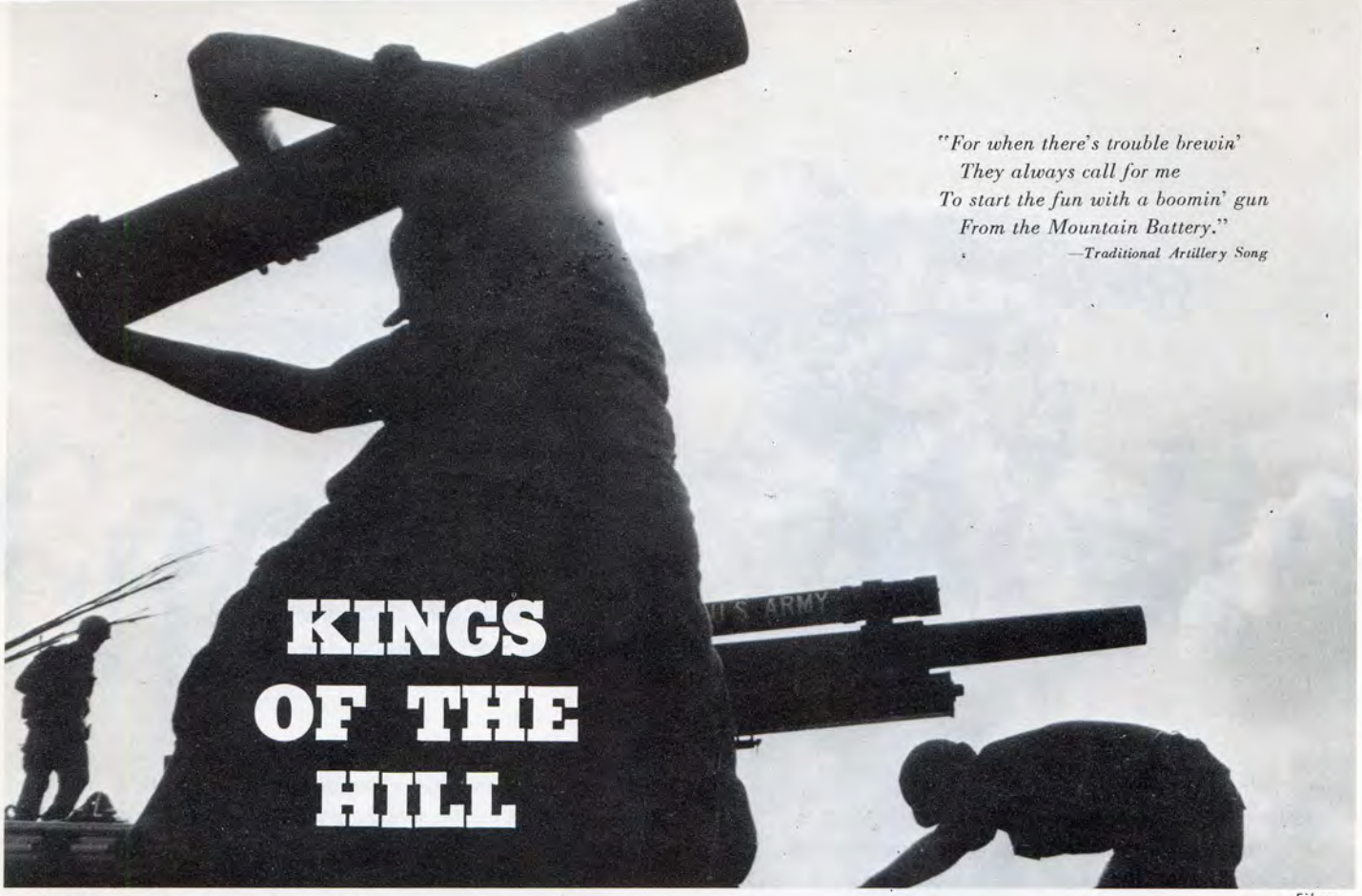
Drake, who holds a B.A. degree in hotel and restaurant management from Michigan State University, continued, "You ask yourself if you did everything you could. Some of the guys who step on mines wouldn't have a chance if they were blown up on the steps of a hospital. But you've got to keep on going."

"You think about yourself," shrugged SP5 Purvance. "You're the person who was supposed to save this man's life and he dies. What are you going to do?"

"If you let it prey on your mind you can't function. You've got to keep going so you can treat the next man," affirmed SP5 Bracy.

The aidmen of the Vietnam conflict stand a much better chance of saving lives than their counterparts of previous wars, thanks to medevac helicopters. Regular medevacs can usually reach any location in the Americal's area of operation in 15 minutes or less. Emergency medevacs, regular cargo helicopters or "Charlie-Charlies" that are in the immediate area of a wounded soldier, can swoop out of the sky, load the injured man, and be airborne to the hospital within a matter of minutes.

What effect will being a combat medic have on these men? SP4 Ernest Biscamp, 21, Houston, an aidman with 5th Bn., 46th Inf., 198th Inf. Bde., wants to work in a hospital or something related to the medical field when he gets out of the Army. SP4 Saxon hopes to go to medical school someday. Others will return to school or their former civilian occupations. None will forget their year in Vietnam nor are they likely to be forgotten by those they have served.



"For when there's trouble brewin'
They always call for me
To start the fun with a boomin' gun
From the Mountain Battery."
—Traditional Artillery Song

KINGS OF THE HILL

Eilers

By MAJ PAUL B. PARHAM

The steep mountain had become a trap. From the gloom of the canopied jungle the infantry platoon had carefully moved up the slope into hot bright day. Now buzzing death cracked overhead as they hugged the ground. The point man could not raise his head as North Vietnamese Army machineguns revealed the extent of enemy entrenchments. Help was needed, and quick!

A short radio message was sent. Miles away, on another mountain top, soldiers prepared for action.

"Shot, over!" came an answering message, only seconds later. A few more seconds passed as enemy bullets, probing for them, smacked one soldier's hasty cover. Then a whistling rush overhead was followed by black smoke and flying shrapnel up front.

"Right on. Fire for effect!" said the platoon leader. The command relayed to distant artillerymen produced a protective umbrella of steel and smoke, blasting the enemy from his holes. The Americal Division riflemen maneuvered freely, thanks to Division Artillery. The King of Battle—artillery—gladly helped the infantry—the Queen.

The Army's largest division also has the largest division artillery. For good reason. In southern I Corps, there are no outside resources. Where other divisions receive support from higher artillery levels, the Americal stands alone.

Seven battalions ranging from 105mm howitzers to giant 175mm guns cover Quang Ngai, Quang Tin, and part of Quang Nam provinces with instantly available support. This unique organization also includes the 6th Bn., 56th Arty, the only Hawk unit assigned to a division. A "quad fifty" (four .50 caliber machineguns mounted coaxially) battery and searchlight platoon round out the artillery support for Americal soldiers.

LZ West is the rugged mountain home of C Btry., 3rd Bn., 82rd Arty. The Vietnamese call it the mountain of the Black Leeches, for reasons better known to its other tenants, the 4th Bn., 31st Inf., 196th Inf. Bde. To the west, higher ranges poke through the clouds, marking the area where the infantry is patrolling. As the sun burns off the haze, the vastness of the territory is revealed. Green, rice-rich valleys appear far below. North, east, and south, small industrious figures bend over their crops. In the hills to the west the enemy hides. LZ West represents security, not only to the searching Americans but to the people as well.

Within the high perimeter, C Battery stays alert. This is a typical artillery outfit.

"The most important thing here is that gun," stated SGT William A Hahn (Columbus, Ohio) pointing at his spotless 105. His men nodded in agreement, looking up from their work. "When the infantry calls, it has got to fire. We break it down every morning just to keep it clean." Hahn has seen artillery from both ends. On his second tour in Vietnam, he served with Co. B, 4/31. "We share the responsibility for saving a lot of GIs out there, and all my men know it."

PFC Paul L. Marshall (San Bernardino, Calif.) ex-

plained the setup. "We keep our ammo segregated and every man knows exactly where it is. You've got to, especially when you fire at night." The men have their bunks in a section bunker that forms part of the parapet around the howitzer. "We have to be where we can move fast." The ring of sandbags is marked with aiming stakes, allowing a rapid shift to fire in any direction.

"I guess the big thing we all learn is to act as a team. We all jump when a fire mission comes in," commented SP4 John W. Jones (Petersburg, Va).

Teamwork is vital to artillery. It starts when fire is needed and ends only when the mission is completed. The mutual respect of infantry and artillery is abundant.

"They pulled us out of some real tight situations," remarked SGT Marshall E. Robertson, platoon sergeant of Co. C, 4/31. "Just knowing you have the artillery to back you up is good for your morale. I never want to go outside my artillery support."

To provide this support, artillery batteries in the Americal area are often split into platoons and moved by air, land, or water to remote positions. This ability to move on short notice in small formations has become routine. The battery fire direction center, converting enemy positions into firing data for the guns, must often handle missions for widely separated companies, simultaneously. If necessary, single tubes can be fired in different directions. The best pacifier however is the massed fires of many tubes, delivering destruction without warning.

"The Hoi Chanhs that have rallied to my platoon say that our artillery is one of the reasons they quit," continued Robertson. "It restricts the enemy's freedom of movement, and definitely lowers morale."

Cooperation and teamwork can produce some unusual scenes. A recent battle saw a three gun platoon fire 1,300 rounds in 18 hours. The basic load went fast, and C Battery saw that their ammo would not last. Before Chinooks could be loaded for resupply, the battalion commander of 4/31, shuttling his command and control ship, brought in enough to keep the artillery going. Infantrymen and troopers from H Trp., 17th Cav. pitched in to open boxes and stack projectiles.

As the Chinooks brought in more, the sweating soldiers lugged the heavy boxes up from the helipad, 50 meters away. The weary gunners fired into the night, and were spelled by the battery's cooks, cross trained as cannoneers—they are as adept at pulling lanyards as flipping eggs. The embattled infantry praised the accuracy of shells landing only 50 meters away, and then "walked" up or downhill as directed.

"When we got hit we had no choice but to call artillery in close. 1LT Ray, our forward observer, put it right where we needed it. When we reached our objective, only a few stragglers were left to fire at us. Artillery did it. Without it we're lost."

Robertson's words brought grins from the gunners. "We're pretty glad to have you on our side too," FSG James N. Mortimer (Bend, Ore.) admitted. "But what about those catcalls and ribbing you guys usually give us?"

A friendly feud emerged, as the men exchanged comments about Projo, the battery's "all-kinds" dog that doesn't like the infantry to come aroumd, or the "plush living on the top of the hill."

New tactics and techniques are being developed in Vietnam, and the artillery is using them. But the final test is whether or not they produce rapid, accurate, and deadly support when needed by the combat soldier. "Move, shoot, communicate" is the artilleryman's motto. C Battery, 3/82 Artillery from its mountain home, continues this tradition along with other mountain batteries throughout the Americal AO. As artillery is the King of Battle, these are the kings of the hill.

With the enormous range of this 175mm howitzer, the 3rd Bn., 18th Arty., can support division soldiers in many scattered areas.

Eilers

Dean (Tampa, Fla.), "but the greater freedom of motion allows the gunner to cover more territory quickly. Timing is the greatest factor in success."

Besides using his skills as a gunner to protect the chopper or in support of ground troops, the gunners are responsible for refueling the ship and giving the pilots oral guidance during the take-off and landing.

Although he is obliged to assist the other enlisted member of the ship, the crew chief, in the maintenance of the helicopter, the assistance is reciprocal. While in flight, the crew chief acts as one of the gunners, and together they form a team capable of devastating an area the size of a football field on a single pass.

But regardless of how good a shot he is or how vast his knowledge of the chopper's ordnance, the man at the trigger must display some mechanical ability to keep his guns firing, and help keep the ship in the air.

"It would be impossible for the crew chief to maintain the chopper in such a state of combat readiness without the cooperation of these enthusiastic workers. Every hour in the air requires at least one hour of ground maintenance," stated one of the pilots.

Though these tedious hours are essential, the core of the job is the few minutes when he is at his gun, making life miserable for the enemy.

The love of flying and the excitement of the chase is shared by SP4 David L. Winter (Superior, Wis.). He has been with the 71st Avn. Co. for more than two years and has logged nearly 750 combat hours. During this time, along with the glamour, there was plenty of danger, and close calls were a common occurrence.

"During a mission about 18 months ago," Winter recalled, "our ship was receiving pretty heavy ground fire, yet in spite of it the situation seemed pretty routine. Then a .30 caliber round slammed into the receiver group of my M-60, shattering it. It was a real eerie feeling having the weapon shot out of my hands. Except for temporarily putting my weapon out of action, no harm was done."

Five months later, while flying a contact mission over the Que Son Valley, the tall, sandy-haired ex-mechanic was shot down and had to "hump all the way back" through hostile territory. "I never realized how hard the 'grunties' have it until then. They sure have a tough case going," noted Winters, who is the holder of two Purple Hearts and two dozen Air Medals.

"There's no hiding place up there," added a former company clerk, SP5 Michael J. Murphy (Missoula, Mont.). "You're vulnerable and present one hell of a target.

"The enemy knows the amount of damage we can do, and they'll willingly expend beaucoup ammunition trying to get us. Often, he'll even give away his position in the attempt, and that's when we can really sock it to him."

Murphy, who was a graduate student at the University of Montana prior to being drafted, holds degrees in both psychology and sociology. He has been in Vietnam for more than 20 months, 15 of which have been served with gunships.

He, too, has had his hairy experiences as an aerial gunner, the most memorable of which occurred last July near Antenna Valley. "We were low-level flying near LZ O'Connor," the twice-wounded soldier reminisced, "when a .50 cal. hit us with a thunk. It travelled through the seat and demolished the handle of my .38 pistol... which I was wearing at the time."

This was particularly harrowing since three previous choppers on which Murphy had served as door gunner had been shot down. Two of them one month before this incident.

Why do they keep flying? What makes them extend over here in Vietnam? Murphy replied, "It's really hard to say. I know it isn't for the extra pay we get ($55 monthly), so it's got to be partly for the excitement of flying, and for a new scene every day.

"But mostly we stay for the satisfaction we get from doing an important job. It's hard to explain," Murphy continued, "the nice feeling you get when we come in to pull the ground troopers out of a tight spot, and they call just after your guns have taken the pressure off...and say 'Thanks a lot, guys.' "

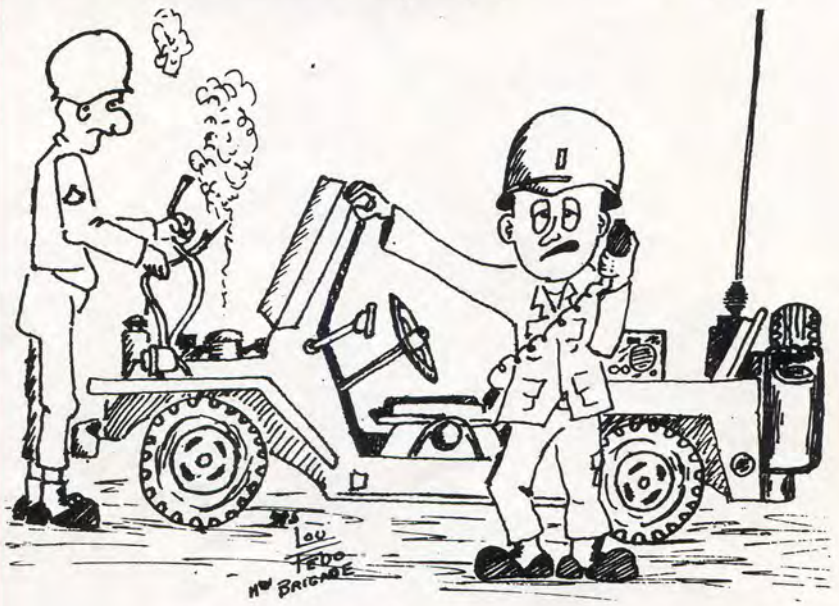
Buzogany

"Firebird" gunner, SP4 Roger D. Morley inspects the miniguns during a pre-flight check. The maintenance of the helicopter's complex weapons system is one of the door gunner's responsibilities. Chopper pilot WO1 Alfred Adamitis looks on.

AMERICAL MIRTH

By SP5 Lou Fedorski
11th Inf. Bde.

"What do you mean you're outta gas?"



"Sarge...I wanna know what are some of those awful names you call our jeep that always makes it start."

"This is niner two—I'd like to report a dud artillery round, over ...negative that, we prefer not to blow it in place."

"...and now for our second block of instruction, Accident Reports."

Poetic Wisdom Of The Peasant

While the rice-shoots are still young in the moonlit paddies, proverbs, poems, and legends abound in the homes throughout Vietnam.

For it is spring, the time of year when the labor in the fields has halted and the seeds for tomorrow have been sown into the rich, muddy earth. Storytellers and singers raise their voices over all the land.

The songs and tales of the season bring the mental pictures of the peasant, wearing his new clothing and talking about the joyous rebirth of the world, singing about *"the banks of cooked, sticky rice and the fields of honey."*

In bad years, the years of strife and bitterness, the farmers still sing of their love for their homes: *"Barren land, land where the monkeys cough and the crow barks the dawn, soil impossible to break, and yet we regret leaving it."* For the peasants so love their land that they often say, *"An inch of land is an inch of gold."*

Like the people they reveal, the classic works are candid and earthy while remaining clever and, most important of all, dignified. The central characteristics of all Vietnamese literature express a strong belief in individual independence.

While it has often been said that the Vietnamese style was copied from the Imperial Chinese tradition, this is not completely true. The influence of Cambodian and Indian, as well as Chinese, scholars, philosophers, and writers left their mark on all facets of Asian thinking and writings.

But uniquely, Vietnamese style remained informal, simple, and familiar. In spite of a sincere attempt by the foreign rulers of Vietnam's three ancient kingdoms (Tonkin, Annam and Cochin-China), the peasants resisted this indoctrination and remained true to their traditionally unstructured, loose style of expression.

Sometimes the basic mechanics of this literature may be alien, but the characters and emotions are always native Vietnamese. An ancient proverb, author unknown, believed to have been created more than 10 centuries ago warns the Emperor of Annam against entering a treaty with China: *"On the border, the grass divides like the hair of a feather. Chinese grass grows north, Vietnamese south."*

To further caution him regarding the differences between the two peoples, the sage continued, *"A snake always fathers a snake; a dragon, a dragon."*

The lyrics of the folk music, too, may be used to give the listener a deep insight into the innermost thoughts of an agricultural people struggling for survival.

The seasons themselves often are used to compare life with nature. The spring season is equated with youth and the people contemplate its too short duration with an aged folksong that says:

"Enjoy the springtime before it is gone
and old age hasten to catch you.
Let us play the drum until it has a hole in it
and the gong is no more.
Then we can get serious and marry."

Since only on rare occassions can the origin of any of these works be attributed to a specific author, there exists many variations of each song and story. Having been told and retold for tens-of-centuries, each "author" added his own touches to the tale, so the "cloth weaves differently in each Province."

The legends mostly began with a short saying or a maxim and blossomed into a tale of romance and human understanding. As it has been written, *"Enough shovels of earth make a mountain, enough pails of water, a river."*

The careful selection of words used in each sentence gives a mental picture possible only among a sensitive people capable of appreciating the wonders of life.

For those who are sentimental or romantic, these vestiges of an age long past are objects of love. They express the joys and the sorrows, the goodness and the evil of life.

But most of all, their literature expresses in a hostile world in which the future seems bleak...hope.

Sklaren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