

THUNDER!

Vol. 2, No. 2

WINTER, 1969



We Fly For The Troops



"The magnificent achievements of this battalion in a division that has engaged in some of the toughest fighting in Vietnam's Hau Nghia Province are simply legendary."

With these words, General Bruce Palmer Jr., Army Vice-Chief of Staff, named the 25th Aviation Battalion the Army's outstanding aviation unit for 1968-69. The award, given by the Army Aviation Association of America and

Hughes Tool Company, was presented to the battalion at ceremonies in Washington, D.C.

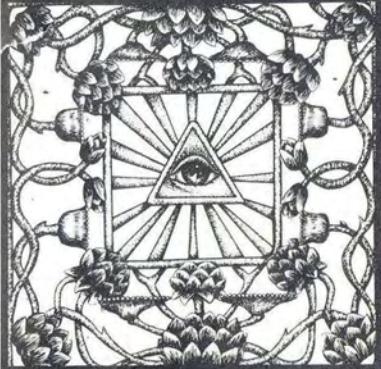
A plaque commemorating the award cites the 25th Aviation Battalion as "The aviation unit that through organized effort has demonstrated the ability to employ aircraft in the furtherance of the Army mission."

The 25th Aviation Battalion flies any mission necessary for support of ground troops. The

unit accomplishes all standard missions including courier service, command-and-control flights, aerial fire support, observation flights, smoke delivery and troop lifts.

Its activities have made the Tropic Lightning's Aviation Battalion more than live up to its motto: "We Fly For The Troops"





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COMMAND GROUP

MG Harris W. Hollis
Commanding General
BG Thomas J. Camp Jr.
BG Michael J. L. Greene
Assistant Division Commanders
COL James M. Connell
Chief of Staff

INFORMATION STAFF

MAJ Warren J. Field
Information Officer
CPT Mark J. Verbonich
Editor
SP4 Nick R. Carvagno
Assistant Editor and Designer

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Front

A Forward Observer from 2nd Battalion, 77th Artillery wades through the marshes near the Vam Co Dong River while operating with 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds.

Photo by SP4 R. B. Williams

Back

"Crusader" lift ships of the 187th Assault Helicopter Company flare into a landing zone in Tay Ninh Province.

Photo by SGT Dave DeMauro

MINI-CAV

By SP4 Joe O'Rourke and SP4 John Haydock



It is a muggy December morning. The sun diffuses between the buildings that house Delta Troop, 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry so that they seem to run together—fluid in the early-hour heat. In the cluster of hootches, the men of the squadron's Aero-rifle platoon ready their gear for a possible alert.

And it comes. Several of the Aero-riflemen scramble to helicopters already warming up in Delta Troop's "Corral". Cavalry observers, already airborne over the 2d Brigade's area of operations, have detected enemy movement just south of the Ho Bo Woods. It is the mission of the Cavymen to investigate the suspected enemy location.

Over a loudspeaker, a bellowing voice from the Tactical Operation Center details the mission to the Aero-riflemen as they run to the waiting ships. Within minutes, the Cavmen are air assaulted to the location indicated by the aerial observers and are set down in the rice paddies adjacent to the Woods.

Under the beating wind of the rotor wash, the men struggle through muddy fields in pursuit of an elusive enemy. Following the guidance of heliborne observers, they probe the tangled brush and scattered bomb craters that are the Ho Bô Woods while Cobra gunships circle overhead.

A kilometer from the landing zone, Cav pointmen spot an enemy squad racing through the war-beaten jungle. Five North Vietnamese soldiers die in a brief but fierce skirmish—three more are killed by Cobra mini-gun fire called on target by a light observation helicopter. After a final inspection of the contact area, homeward-bound choppers retrieve the Aero-riflemen for a short return flight to base camp and a debriefing on another successful mission.



25th Inf

These men are part of a new airmobile employment concept, the Air Cav Element or Mini-Cav, a newly organized heliborne assault unit from the 25th Infantry Division's 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry. They are quick, tough and effective.

"With recent months the enemy has been working in small groups, hitting and moving away quickly. The best way to combat these

small forces is by using small units of our own. And this is where the idea of the Mini-Cav was born," explained Captain William Dawson, Savannah, Ga., former commander of the Aero-rifles.

The Mini-Cav, originally an assault platoon of the Cav's Delta Troop, was the airmobile arm of the organization, inserting in eagle flights to recon and make contact on ordinary

operations. But now the unit has been broken down into teams with Vietnamese scouts. In addition, each Mini-Cav assault squad has a Light Scout Team with a light observation helicopter and a Cobra gunship at its disposal. More often, however, the Cavmen are at the disposal of the Light Scout Team.

The Cobra and LOH team determines the

25th Inf



25th Inf

missions; the Aero-riflemen accomplish them. "The main mission of the Mini-Cav," said First Lieutenant Terrence O'Connell, who took over command of the unit when Dawson returned stateside in January, "is to find, develop, and exploit intelligence targets and provide quick reaction within the 25th Division tactical areas of operation."

The operation of the Mini-Cav is always dynamic, rarely the same. Success is achieved by working frequently with groups of Vietnamese Kit Carson Scouts, by coordinating activities with the Vietnamese National Police and by the careful use of interpreters and indigenous organizations.

The teams are divided among the units of the Tropic Lightning Division. One responds to the calls of the 2d Brigade, one aids the 3d Brigade, and an additional Light Scout Team performs missions for the 1st Brigade in Tay Ninh province.

"At the beginning of October, 1969, the concept of the Mini-Cav was put to the test," said Dawson, who watched the growth of the elite teams. "During the 30 day testing period, the small group of men making up the Mini-Cav turned over 36 detainees for questioning, captured five prisoners of war, destroyed 44 bunkers, demolished or captured 17 Viet Cong sampans, captured five enemy weapons and killed five enemy soldiers."

The impressive record caused them to be dubbed the Mini-Cav by the rest of the squadron, and since then they have been doing the same outstanding work.

The Light Scout Teams organic to the Mini-Cav often operate independently. Once they detect a likely target through visual or electronic means, they radio to scramble the Aero-rifle

teams. When the Cavalrymen are inserted, the helicopter team is retained overhead and in front of them to provide visual reconnaissance and air security.

Since the insertion of the assault team is most frequently based on immediate intelligence, the possibility of making contact with the enemy or of flushing the aggressors out of hiding is very high.

If the enemy engages the Aero-rifles, the Light Scout Team provides close aerial fire support. If the enemy chooses to evade the Aero-rifles, the helicopters are free to engage the Communists as they attempt to escape.

The two-fisted punch of the Mini-Cav is inescapable.

"It gets pretty frightening out there in the

field at times," said Private First Class John Speaks, machine gunner from Coshoctio, Ohio. "But when I look up and see that Light Scout Team, I feel real good."

Not all of the missions of the Mini-Cav are spur-of-the-moment, however. There are many planned sorties to gather information for future operations.

"Use of the Vietnamese National Police lends itself to area and population control," explained Dawson. "This type of planned mission is executed with an airmobile force landing at locations where suspicious personnel have been observed."

Once on the ground, medics treat the Vietnamese people for injury or illness while Allied interpreters are talking to the people. "After

Williams



gaining the local inhabitants' trust, they can usually gain much information about nearby Viet Cong activities from the civilians," said Dawson.

The information frequently leads to almost immediate action on the part of the heliborne Cavalry. The speed and mobility of such tactics is their primary value.

This kind of operation can quickly proceed

from one area to another, enabling extensive employment of the National Police with the Aero-rifles primarily providing security.

The mobility and effectiveness of the unit has also given the Mini-Cav the task of being a kind of "emergency squad" within the Tropic Lightning Division. When an aircraft is shot down or is forced to land because of mechanical failures, the Mini-Cav swings into action.

The Aero-rifles are inserted into the area around the ship as quickly as possible as an instant security force. In addition, the men provide first aid to anyone injured in the crash.

Although a small unit and still a young one in the 25th Infantry Division, the Mini-Cav has proven that where Charlie is concerned, it's packed with maxi-power.



A Band For All Seasons



Loper

As long as organized armies have existed, there has usually been someone along to provide musical accompaniment. The Roman legions had trumpeters; the British Empire, a regular military marching band replete with drums, horns and bagpipes—a combination that produced an eerie, thundering wail intended to frighten the enemy before battle. Swap those bagpipes for electric guitars, the red coats for jungle fatigues, add airmobility and you've got the 25th Infantry Division Band.

The band was part of the first wave of Tropic Lightning soldiers to land in Vietnam in March of 1966—not that the 33 bandsmen got much of a chance to play in those early days. They spent their first nine days in country digging trenches, building bunkers, pulling guard and otherwise helping to set up Cu Chi Base Camp. Since those days, the band has often laid down its instruments to help with the more immediate

task at hand—fighting Charlie. While never directly in contact, the bandsmen have become virtuosos at arming rockets for gunships—getting plenty of practice in the early part of 1969 when the NVA tried time and again to overwhelm a number of small patrol bases along the Cambodian border.

But music is their principle armament and its impact on troops in the field and the Vietnamese throughout the division area is right on target. When the band travels to a fire support base in the boonies, it's met by a standard barrage of good natured barbs about “base camp warriors”. But the soldiers gather around and soon they're requesting and getting swinging ensembles of an uptempo jazz version of “Ode to Billy Joe” or a deep blues rendition of “Yesterday”. It's not all “Stars and Stripes Forever”.

“They just can't believe it at first,” grinned Staff Sergeant Fred Jones of Los Angeles, “but man, they really dig it.” For a brief hour, the troops are carried away from the day-to-day routine of life in Vietnam.

One key reason the band is so popular is the fact that it has bridged the generation gap. “There are two distinct groups in the Army,” analyzed Private First Class Frank J. Holley, a trumpeter from Pensacola, Fla. “There are the older troopers who really like the marches. The younger men like the pop stuff more.”

To satisfy the diverse musical tastes both within the band and within the division, bandmaster Chief Warrant Officer Ronald L. Ridenour of Ashland, Ky., came up with this

formula: develop a crack, all-around division band to handle concerts, ceremonies and other military events. Then develop “special combos” to appeal to individual tastes. “I've encouraged the bandsmen to do what they want to do most,” said Ridenour.

Sergeant Jones had been playing soul music long before it came into vogue. When he arrived in Vietnam, he saw no reason to give it up for a year. He approached bandmaster Ridenour about forming a soul group. When Ridenour gave his full consent, Jones had all of his Stateside sound gear shipped over and Vietnam has been vibrating ever since. “It's wild,” said Jones, whose group is dubbed “Fred and the Carasouls.” “When we go to patrol bases, they can't figure where we'll plug in. We tote our own generator.”

The birth of the hillbilly band was a crowd-pleasing accident. Specialist Four David Berry of Uniontown, Ohio, was horsing around with his violin one day, doing a parody of country-western music. The gag was a good one but the sound was better and Mr. Ridenour asked



Loper

By 2LT Arthur Cerf



Loper



Loper

him to set up a hillbilly trio. The group is a smash hit with all C&W fans who claim they can't get enough toad stompin' music over here.

"There was even a woodwind ensemble that played modern classical music," Mr. Ridenour sighed, "but the oboe player DEROSed."

Like musicians everywhere, the Tropic Lightning bandmen are well-travelled. In a given three day period, they might play a jam session at the signal station atop Nui Ba Den while Air Force jets tear into the mountainside with high explosives, travel to Saigon for a military concert, and then go on to a small Vietnamese village to play for a medical aid mission.

It's in this last area Mr. Ridenour feels the band is making the most progress. "We're contributing a bit of our culture to the country and we're making friends for the US. The people never forget the band came in to play and asked nothing in return. The Vietnamese aren't used to this but they really appreciate it and it offers us a sense of accomplishment."

The boys in the band are all professionals—at least 30 per cent have college degrees in music and nearly all the rest have advanced musical training. Most have band MOSes but more than one grunt has auditioned for the bandmaster and found himself in the band the next day. Anyone in the division is free to audition.

But anyone thinking he's worked himself into a soft niche will soon learn otherwise. The bandmen's day usually starts at 5:30 a.m. and with ceremonies, MEDCAPs, concerts, base camp details like KP and guard and hours of ordinary practice, it often doesn't end until midnight.

Playing in Vietnam causes some problems too. The extremes of Vietnam's climate play havoc with the instruments. In the rainy season,



Loper

pads fall out of some of the instruments and anything made of wood often warps or cracks. In the dry season, a not-so-thin layer of dust coats everything and gums up valves and small openings. Since there are no repair facilities around, the Lightningmen improvise with paper clips, elastics and anything else that sticks.

Another problem faced by the bandmen is the day-to-day routine of playing popular marching band standards. "If I have to play 'Bill Bailey' one more time, I'll go out of my mind," moaned Specialist Four Michael L. Mideiros of Downey, Calif. But generally, there's enough variety in the range and repertoire of the band to keep everyone satisfied and most band members agree with Private First Class Holley who said, "Just as long as I'm playing, I'm happy."



The refreshing shower you take; the maps you use; the pack of cigarettes, the magazine, the stereo equipment you buy at the PX; the fatigue shirt you wear almost every day for a year; the gas in your jeep or the jeep itself; the ice cream you may eat for desert tonight; have you ever wondered where all these things that make your stay in Vietnam liveable come from?

Practically every item you use during your year in Vietnam has been provided by one organization—the 25th Supply and Transport Battalion of the 25th Infantry Division. The battalion serves as an immense war zone shopping center that supplies and delivers everything needed to live and fight thousands of miles from home territory.

The Tropic Lightning Division's Supply and Transport Battalion is comprised of three companies: Headquarters and Headquarters Company provides management services; Alfa Company maintains and stocks direct support supplies and Bravo Company is responsible for transportation services.

Needless to say, the task performed by the 25th S&T Battalion is an enormous one. Well over 24 million pounds of rations are provided to the division each year by the battalion. An average of 10,000 requests for Class II items (clothing and individual equipment) and Class IV items (building and fortification material) are handled each month.

The 25th S&T is also the source for all the fuel and oil products (Class III) used throughout the division. Motor gas, aviation, diesel and JP-4 jet fuel fire the engines that drive and maintain the Tropic Lightning Division. Over two million gallons of petroleum products are issued from the battalion's POL yard every

Supplying The Troops

“Without Delay”

By 1LT J. T. Richards



Photos by SP4 Frank Ditto and SP4 John Haydock





month.

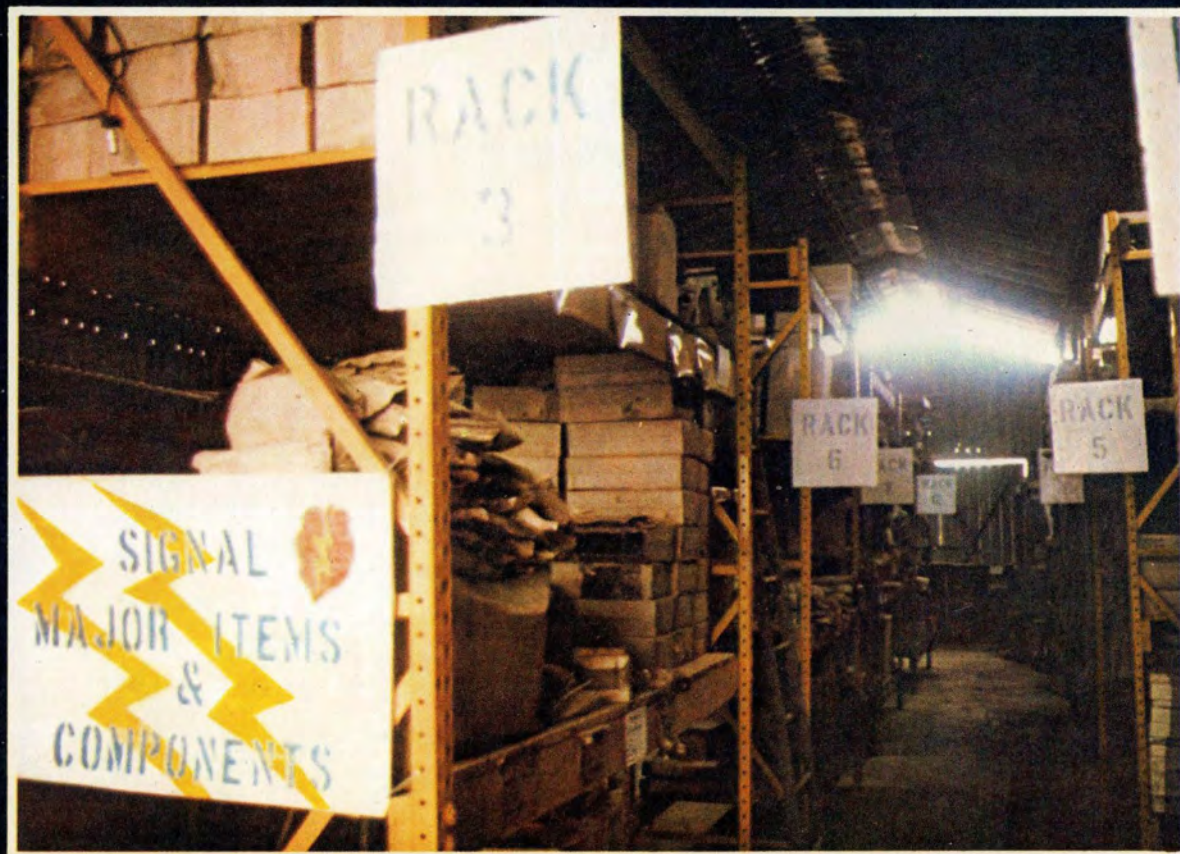
The S&T Battalion's water distribution service provides drinking water to the division and supplies 90,000 showers each month. The battalion also stocks the Post Exchange system, collects salvage materials, provides soft drinks and even supplies 11,000 gallons of ice cream from the Long Binh plant each month. Each truck of the 25th S&T hauls over 5,000 tons of supplies monthly, logging a total of over 80,000 miles every 30 days.

A brief listing of the major end items issued by the S&T Battalion is also very impressive. The wide range of equipment essential to a combat division is supplied and transported by the battalion. These items range from personnel carriers and tanks that carry the fight to the enemy to the typewriters and carbon paper that help maintain the combat troops through administrative services.

Few arsenals have a longer inventory of weapons than that of the 25th S&T. Every weapon employed by the division is provided by the battalion: M16A1 rifles, M60 and .50 Caliber machine guns, M79 grenade launchers, mortars and artillery pieces are only a few of the weapons supplied to the men of the Tropic Lightning.

The 25th Supply and Transport Battalion has been providing direct support to combat troops since August 26, 1941. The battalion was organized on this date in Hawaii and later assigned to the newly-activated 25th Infantry Division on October 1, 1941. The 25th S&T served the division through four campaigns during World War II. Throughout the Korean Conflict and in Vietnam it has participated in a total of 15 campaigns as of September, 1969.

The first elements of the 25th Supply and





RATIONS · DO NOT
· DELAY

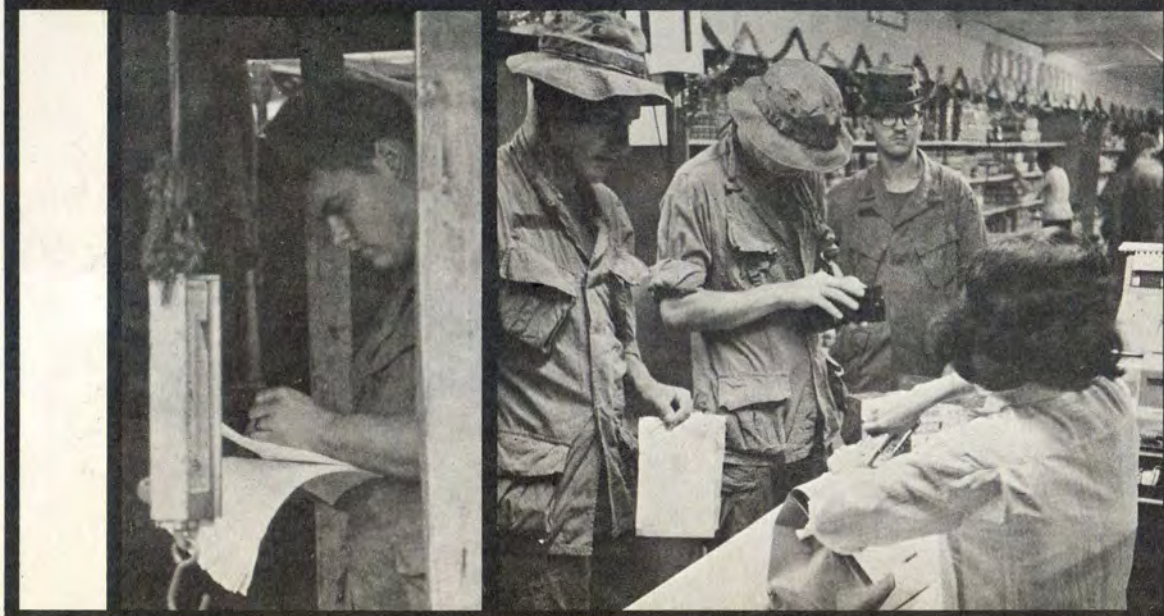


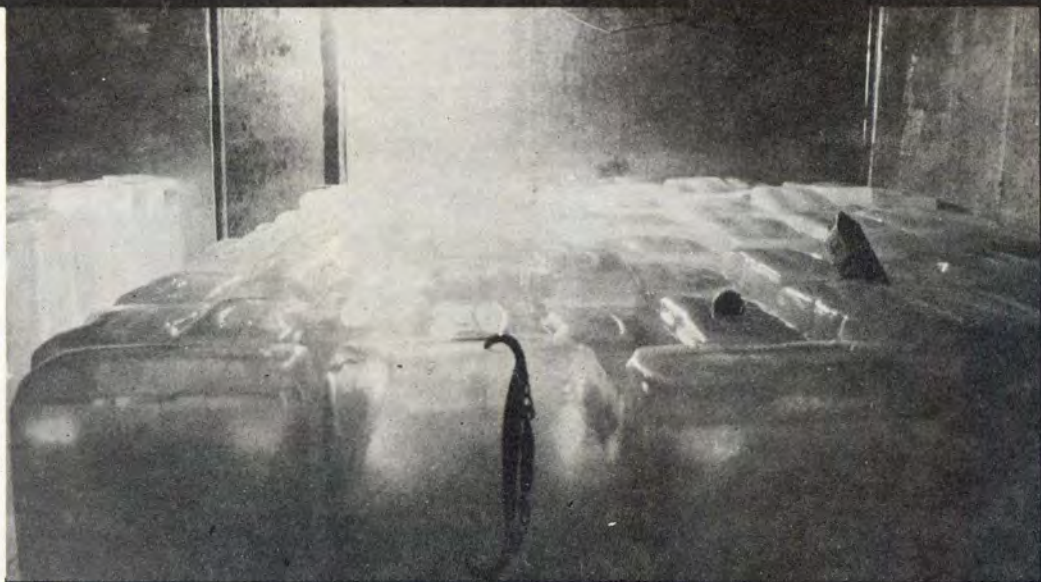
Transport Battalion were alerted for deployment to the Republic of Vietnam in December, 1965. The Battalion's 2d and 3d Supply and Transport Companies (Provisional) supported the Tropic Lightning Division's 2d and 3d Brigade Task Forces when they were deployed to Cu Chi and Pleiku, Vietnam late in 1965 and early 1966.

In addition to fulfilling its primary mission of supplying the division, the 25th S&T performs a number of important services which make day-to-day living in a combat zone, whether on or off the job, a lot easier. Operation of forward supply points by air and ground, water distribution, maintenance of an ice plant, direct exchange service for personal clothing and equipment, support of the PX and even a base camp bus service are just a few of the many services the battalion renders to the men of the 25th Division every day.

If there is a single word that best describes the Division's Supply and Transport Battalion it would have to be activity. To provide the extensive services it does to an entire infantry division, a twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week operation must be maintained. No matter where you may go in the battalion area anytime of the day or night, you're sure to find something happening.

Probably one of the busiest places in the battalion is the Class I yard. Here every morning shortly before sunrise, supply trucks from units throughout the division line up and move into the yard to pick up the day's supply of perishable and non-perishable items. These include fresh eggs, fruits, meat, vegetables and cold milk





as well as canned goods for the mess halls, C-rations for those in the field and nearly 15 tons of safe, pure ice from the battalion ice plant.

Month after month between 1,500 and 2,500 air delivery sorties are flown throughout the division without a single malfunction. This outstanding performance is due to the battalion's emphasis on a continuous training program in the techniques of helicopter external lifts, including practice rigging and hook outs of equipment. Extensive inspection and maintenance of equipment has also contributed to the success of the operation.

The battalion's Class II and IV yard is a place that's not only busy but also probably one of the noisiest in Cu Chi Base Camp. Here the huge forklifts with oversized wheels nearly as large as the vehicle itself roar through the yard from dawn to dusk, loading, stacking and unloading bulk shipments of supplies and material.

At the POL yard, trucks from every unit and of every tonnage and type line up for refueling, while huge fuel trucks from Long Binh replenish the supply of the thousands of gallons of fuel used every day.

If ever there was a unit motto lived up to day after day, year after year, it is the motto of the 25th Supply and Transport Battalion. Under the tropic heat of the Vietnam sun, in the biting cold of a Korean winter, throughout the long hot years of World War II in the Pacific, the battalion has never failed to provide the best direct support possible to the infantrymen of the 25th Division—"Without Delay."



Feb 21



a time for





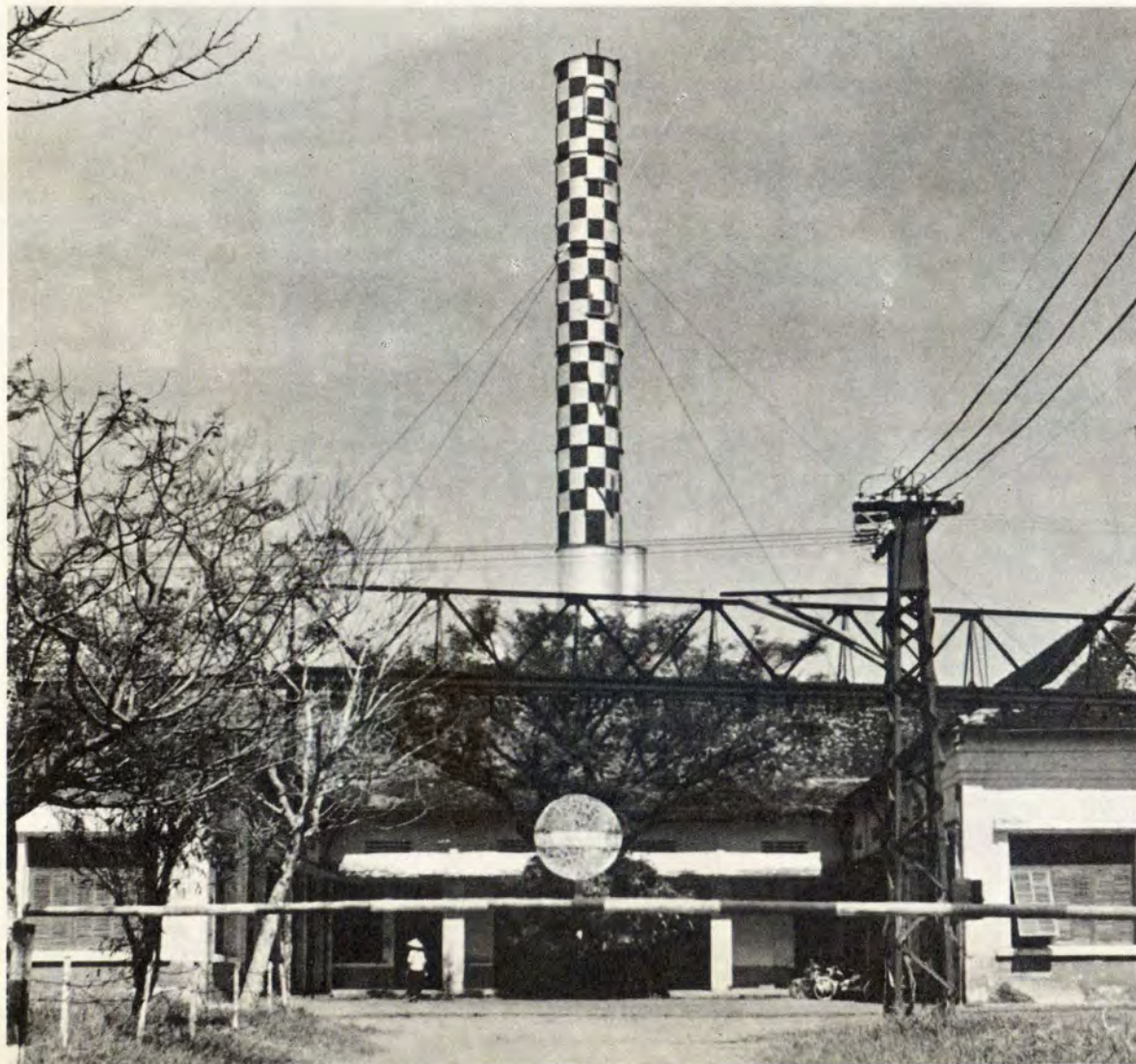
HOPE



Photos by SP4 Joe Loper



*“... it will take only a day
to get the machines running again.”*

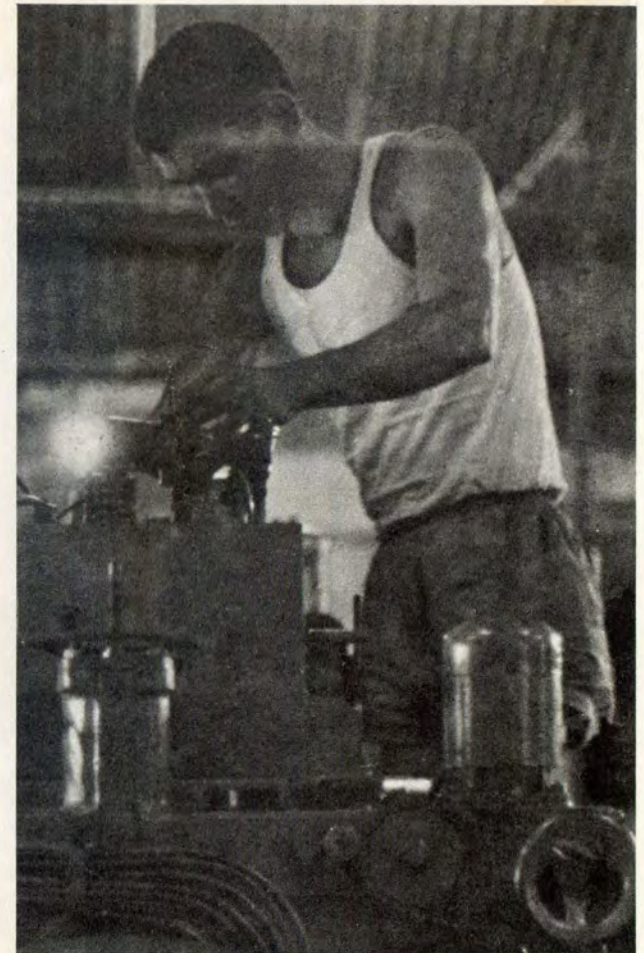


The most distinguishing landmark in the 25th Infantry Division area of operations, as one is told when he enters replacement training, is the towering visage of Nui Ba Den, the Black Virgin Mountain near Tay Ninh City. But to Third Brigade soldiers working near Hiep Hoa village, 18 miles southwest of Cu Chi, the checkered smokestack of what is known simply as The Sugar Mill is also a significant landmark.

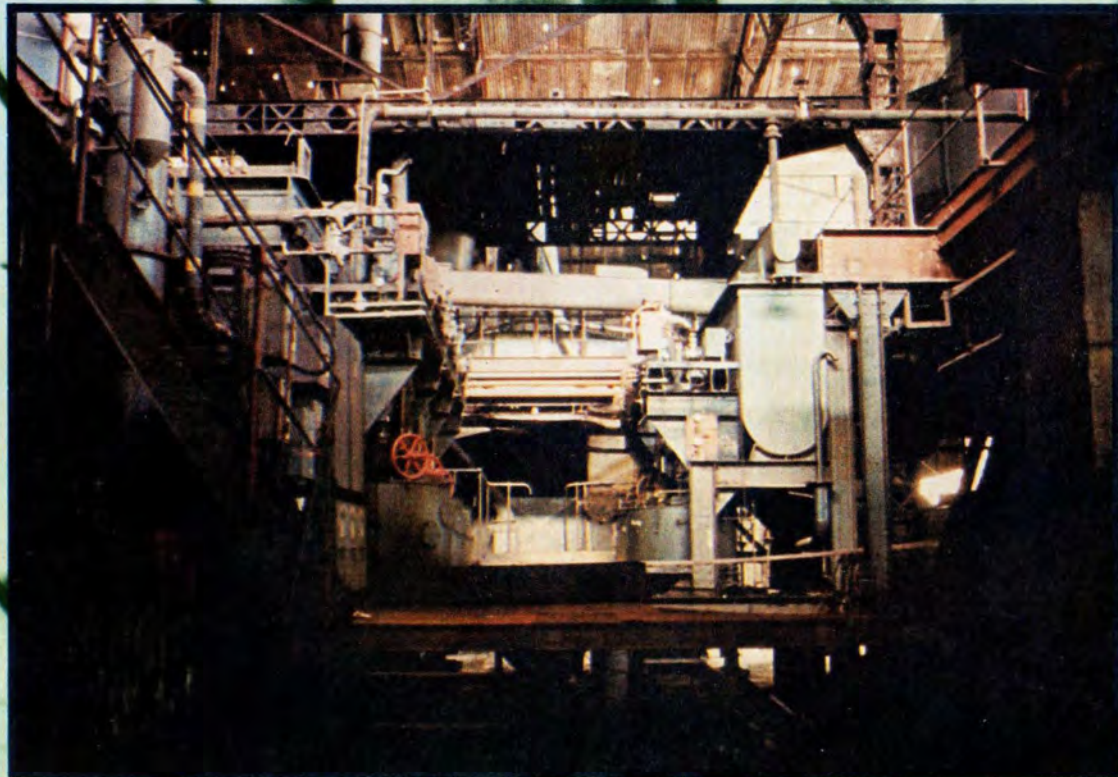
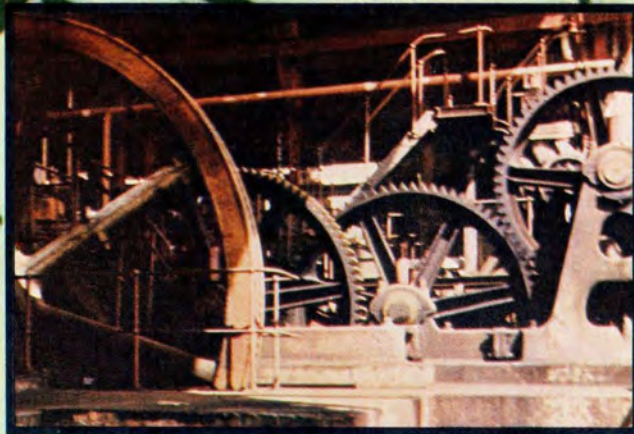
One becomes aware of the mill's presence when its shrill whistle calls the Vietnamese mill hands to work, marks the noon hour and signals the day's end. To a soldier new in country, operating within hearing distance of the plant's whistle can at first be a startling experience.

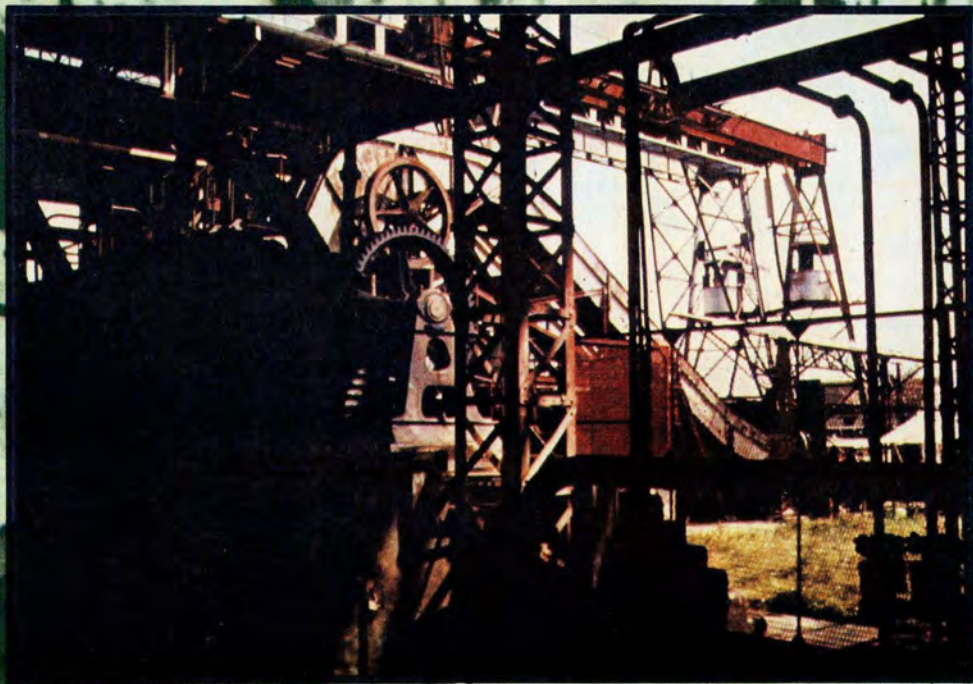
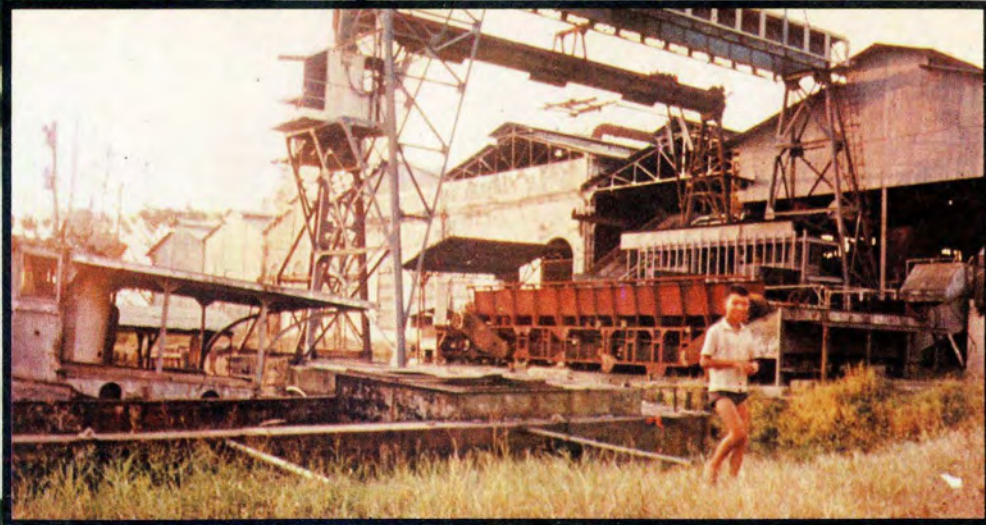
I remember my first day with the 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds moving out of Fire Support Base Jackson on a combat patrol. The still morning air was broken suddenly by a loud, wailing whistle that sounded like an air raid siren. When I got my voice back, I asked the men in my platoon what the sound was. They told me it came from the sugar mill nearby, adding that the duty there was good—beer, running water and flush toilets heading the list of benefits. Other than that no one really knew much about the place.

As I discovered later, during more informative visits to the area, the whistle blasts originate at an expansive sugar mill complex, surprisingly large for a country in which most buildings are one-story mud, brick or bamboo structures. The mill itself is comprised of ten buildings, housing everything from giant machinery that transports sugar cane from barges on the adjacent Vam Co Dong River, to large melting vats, to the power plant that provides electricity for the entire mill complex.



The history of the Sugar Mill dates back to the early 1920's when a small group of Chinese businessmen ventured into the area. These men built the first processing plant at the present site on the banks of the Vam Co Dong River. Operating on a small scale, the Chinese netted meager profits from what they could sell to the local community or ship to the Saigon markets.



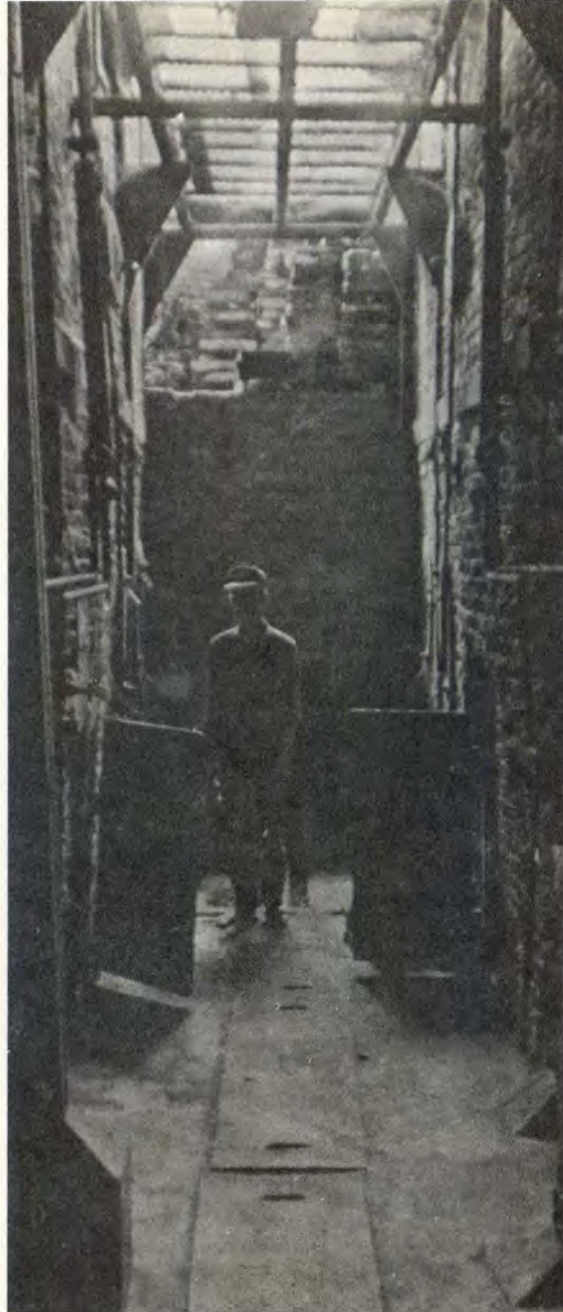


In 1935, a French sugar company bought and refitted the mill, expanding production to 7,000 tons of raw sugar a day. Beautiful villas were built for the company executives and attractive housing units were provided for the mill laborers. Many of the Hiep Hoa villagers were hired to work for the sugar company harvesting cane, transporting it down the river to the mill and operating the huge machinery at the plant. French influence is still evident in the many Vietnamese workers who speak the language fluently.

During World War II, the production at the Sugar Mill was limited because of the Japanese occupation of Indochina. In 1945, a squad of Japanese soldiers stationed at the mill complex was attacked by the local villagers armed only with clubs and knives. Five of the soldiers were killed and the others driven away from Hiep Hoa.

After World War II, the French regained control of the mill and found themselves fighting the Viet Minh. Fortified positions were built to protect the complex from marauding guerilla bands. The French, however, were unable to cope with the Viet Minh and began selling control of the Sugar Mill to the South Vietnamese Government which owned 50 per cent of the complex by 1956. In 1965, the Government of Vietnam assumed total control of the mill. The GVN now owns three plants in South Vietnam: the Hiep Hoa facility provides raw sugar to refineries in Saigon and Bien Hoa which process the crude sugar shipped down the Vam Co Dong from the northern mill.

Overseeing the three mills is a government-appointed administrating council with the Economic Minister serving as chairman. A director is chosen for each mill by the Council to manage



production and maintain the plant facilities. Mr. Nguyen Van Tat has been the director of the Hiep Hoa Sugar Mill since 1956 when he worked for the French. Prior to taking over supervision of the Sugar Mill, Tat served as a lieutenant in the French Army, fighting for several years against the Viet Minh. He also studied in France for ten years.

Since the GVN bought the mill, its productive capacity has doubled under Mr. Tat's management to a possible 15,000 tons of raw sugar a day. The expanded capabilities result largely from replacing old machinery with new equipment and installing an extra series of elevators and vats to accommodate the extra cane. The generator plant which provides power to turn the mill's machinery also supplies electricity for the whole compound. There is also a water purification plant and pumping station that provides the mill with running water.

A molasses plant and rum store were housed within the complex until they were destroyed during the 1968 Tet Offensive. A one million litre fuel tank was also destroyed by a Communist rocket during Tet. According to Mr. Tat, "The fire burned for three days and destroyed much of the housing for the workers."

In general, however, little damage has been done to the Sugar Mill itself as a result of the war. "The Communists on the whole have spared the mill," explained Mr. Tat. "They realize the importance of the mill to the people in the region. If they damage it, they will have all the villagers hating them."

The harvest season of 1966 was the last time the mill was able to gather enough cane to make raw sugar for the two refineries downriver. Recent production has been limited to distilling rum. "The fields are now capable of

yielding only 10,000 tons of sugar which would not be enough for one day of production," according to Mr. Tat. "This is the reason that only rum has been made since 1966. Also, since the Hiep Hoa Mill is unable to provide raw sugar for the Bien Hoa and Saigon refineries, the crude sugar must be imported from Taiwan and other countries."

When the mill is operational, cane is brought in from as far north as Tay Ninh Province or south from Long An Province. The Vam Co Dong River winds through these two provinces as well as Hau Nghia, providing a natural transportation system for the Sugar Mill. The river banks also provide large fertile areas for productive cane fields.

But the war has temporarily halted the harvesting of cane along the entire riverside, a highly contested area militarily valuable to both Allied and Communist forces. The enemy has mined the area heavily and told the people to avoid the riverside. Severe punishments are threatened for those who cut the cane along the river. These threats against the villagers along with the continued use of the Vam Co Dong as a primary infiltration route from the border regions to the Saigon area have necessitated extensive patrolling by both Vietnamese and American riverine forces.

Tight restrictions have been placed on river travel and a buffer zone has been established on both river banks. Clearing the riverside thickets has denied the Communists cover from which to ambush patrol boats and civilian craft.

The cane fields now lay fallow as the population concentrates on driving the enemy from South Vietnam. "Most of the people that worked for us in the fields are in the Army," explained Mr. Tat. "Where they once grew part of their



cane crop, they now grow rice and other foods to supplement their needs. The fields are now wasted because of the war. It will take about two years to get the fields in shape once the Communists are defeated. When that time comes, it will take only a day to get the machines running again.

"The Sugar Mill right now is not of great importance to the people," Mr. Tat continued.

"Where the mill's importance lies is in its potential. Before the heavy fighting started, most of the people worked for us. They were dependent on the mill since the local economy was centered on sugar production. When the war is over, I believe the people will return to the fields and the river economy will flourish again."





TAIWAN:





Land of Quiet Pleasure

Story and photos by SP4 John Haydock



Too often, Taipei is considered only as the place to go on R&R if you don't have much money. However, an inexpensive holiday is just part of the benefits of a stay in Free China. There are many more. But you have to be prepared beforehand by knowing what you want and why you are going.

Taipei, a city of more than a million Chinese from all parts of the mainland and surrounding islands, is not a haven for GI bargain hunters. If you intend to buy special

equipment or goods on R&R, this is not the place.

However, in the vicinity of the R&R center there are good buys on tailor made clothes, brassware and some wood carvings. An ability to haggle is an asset in most shops, but if haggling isn't your bag try Taipei Handicrafts on Sung Kiang Road or the Wives Club Boutique Shop in the US Navy West Compound. Prices for local handicrafts are a little higher in both places but so is the quality.

The best bargain in Taipei is a good time. If you like to roam around, or even if you plan to stay in your hotel, the people will go out of their way to make your visit pleasurable.

The flight to Taipei takes about two hours. The orientation by R&R authorities is given right on the aircraft. There you select your hotel from a list of about 40 authorized establishments. A moderate price is approximately eight dollars a night, which you pay in advance upon arrival at the hotel.

There is a short ride to the R&R center where your baggage already waits by the time you

arrive. Money quickly converts to New Taiwan dollars (NT) at 40 NT to the US dollar. Customs is mainly a quick check for concealed weapons.

A waiting cab takes you to your hotel, most of which are close to the center. Service, no matter what the price of the room, is the best. Most hotels are affiliated with a bar and restaurant where companionship and good food are immediately offered. The girls of Taipei are very friendly, Americanized almost totally in dress and taste, and, like all Oriental women, are set on satisfying the male's every need.

Tiny taxicabs are very inexpensive, about 20 cents for the first kilometer and five cents for each additional click. With the help of a clever driver and a friend who knows the city (and they aren't hard to find) you can make your way through the chaotic streets to some outstanding points of interest.

At the new Taoist temple you will find throngs of people and fascinating religious objects which make a visit there most worthwhile. Near the temple are Taipei's attractive formal gardens, kept trim and immaculate the year round. Near the Presidential Office Building downtown are the Botanical Gardens, which, for the studiously inclined, includes the National

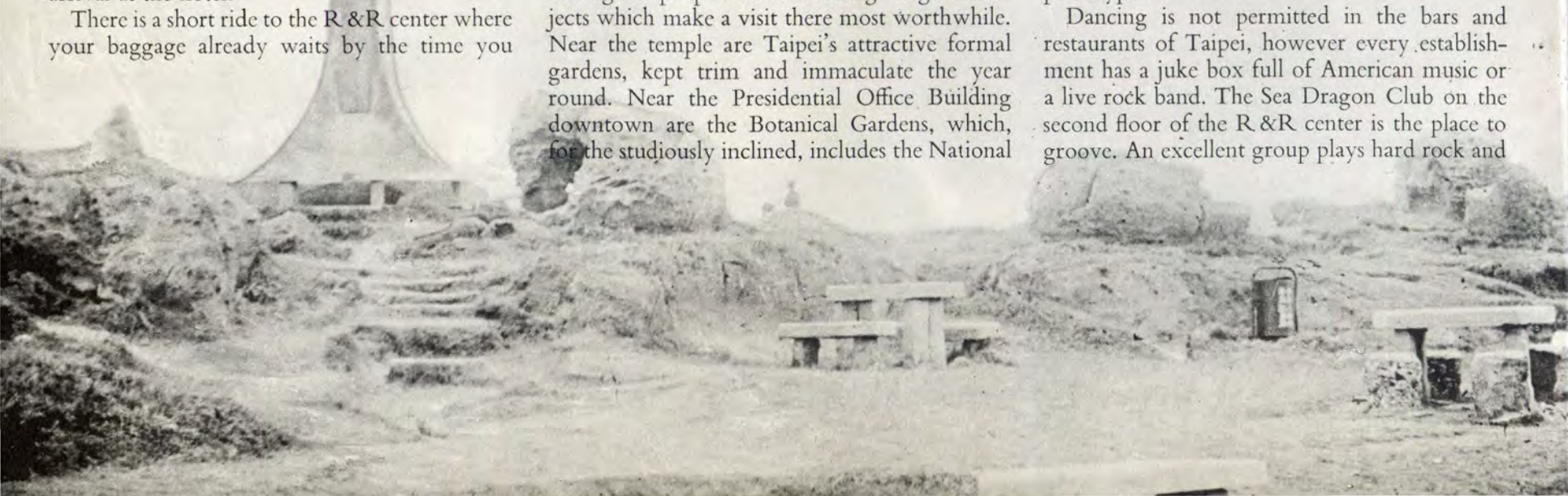
Historical Museum, the National Library and the National Science Hall. Don't fail to spend a few hours in the National Palace Museum near Grass Mountain. This museum contains the treasures of ancient China brought to Taiwan by the Nationalists in 1949.

Nightlife in Taipei is glittering and diverse. The top spot is probably the First Theater Restaurant, where an evening of entertainment can run to more than 40 US dollars. The family-oriented variety show is exceptional and features top American, Australian, European, and Chinese acts.

There are several other nightclubs where the shows are decidedly American style. Everywhere you go, you will encounter the mellow, haunting sounds of Chinese vocalists.

Recent American motion pictures are shown regularly in huge theaters. There are even some excellent Chinese flicks, imported from Hong Kong, that have the flavor of their European prototypes.

Dancing is not permitted in the bars and restaurants of Taipei, however every establishment has a juke box full of American music or a live rock band. The Sea Dragon Club on the second floor of the R&R center is the place to groove. An excellent group plays hard rock and



slow sounds for about four hours every night. And there is no lack of eager partners for the guy who loves to dance.

Areas of natural beauty, unparalleled anywhere in the world, rim Taipei. The R & R center offers several inexpensive tours, but the true adventurer if he is willing to spend the time and money, can corner an obliging cabbie and head out on his own to some of the highspots.

Yangmingshan, which means Grass Mountain, honors a revered scholar and statesman who bore that name. The National Park on the mountain is just a short distance outside the city in one of the most beautiful residential regions of Taiwan. The President of the Republic lives not far away.

Beautiful flowers, crystal ponds, and a quaint mountainside teahouse are the major attractions at Yangmingshan. The trip up the mountain gives the visitor an excellent orientation to the terraced rice paddies and open farms of the agricultural side of Formosa. The vantage point of height, on a clear day, gives a breathtaking overall view of the sprawling city.

A bit more distant from Taipei, but well worth the time and expense of the excursion, is the shore of the island. Special Services beaches offer free relaxation in the summer, and the wild and rough northeast coast presents scenic pictures of eroded rocks and cliffs as nowhere else in the world.

South of the city is Wulai, a mountain reserve traversed by foot, manpowered rail cars, and a cablecar. Below is the tremendous gorge cut by the Hsintien River. Moreover, Wulai is the home for the descendents of the first aborigines who discovered the island. Their folkdances and music are major attractions.

For the man fond of the culinary arts, the

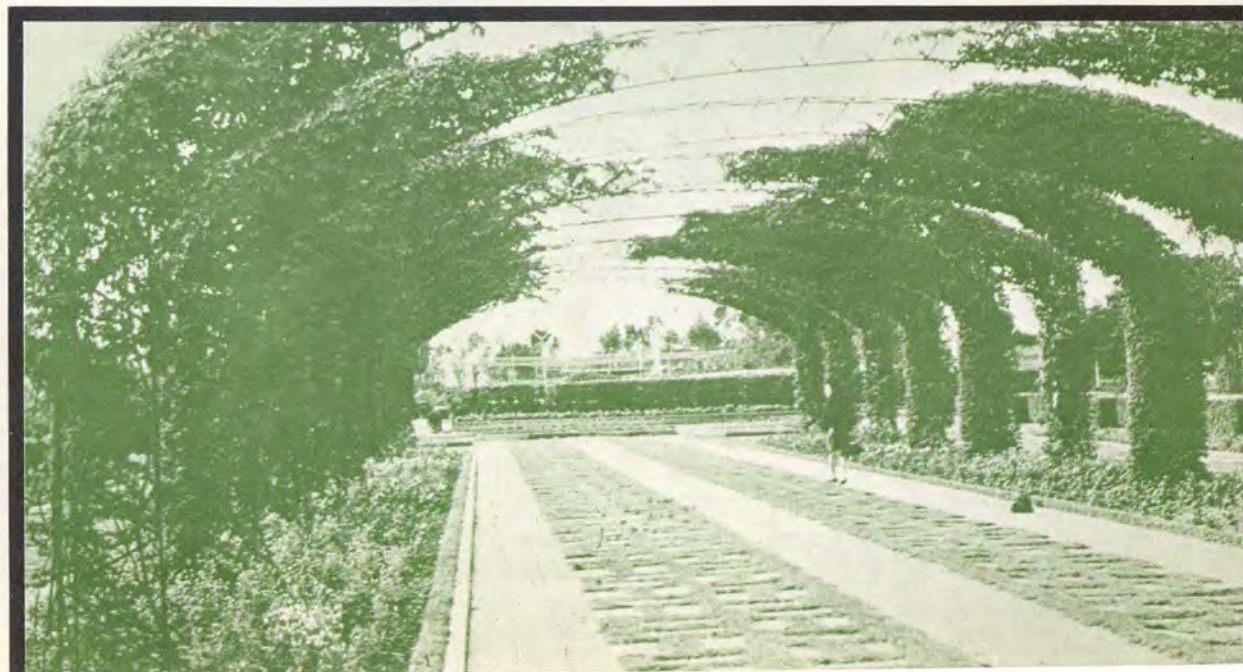
kitchens of Taiwan are unexcelled. If you are lucky enough to be offered some "home cooking", don't pass up the opportunity because the markets of Taipei, though for the most part still "open air", are clean and well stocked with delicacies like crab, crayfish, and shrimp.

The Chinese love to eat, and at every corner are snack shops and refreshment stands. Three treats you mustn't miss in Taipei: The Fire Pot Dinner, where strips of raw meat and vegetables are boiled in a soup right in the middle of your table and dipped in a raw egg and spice sauce; Taiwan oranges, partially green but the most juicy and flavorful anywhere; and the Chinese answer to popcorn—dried octopus. Taipei champagne—a native variety of green tea—is also popular.

The American military facilities in Taipei

are more than adequate for the R & R soldier. The expansive Navy Exchange is as well stocked as any Stateside PX. The liquor store and American Embassy Shop are also open to Army personnel on R & R and provide a wide selection for the connoisseur. The nearby R & R center has an exchange of its own where cold beer and soda as well as incidental necessities like toothpaste, civilian clothes and candy can be conveniently purchased.

For beauties that satisfy all the senses and a time of almost complete relaxation and diversion, Taipei cannot be outdone. Although the bustle of modern life is present everywhere, it is a city that consciously retains the comparatively uncomplex way of life without, as one author put it, "tranquilizers and instant noodles".



In the morning sky over the Renegade Woods a helicopter races above the tangled brush—in its wake, a swirling flurry of leaflets drifts earthward:

“COME IN!”, the leaflets plead in Vietnamese, “END YOUR WAR! JOIN THE THOUSANDS OF YOUR COMRADES WHO HAVE COME HOME AGAIN AND NOW LIVE IN PEACE. COME HOME TO YOUR WIFE AND CHILDREN! WIPE AWAY THEIR TEARS!”

During the night a Viet Cong guide secretly reads one of the leaflets which he found while leading a group of North Vietnamese soldiers to their unit. The words and ideas of the message affect him deeply. He is hungry, dirty, exhausted, hunted. He has not heard of his family in months and he misses them greatly.

That morning he slips from his hiding place in the jungle, making his way toward a distant platoon of Allied infantrymen patrolling the edge of the woods he called his home for almost a year. He approaches cautiously. Moving toward the platoon, he stands erect, waves his arms . . . Chieu Hoi!!

With these two words his war is over. He has returned home a free man, an enemy eliminated not with a bomb or bullet but with a simple message of truth.

The Word War

By SGT Danley Delaney



Convincing the enemy to leave the battlefield voluntarily and return to the Government of Vietnam is the primary mission of the First Brigade's Psychological Warfare Operations (PSYOP) team operating out of Tay Ninh Base Camp. By presenting the welcome of the Republic of Vietnam and explaining the opportunities that accepting this welcome will insure to the enemy-in-hiding, PSYOP personnel work to weaken the Communist will to oppose freedom in the country.

Many methods are employed by

Psychological Operations specialists to bring the “Open Arms” invitation of the Government of Vietnam to the enemy. One of the most successful channels used to reach a potential Hoi Chanh is the individual's family and friends. By working closely with villagers to build hospitals and schools and providing medical aid everyday, PSYOP teams impart a subtle message of opportunity and freedom to the local populace.

“To get the Government of Vietnam's message to the enemy most effectively,” explains First

Lieutenant Thomas J. Johnson, First Brigade Psychological Operations Officer, “we must first get the local people to accept it.

“In this way, we hope that a relative of a Communist fugitive will hear the program and go to him with the message. ‘Come in,’ he says. ‘We need you at home. We have had enough of war. Our government is good.’ The enemy, we hope, will listen closely to this voice. The more local people reached, the better are the chances of success.”

In addition to direct contacts with the enemy, the PSYOP pro-



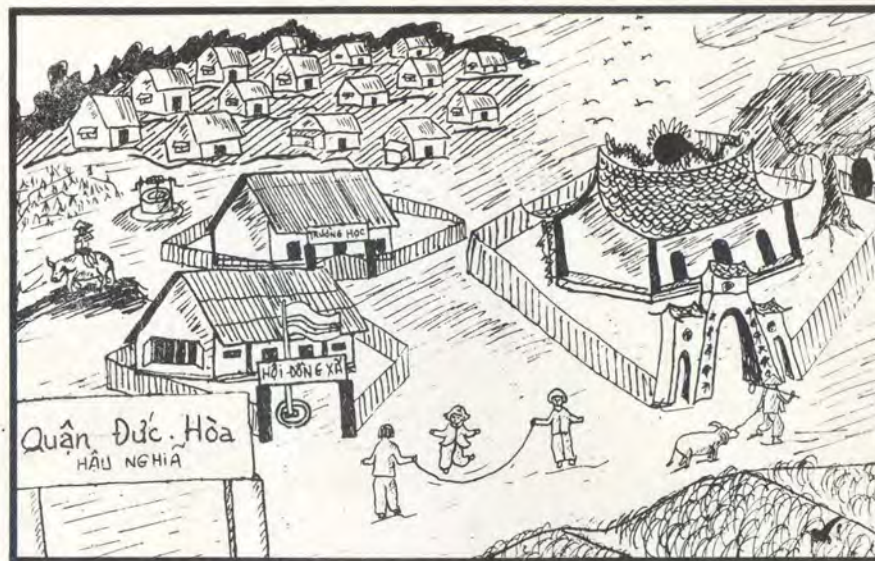
Drawings by
Division G5

gram also relies on several different means of broadcasting appeals to rally to the Government of Vietnam. Speakers mounted on vehicles and helicopters bring the Chieu Hoi message to the field. Pre-recorded tapes are broadcast into enemy hiding places, inviting him to accept the welcome of the South Vietnamese people and begin building a new life for himself.

The program is effective but it does take time to see results. Major David C. Kiger, First Brigade Civil Affairs Officer, explained that patience is one key to success in Psychological Operations: "Often the results of our work aren't immediately apparent. We ask all ralliers if hearing broadcasts or reading leaflets affected their decision to accept the Government of Vietnam. In this way, we can measure in part the success of Psychological Operations."

According to Lieutenant Johnson, the results are most encouraging. "Most Hoi Chanh's indicate that they did read a leaflet or hear a broadcast which prompted them to rally. Others say that a member of their family having heard the messages or benefitted from civic action projects came on their own to convince them to return to the South Vietnamese government."

The overall goal of the entire Psychological Operations Program is the destruction of the Viet Cong



Infrastructure which recruits, organizes, trains and maintains local VC units. The program has been so successful in this area that most of the Viet Cong units are now manned by North Vietnamese under leadership of hard core VC cadremen.

"For the most part, the Viet Cong Infrastructure has been broken and discredited to the people. The VC can no longer recruit freely or maintain a loyal or sympathetic local populace," explained Staff Sergeant Billy E. Stonaker, PSYOP Improvement and Pacification NCO at First Brigade.

Another aim of the PSYOP program is to bring the Government

of Vietnam close to the potential Hoi Chanh as well as his family and demonstrate how his service would be more valuable to himself and his family in a free Vietnam. The Republic of Vietnam will need community leaders and energetic citizens willing to work for a prosperous future. Many of these people will be recruited from the ranks of those who have voluntarily chosen the Government of the Republic of Vietnam over Communism.

Based on the ideals of peaceful progress as put forth through PSYOP, the Government of Vietnam offers a new life, citizenship, medical care and financial assistance to each Hoi Chanh. To facilitate

the move to the GVN, PSYOP messages promise 30 piastres a day food allowance for each returnee and his family. Taped broadcasts in the field tell the potential rallier of the 200 piastres for himself and the 100 piastres for each member of his family he will receive for living expenses.

To assist ralliers further in resettling their families, the GVN will provide the basis for an occupation through skill training at the many Chieu Hoi centers operating today. Through this sincere effort to provide a new life for returnees and create a productive unity within the country, the way is open for all South Vietnamese to accept willingly the Government of the Republic of Vietnam and work with it for a promising future.

The overall success of Psychological Operations is encouraging, but the work is never fully completed. The task will be finished only when the people of the Republic of Vietnam are free to live and prosper under a government of their own choosing.

Chieu Hoi



Yours For The Asking

By CPT F. B. Swenson

Uncle Sam has set aside a bundle of cash for your use. It's yours for the asking under his benefits program for eligible veterans and soldiers still on active duty. Cash benefits administered by the Veterans Administration (VA) include assistance for continuing your education, taking an apprenticeship, on-the-job training, farm or flight training; guaranteed loans for the purchase of a home or farm, home repairs or alterations, farm supplies or equipment; disability compensation and medical and dental care.

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE: To be eligible for educational assistance you must be a veteran and have served on active duty at least 181 consecutive days or have been released from active duty for a service connected disability. Persons still in the service are also eligible for educa-

tional assistance if they have been in the service for at least two years with 181 consecutive days of duty. If you meet these qualifications, you may select any program of education, apprenticeship, on-the-job, farm or flight training at any approved educational institution or training establishment which will accept and retain you. You can even get assistance to finish high school without a charge against your basic entitlement to higher education.

If you are interested in college level studies or above, you are eligible for one-and-one-half months of financial assistance (up to a maximum of 36 months) for each month on active duty. Anyone having served at least 18 months on active duty is eligible for the full 36 months of assistance. It is important to note your eligibility for financial assistance ceases eight years from the date of your latest discharge.

If you are single and are attending school on a full-time basis, you will receive \$130 a month. With one dependent your entitlement is \$155; with two it is \$175; and for each dependent over two you receive an extra \$10 a month in addition to the basic allowance. Monthly payments are geared to the number of semester hours you take. With no dependents and attending school only half-time you would receive only \$60 a month. A cooperative training course in industry, business, or farming entitles you to a \$105 monthly payment.

To be eligible for flight training, a veteran must possess a private pilot's license or have completed the required number of hours for a private pilot's license and meet the medical requirements necessary for a commercial pilot's license. Allowances for flight training are computed at a rate of 90 per cent of charges for tuition and fees for the course. Entitlement is

reduced one month for each \$130 paid.

Apprenticeships and on-the-job training must be pursued on a full-time basis. The amount of assistance varies according to the time on the job. The first six months a man with no dependents is paid \$80 a month. The second six months the assistance drops to \$60. This is because the government requires that the individual's wages be increased on a regular basis according to the length of time on the job. Consequently, assistance diminishes with time.

GUARANTEED LOANS: Any veteran with at least 181 days' continuous active duty or discharged for a disability is eligible for a GI loan on a home or farm or for farming purposes. Persons on active duty at least two years are eligible also while their service continues. Eligibility continues for a minimum of ten years after discharge up to a maximum of 20 years. An additional year above the minimum is awarded for each three months active duty. Disabled veterans are eligible for the maximum of 20 years.

The VA guarantees up to \$12,500 or 60 per cent, whichever is less, on a loan from a private company. Farm real estate loans are guaranteed for \$4,000 or 50 per cent of the loan, and for non-real estate farm loans the amount is \$2,000 or 50 per cent of the loan.

Loans are made to purchase homes, to make alterations, repairs or improvements in homes already owned and occupied, to purchase farms or farm supplies or equipment, to obtain farm working capital and to refinance delinquent indebtedness on property to be used or occupied by the veteran or for farming purposes. Where private loans are unobtainable, direct

loans may be made by the VA only for the purchase of homes and farmhouses. Direct loans may not exceed \$21,000. There is no maximum on guaranteed loans. Current maximum rate is 72 per cent on guaranteed and direct loans.

DISABILITY COMPENSATION:

Monthly payments are made to veterans who are disabled by injury or disease incurred or aggravated by active service in the line of duty. Payments run from \$23 to \$1,000 depending on the disability and how much it handicaps you in earning a living. Disability pensions are also paid to those veterans who become permanently and totally disabled from reasons not traceable to service.

MEDICAL CARE: Hospital or outpatient care is available to all veterans with service-connected medical or compensable dental conditions. Treatment will be given at one of the many VA hospitals or clinics or the VA may pay for outpatient care by a hometown doctor or dentist if approved in advance.

If you are interested in obtaining full information on any of these benefits and how you can qualify, or the many more that are available to you not mentioned here, contact a VA representative. In Vietnam the nearest VA office is in Long Binh at 90th Replacement Battalion. When you're back in the world, you will find at least one VA office in each state. VA personnel are ready to serve you to see that you receive your full entitlement to Uncle Sam's service benefits. Think about it!





Two Up, Two Down

My name comes up on the roster for bunker guard. I am a legal clerk in an artillery unit. Training on the M16 rifle and other weapons has prepared me for this.

1815 Hours: I go to bunker 11A in full combat gear with two other clerks. Set up equipment and fill out the ammo report.

1900 Hours: Communication check. "Command bunker, this is bunker 11A. Commo check."

"11A, this is command bunker. Commo check successful. Require situation report every hour starting at 2100 hours. Out."

"Roger, out."

1915 Hours: The five reinforcement guards arrive and set up sleeping quarters to our rear. Secure feeling.

Their laughter is our warmth as they break out the soda and share experiences of another world. I sit on the bunker and drink in the stories of my companions about the days they've spent in 'Nam. I am new in country, but I can hear in my mind the whistle of rockets smashing through the night.

"It must have been hell here then."

"Yeah, it was."

2030 Hours: "Think I should check the tower?" Taylor asks.

"Naw, wait 'til we start shifts." MacLaine's Arkansas twang shines through. He is the ranking man—Spec 4.

2100 Hours: The Sergeant of the Guard strolls into our area.

"Hey Baby, everything up tight?"

"Roger that," smiles Mac.

"Want a soda, Sarge?" asks Taylor.

"Naw, can't drink on duty, man." He heads for another bunker.

To our front, the area for which we are re-

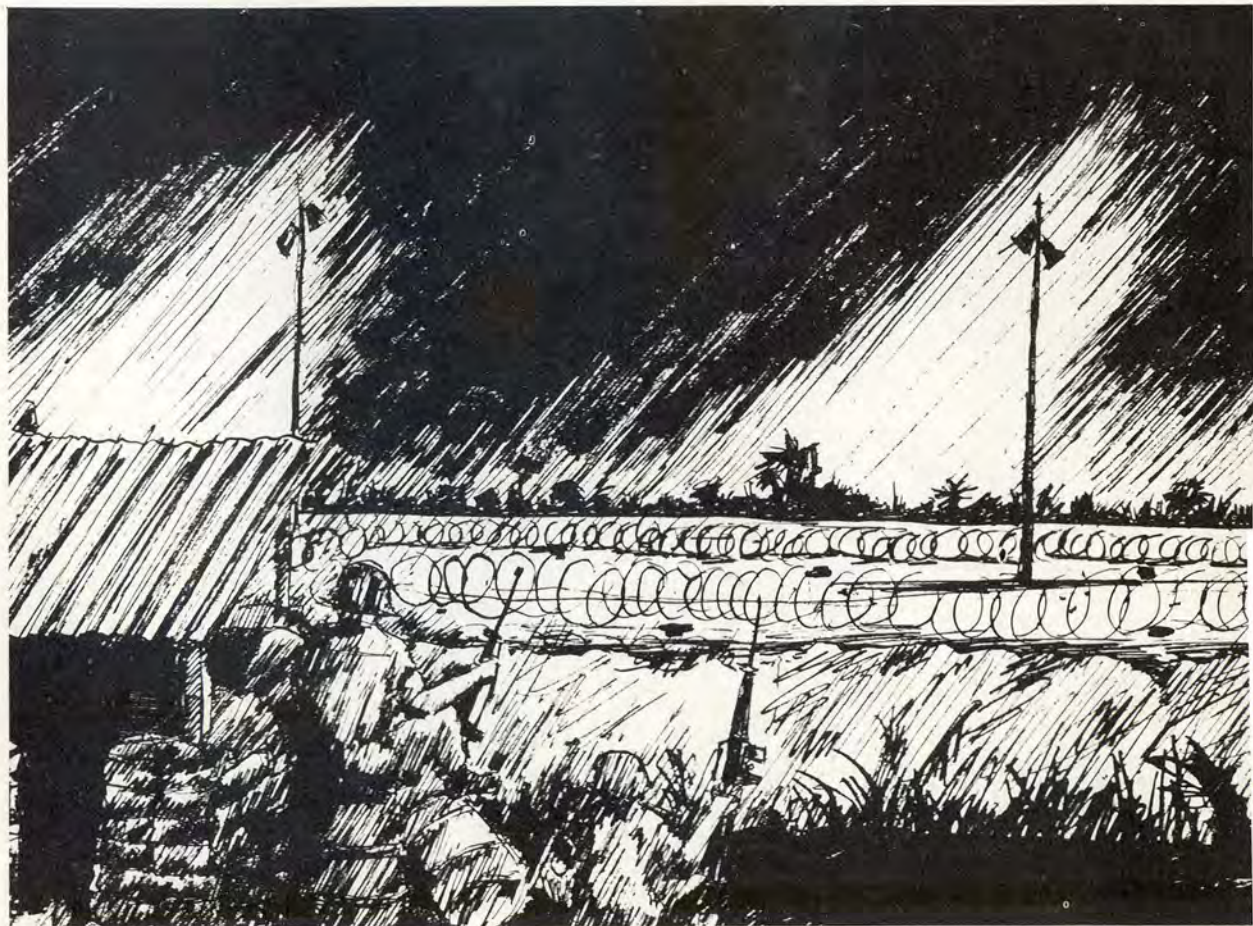
sponsible looms as a menacing monster-shadow. The curtain of darkness descends, and the adrenelin begins to seep. The large ponds at the fifth wire shimmer with an incandescent glow. Choppers circling above shoot their beams of brilliant white light against the jagged treeline which envelops the village to our right.

I sit on top of the bunker, M16 at my side. Out in front the blackness seems to move in

fluid waves, ever changing. Visibility—poor. Better scan the wires and claymores.

Five fences enmeshed in a tangle of barbed wire rolling between posts like deadly tumbleweed. You'd think a man couldn't possibly make it through that mess. But Charles can wriggle his small, lithe frame between the wires with ease.

There is a shady image on the ground about



eight feet behind a claymore. The image seems to move, I can't be sure. I've heard the stories about sappers and how Charlie just pops up behind you. And so I stare out with determination, hoping to defeat the fleecy blackness.

2145 Hours: Flares along the perimeter float down burning light that gives us an all too brief look at the area in front of us. I wish we could pop flares all night.

2200 Hours: I call in a sit rep. Negative on movement.

Back to the perpetual search of the unknown. No moon tonight, too many clouds, and I'm scared.

2230 Hours: Footsteps behind me. Familiar chills race each other down my spine.

"Halt. Who's there?"

It is the roving radio patrol. We talk a while

and then they move on.

Better check the area again.

2300 Hours: Mac comes out of his light sleep as I shake him awake.

"I'll go to the tower and send Taylor down here, OK?" I ask.

"Yeah, that's OK."

Taylor challenges me as I climb the tower ladder.

We talk at the top a few minutes then he goes down to the bunker.

The panorama from the tower permits only slightly better visibility than the view from the bunker. The frightening, lonely quiet prevails.

2400 Hours: I am alert, but I rely mostly on fear to fight off the noiseless footfalls of sleep. Even though there are several other guys in the immediate area, I feel a gripping isolation. Crashing into the shimmering curtain of night, four machine guns fling ordered sprays of ripping metal. Every fifth bullet is a tracer, a brilliant red-orange flash which links with the other tracers forming thin ribbons that stream out into the darkness. All of the bunkers near me are belching fire. The streaming tracers form cross-patterns of beauty disappearing into the infinite distance, glancing off ponds to challenge some faraway star.

The tracers weave a mosaic of red and orange interlacing streams. Could a sight as beautiful as this kill people? Many corpses can testify in their forever silence, but it seems so unlikely, so self-contradicting. Maybe the tracer bullets never kill anyone; they merely continue to streak beauty to the most remote corners of the universe. It must be the invisible four bullets between the tracers that do human damage. The tracers only offer dream beauty to those who see them.



0100 Hours: Mac climbs the tower and I go back to the bunker. My turn to sleep—lightly . . .

Taylor shakes me to wakefulness and I can't believe two hours went by so fast. I scan the area. Nothing, at least nothing real, is moving.

The expansive darkness smiles through its creepy cloak. I can hear the enemy laughing at me and my mind speaks with The 'Nam.

So you've had me for 36 days now, Old Man. You've forced me to live in conditions that I never thought I'd have to endure. You've turned on your monsoons and rained hell on me day after day. Funny how you've forced me to do work that's strange to me; how your mosquitoes have bitten my skin until it is lumpy with welts; how you've taught me a new kind of scared. I can see your smugness as you savor the greatest treasure of all—you will take one precious year out of my life, a levy on my future.

You've had me for 36 days now, but I'm making it just fine. You better hurry, you've got only 329 days left at the most. You are stealing my time, but it's not a tax as you think. It is a refund to me because I am gaining richness of experience here at your expense. Each day here only adds to my belief in myself and my country. I've made it for 36 days and tomorrow will be 37. I'm getting short Old Man, you best hurry.

0530 Hours: The sun's first rays bounce off the clouds to my front. Another day.

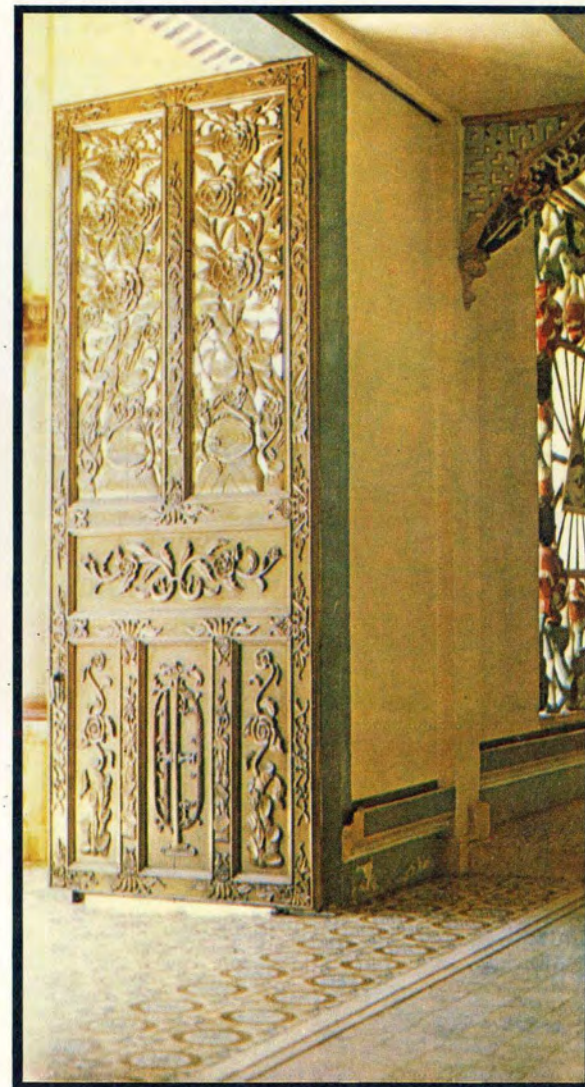
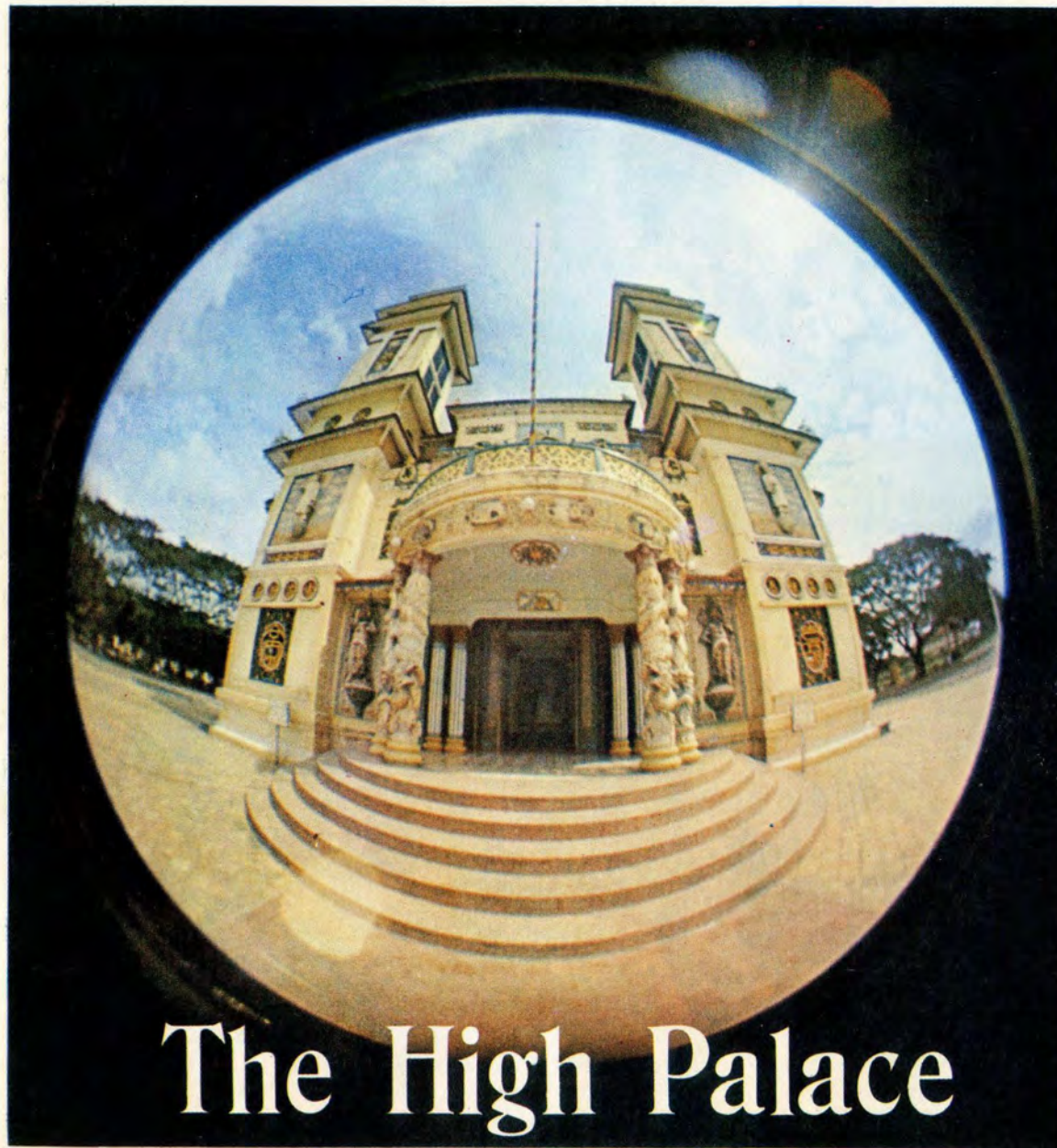
Too late for tonight, Vietnam, your toy Charles can't get me now. His motor doesn't work well in the daylight. The sun leaps upon the horizon.

My turn to laugh, Vietnam. If you think you've got the odds, Old Man, you're wrong; they've always been and always will be in my favor. My turn to laugh, my turn from now on.



By SP4 Doug Sainsbury

Drawings by SGT Richard Mizdal



Verbonich

Story and photos by SGT Sam Dixon

The American soldier's first contact with the Cao Dai religion is usually a brief dusty glimpse of the Temple Grounds from either a roaring APC or a bumping jeep. But that brief glimpse is enough to instill a growing seed of interest and curiosity. The Cao Dai Temple can be seen from most of the fire support bases in the area—especially at night during holy ceremonies when the main temple blazes with an eerie neon glow.

That brief glance, however, fails to satisfy the natural curiosity of the American soldier who somehow manages to see Cao Dai before his tour is over. What lies behind those aesthetic walls crawling with smiling concrete lions? What mysteries do the gigantic filigree gates guard and hold secret? What strange Oriental practices go on behind those walls? Nothing frightening,



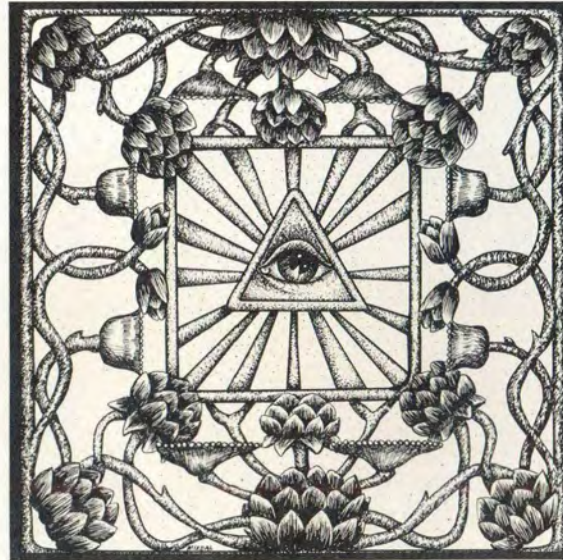


awesome or unnatural to be sure. The Cao Dai Temple is the seat of religion for the majority of the Vietnamese population of Tay Ninh Province and its influence reaches throughout Vietnam.

In the galaxy of religions, Cao Dai is a growing infant. Its origin is traced to the year 1926, when a group of Vietnamese intellectuals and scholars were experimenting with the occult world and spiritualism. They discovered the new religion, according to Cao Dai canon, when God contacted and inspired these people through an occult method of communication with spirits

called "divine writing".

One of the group members would enter a trance and begin to write with spiritual fervor revealing knowledge that none among them was capable of authoring. From this small group of intellectuals grew Cao Dai, or High Palace where God reigns, as the religion established itself.



Mizdal

The Cao Dai religion embraces all the great theological precepts from the great religions of the world. Its doctrine contains inspirations from Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity. To the Western mind, Cao Dai beliefs seem strange. Indeed, the connection of Jesus Christ with a religious figure such as Buddha is enough to confuse many congregations in the



United States. Yet, Cao Dai embraces all the major religions, taking the best and most meaningful from all, combining them into a concise philosophy.

Cao Dai is far from pagan. Its followers don't worship idols but, like most religions, have a symbol for a Supreme Being. The primary Cao Dai symbol is the Holy See or all-seeing eye of God. Surrounded by a triangle, the emblem represents the three main constituents of Cao Dai: Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. These three aspects of the religion have their counterpart in more familiar faiths such as Judaism with orthodox and reformed interpretations. There is something in the religion for everyone—different interpretations within one church.

Once established, the Cao Dai faith spread rapidly and grew until at the present time, 98 per cent of the Vietnamese living in Tay Ninh Province are Cao Dai.

In addition to the main temple, there are also hundreds of smaller temples and shrines throughout South Vietnam.

The Holy City of Cao Dai is three miles east of Tay Ninh City. Within the boundaries of the Holy City itself are the principal temples of the religion. The Great Divine Temple, completed in 1941 and immense even by Western standards, is flanked by monuments to past Cardinals and by a great congregational hall. Inside, the temple is an eclectic collection of religious symbolism and Coney Island color. Great pillars festooned with a painted dragon motif support the cloud-painted and mirror-starred ceiling. Nine highly polished steps lead up to the main altar where red-lacquered and gilt thrones glow in indirect light cast from huge latticed windows. Behind the thrones is

the main altar consisting of huge pieces of hand carved mahogany furniture, dominated by a gigantic globe bearing the Holy See—the all-seeing eye of God. The main altar is adorned with glittering, highly polished brass vases, bells and standards. Fresh flowers are everywhere, combining their aroma with incense which burns constantly.

Also located in the Holy City is a perfectly manicured formal garden where many varieties of flowering plants display their color in perfect geometric patterns. The main points of interest, however, are the bonzi or shrubs trained and clipped into the shapes of great serpentine dragons, phoenixes and peacocks.

Besides the Great Temple, there are offices for high officials, lecture halls, an infirmary, kitchens, dormitories and fields for growing rice and vegetables. Visitors are graciously escorted through the temple and grounds by young priests dressed in white and eager to practice their English while conducting informal tours.

Cao Dai is of paramount interest politically because the dogmas of the religion are diametrically opposed to Communism. Because of this, Cao Dai has been the target of many enemy offensives. In spite of the war, however, the Holy City remains aloof—calm and serene, uncluttered by signs of the unhappy conflict which rages all around it.





Loper



Loper

This display shows a few examples of expended and dud ordnance which the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong may use as booby traps. Both American and enemy manufactured shells and grenades can be readily adapted for use as antipersonnel weapons. Employed in areas of heavy troop movement these simple devices make highly effective weapons.





Loper

Circled are two crossed wires which serve as a pressure detonating device. When they are stepped on, an electrical contact is made exploding a nearby booby trap. Such devices can only be avoided by being extremely cautious at all times during your tour in Vietnam, but especially when you are in areas with which you are familiar. Simply because you have been on a trail a hundred times before is no proof that it won't be booby trapped the next time.



Loper

BEFORE AND AFTER: A boobytrap contrived at the Tropic Lightning Mines and Booby Trap School to demonstrate how a few pieces of simple equipment can be combined to create a highly destructive weapon. Fortunately, the trap exploded at the school was a smoke grenade. But you can be sure that if you find a device like this one in the field it will prove to be much more deadly.

Silent—Hidden—Deadly

By SP4 Tom Bozzuto

Your company has been on patrol all day. In the blazing heat of Vietnam's dry season, you move listlessly. Your feet burn, your back is cramped and the sweat pours down your face so that it's hard to see as clearly as you must. But you forget your discomfort—you stay alert.

Finally, the command that you have been waiting for comes down: "Take ten—watch out for booby traps!" You sit down, shrugging off your gear to give your shoulders and back a break, too. Resting there, one of your buddies

notices an SKS rifle partially hidden in some bamboo nearby. Carefully, you both get up to investigate, checking the immediate area thoroughly for tripwires as you move. Near the enemy weapon, your buddy notices a Y-shaped branch on the ground about 50 feet from the hedgerow. The stick has been broken; its longest limb points directly toward the Soviet rifle. It could be a fallen branch—or a marker left by Charlie as a subtle warning to villagers to avoid the area.

Cautioning everyone away, you set a grappling line to pull the rifle from a safe distance. Holding the end of the rope, you move away and get down behind a paddy dike after you make a final check to insure the area is clear. As you pull the line taut, you feel the SKS slip under the tension and the blast of a pound of C4 marks the end of another booby trap that didn't do its job.

You were lucky this time. But what about next time? Is there any way of knowing where Charlie may leave his next mine or how he may set it? According to Staff Sergeant Peter Uli there is. Sergeant Uli, NCOIC of the Tropic Lightning Mines and Booby Trap School, points out that the enemy leaves booby traps in areas where American troops find the going easier. For example, there is a much greater chance of finding a booby trap on a dike than in a rice paddy. Charlie's theory: "Americans would rather walk on the dikes than get wet walking through the paddies."

However, it's not the best idea to make a habit of avoiding the paddy dikes. Use them, but use them cautiously. Charlie watches us, trying to find a pattern of operations or established reconnaissance routines. A unit which habitually avoids dikes in favor of the adjacent paddies can expect Charlie to trap the wet areas more thoroughly than the berm tops.

Sergeant Uli also emphasized that, "Whereas habit and desire for comfort are serious problems and often a cause of our injuries from booby traps, by far the major percentage of Americans killed or wounded by traps wouldn't have been injured at all if it had not been for their curiosity and more particularly for their desire to bring home some kind of war trophy."

The enemy is facing an extreme shortage of



Williams

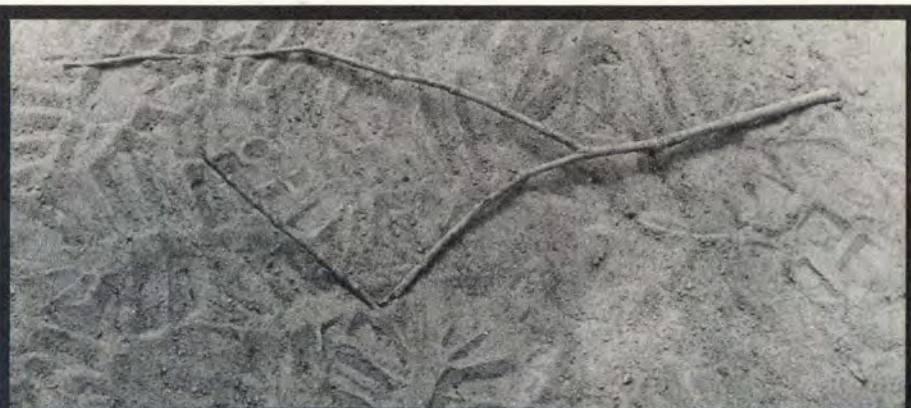
Above: An example of the enemy's use of crude materials to manufacture highly effective weapons. An explosive-stuffed can, a reprimed firing device and some locally purchased line combine to make a common booby trap. **Right:** Discarded cans and firing devices from expended smoke grenades recharged with an AK-47 round make up part of this group of booby traps. Items left in the field can be turned against the careless soldier.

weapons and supplies. He is not going to leave an SKS, an AK47 or other equipment lying in a hedgerow unless he is forced to leave it—rapidly. If Charlie does leave a weapon behind, cautions Sergeant Jonathan W. Laurent, another of the cadre at the Booby Trap School, "you should immediately assume that it is rigged as a nuisance mine." Laurent explained further, "Never pick up or attempt to disarm anything that might by any remote possibility be a booby trap."

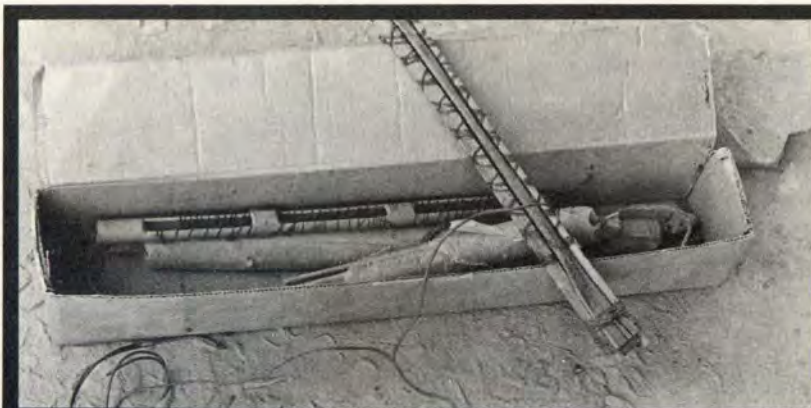
And Sergeant Laurent means "anything". Speaking of a recent action in which his unit was involved, Private First Class Bill Abbott of Delta Company, 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry recalls that, "The third dead North Vietnamese soldier we found had booby trapped himself by pulling the pin on a frag grenade and placing it under his body before he died." During an operation in the Ho Bo Woods recently, tankers of 2d Battalion, 34th Armor discovered an old GI steel pot lying in the center of a trail. Probing around the helmet, the unit engineer determined it was trapped with two pounds of Communist



Williams



A broken branch lying near a trail or hootch could have dropped there naturally—or been left behind by the enemy to point out booby trapped areas to local residents. Frequently such subtle warnings are placed along heavily booby trapped sectors. Careful investigation of suspicious objects often uncovers mined areas.



These bamboo detonators are simple but effective devices in Charlie's booby trap arsenal. Bamboo sticks are wound with wire, and connected to a battery. The detonators are then buried on heavily traveled trails where a careless step may press the wire contacts together exploding a mine.

Loper

plastic explosive. The booby trap was blown in place by the engineer—rather than with a kick by a careless soldier.

Also, judging from recent experience, Charlie isn't satisfied with leaving just one booby trap in your path. On the 20th of August, 1969, the Warriors of Bravo and Delta Companies, 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry found 74 booby traps in a 500 meter square area while constructing Patrol Base Lorence in the Citadel near Trang Bang. Private First Class Ronnie L. Clark, one of the men building Lorence, noted, "There were booby traps everywhere. I couldn't believe that there were so many in such a small area."

And these booby traps aren't necessarily elaborate or sophisticated devices. Last fall, a platoon of Delta Company, 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry discovered 14 homemade booby traps while operating in an area west of Cu Chi. Such nuisance

mines are fabricated from the type of rubbish found in any combat junkyard—or rice paddy: soda cans, C-ration cans, mackerel cans, old shell casings, fiber canisters, boxes and extraneous gear of every description which provide Charlie with his raw materials. Firing pins and spring housings recovered from the hundreds of expended smoke grenades left behind by US forces are inserted in explosive-stuffed cans. With the addition of an AK47 round and a short length of thin wire (perhaps a strand from old commo wire abandoned by American troops) the enemy can construct hundreds of simple but deadly weapons.

It is difficult to predict exactly where the enemy will set his next booby trap. However, understanding his methods and psychology will aid in avoiding or detecting the majority of traps. As any GI can attest, Charlie is patient

and willing to wait for a unit to establish a pattern of operations before laying out a series of booby traps. He also expects you to choose the easier route in rough terrain. Between the alternatives of waist high paddy water or a high and dry dike, he will bet on the drier area and plant his booby traps accordingly. Charlie will also rely on American curiosity and desire for possession of souvenirs or trophies. He assumes that you will kick a can—or steel pot—lying in the open and plants his mines with that in mind.

The GI's desire to take home a war trophy is Charlie's main ploy. If you want that old weapon badly enough, you will be willing to wait while it is checked thoroughly for explosives or any possible intelligence value. You may have to go through a little more red tape, but at least you will be around to take it home.

Following the Communist defeats at Fire Support Bases Crook and Washington, the futile attacks on Tay Ninh City and the costly retreats from the Cao Dai Temple and nearby Nui Ba Den, North Vietnamese main force units sought refuge in the border areas north and west of the embattled city. Sorely wounded by Allied fire power in the month-long campaign, the enemy reverted to small scale warfare throughout the 25th Infantry Division area of operations.

In the First Brigade area, small elements of major main force units remained to harass Allied operations and direct the movement of replacements to the Tay Ninh area. Second Brigade troops encountered various Subregion I and II rear service groups with the mission of moving replacements and supplies through the

Citadel region under protection of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese combat units. Farther to the south, Third Brigade units intercepted infiltrating Communist troops moving from the Cambodian border, through the An Ninh Corridor to the Vam Co Dong River. Tropic Lightning units throughout the Division area also concentrated on ferreting out the enemy's caches, denying him the weapons, ammunition, food and medical supplies necessary to support future offensives.

JUNE

While the remnants of the 88th North Vietnamese Regiment were being pursued on the slopes of Nui Ba Den, Golden Dragons of the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry engaged a company of North Vietnamese in an action which typified

the fighting to come in the Summer and Fall. Charlie Company 2/14, operating near the Saigon River with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry, assaulted a suspected base area north of Cu Chi.

Bursting through the enemy's outer defenses, the combined battle force brought down 20 of the enemy in the initial volley. As helicopter gunships, tactical air strikes and artillery pounded the North Vietnamese positions, dismounted infantrymen maneuvered under the cover of the Mech's heavy machine gun fire. Assaulting through the enemy emplacements, Charlie Company accounted for another 24 North Vietnamese dead.

JULY

Routed time and again from their hiding places, Communist troops were often caught in the open by aerial observers who brought airborne fire power to bear on the scattered enemy. In the opening days of July, an Air Force forward air controller operating near a portion of the Cambodian border known as the Parrot's Beak received a heavy volume of anti-aircraft fire from infiltrating Communist troops. Directing air strikes and engaging one emplacement himself, the Issue FAC accounted for 17 enemy dead and nine .51 caliber machine guns destroyed.

Helicopters also hindered North Vietnamese forces attempting to move through the Citadel as Stinger gunships of the 116th Assault Helicopter Company teamed up with Vietnamese and 2d Brigade units to eliminate 59 enemy in air-ground actions during the month of July.

Action continued in the Citadel region as Bravo Company, 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry and a 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry Command-and-Control ship combined forces for an early evening raid on a suspected enemy

Summer—Fall, 1969:



location near the Ho Bo Woods. Reacting to immediate intelligence, the Golden Dragons air assaulted to the suspected location under cover of gunships and artillery called on target by observers in the C&C ship overhead.

Following a brief but fierce contact, the Fire Brigade ground force reconned the area finding 47 North Vietnamese soldiers killed in action and detaining ten. The Dragonmen also captured 17 AK47 rifles, ten RPG launchers and one light machine gun.

A week later, 2d Brigade units again reacted to indications of a large enemy buildup in the Citadel. A Fire Brigade task force comprised of elements of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry; 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry; 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry and 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry moved out on a mission nicknamed "Nutcracker" on the morning of 28 July to attack a reported concentration of North Vietnamese regulars.

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The ensuing battle in the hedgerows near Trang Bang found Tropic Lightning troops engaging well-entrenched elements of a VC/NVA battalion in a day of close combat. Fighting continued until dusk when the North Vietnamese broke contact leaving behind 53 of their ranks dead. Also destroyed in the battle were 24 AK47 rifles and 20 107 millimeter rockets.

The next day, the focus of action shifted to the 3d Brigade area of operations as the Wolfhounds of the 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry assisted Civilian Irregular Defense Group soldiers who had engaged a large force of North Vietnamese infiltrators along the Kinh Bo Bo Canal near the Cambodian border. Maneuvering under the cover of Diamond Head gunships of Bravo



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Company, 25th Aviation Battalion, Charlie and Delta Companies, 2d Wolfhounds eliminated 67 enemy in fierce fighting through the marshes near the Parrot's Beak.

Enemy resupply activities were also hindered throughout the month of July. The 2d Battalion,

The Mountain, The Woods, The River

By CPT Mark J. Verbonich



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12th Infantry discovered several caches in the Citadel accounting for 33 individual weapons, seven crew served weapons and 178 rounds of assorted ammunition captured or destroyed.

AUGUST

Battle activity remained light throughout the early days of August with only small contacts breaking out briefly in all brigade areas. The quiet was shattered, however, on 12 August when Alfa Company, 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry engaged a reinforced company of North Vietnamese on the site of what was to be Patrol Base Rittgers (later renamed Kotrc). Air assaulting to secure the construction site near the Cambodian border, the 2d Wolfhounds came under heavy weapons fire from well-entrenched troops of an NVA battalion. After a day of close fighting supported by artillery, tactical air strikes and Diamond Head gunships, the infan-

trymen counted 34 enemy eliminated

Leaving their night defensive position the following morning, the Wolfhounds uncovered another 23 enemy dead in the thickets surrounding the landing zone, bringing the battle total to 57. That day the Tropic Lightning troopers began constructing Patrol Base Rittgers on the contact site, establishing a permanent installation from which to check Communist infiltration into South Vietnam through the An Ninh Corridor.

At mid-month the action returned to the Tay Ninh area as elements of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry combined with Vietnamese troops of the 2d ARVN Airborne Battalion to eliminate a reinforced platoon of North Vietnamese regulars operating south of Tay Ninh City. The Allied ground force assaulted well-built bunkers with the aid of artillery and F-105



Karlgaard

fighter-bombers which were challenged by .51 caliber machine gun fire as they swept in to drop their ordnance. A final assault on the Communist positions routed the remnants of the enemy force who fled leaving behind 31 of their comrades in the battered bunkers.

The following morning, a 3/22 Infantry C & C ship engaged another North Vietnamese platoon in the same location as the previous day's action stopping 19 of the enemy. Artillery and gunships were directed by the C & C observers to eliminate the majority of the North Vietnamese force.

On the night of 17 August, a company of North Vietnamese assisted by a sapper force pressed the first significant ground attack since the abortive attacks on Fire Support Base Washington in mid-June. Their target was Alfa Company, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry at Fire Support Base St. Barbara north of Tay Ninh City. A previous Communist stand-off attack on the "Old French Fort" earlier in the week indicated the enemy had targeted the base for a concerted ground assault.

That assault came in the early morning hours but found the Manchus alert at their positions, well prepared to thwart the enemy thrust. Advancing on the perimeter under cover of automatic weapons and RPG fire, sappers pushed through the outer wire throwing satchel charges over the high berm that protected the 4/9 Infantry troopers. Accurate fire from the Manchu positions threw the enemy force from the berm line and forced the attackers to withdraw leaving behind 21 dead and several weapons.

Heavy action continued in Tay Ninh Province climaxing with a second large night contact when Bravo Company, 4th Battalion (Mechan-

ized), 23d Infantry was attacked by a company of North Vietnamese. At 2:00 a.m. a trip flare ignited on the perimeter of the Tomahawks' night defensive position at the base of Nui Ba Den. Caught in the sudden light, the North Vietnamese opened fire with machine guns and RPG's but were met with immediate .50 caliber and small arms return fire from the alert Tomahawk unit.

Assisted by light fire teams, Spooky gunships and 105mm howitzer fire provided by the 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery, the mechanized force drove the Communists from the night laager perimeter. A dawn recon of the flatland contact area revealed that 41 North Vietnamese were stopped in the night action.

In the final days of August, activity again shifted to the 2d Brigade area as Golden Dragons of the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry engaged a



reinforced North Vietnamese platoon from a local Viet Cong battalion in the Ho Bo Woods near the Saigon River killing 48. The Tropic Lightningmen were hit while waiting for a helicopter pickup after a day-long operation. A relatively brief late-afternoon fire fight eliminated the enemy platoon, the remnants of which scattered in the brush and bomb craters that litter the Ho Bo jungles.

SEPTEMBER

Located astride a major infiltration route from Cambodia, Patrol Base Rittgers had become in a short time a major stumbling block to Communist forces moving into South Vietnam. After almost a month of attempting to evade Wolfhound and South Vietnamese units at Rittgers, the North Vietnamese launched a sapper attack on the border post hoping to eliminate the base of operations which was seriously hampering their movement across the border.

Shortly after midnight on the night of 4-5 September, a company of North Vietnamese regulars and sappers launched an attack on Alfa Company, 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry at Rittgers. Under cover of mortar and RPG fire, the sapper unit breached the wire at one point but were cut down by small arms fire as they raced over the berm line. Seventeen enemy died in the abortive attempt to overrun the patrol base, five more lost their lives when their retreat was cut off by Wolfhound blocking forces.

Throughout the Division area of operations, enemy troop movements continued to be intercepted. The morning after the attack on Patrol Base Rittgers, action shifted to the First Brigade as Tomahawks of the 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry engaged a company of North Vietnamese moving near the base of Nui Ba Den. The Lightningmen spotted the Communist



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force in an open area near the banana groves at the foot of the Black Virgin killing 30 of the enemy force in a brief fire fight.

The following day, Alfa Company 4/23 encountered another company of North Vietnamese in the same area as the previous Charlie Company contact. Tomahawk fire power combined with tactical air power and artillery to eliminate another 27 of the enemy around Nui Ba Den.

These engagements around Tay Ninh City and Nui Ba Den prefaced what was to be the largest single battle in the enemy's Autumn Campaign. On the morning of 11 September, a combined force of the 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry and troops of the 7th ARVN Airborne Battalion moved out to recon the southeastern base of Nui Ba Den. While pushing through the banana groves at the foot of the Black Virgin, the Allied ground force received mortar, machine gun and RPG fire from an estimated battalion of North Vietnamese troops.

Quickly reacting to the Communist challenge, the mechanized task force assaulted the enemy

positions under cover of airstrikes and gunships. The North Vietnamese broke contact late in the afternoon, scattering through the caves and boulders at the base of the mountain. A dusk recon revealed 61 North Vietnamese had fallen attributed to Allied fire power.

While First Brigade units eliminated the enemy as he moved or massed near Tay Ninh City, Fire Brigade troops were also active in the Citadel checking enemy infiltration and attacking Communist concentrations. At mid-month, the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry eliminated 38 members of a North Vietnamese platoons.

On 15 September, Alfa Company, 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry and Vietnamese troops of the 2d Battalion, 49th ARVN Regiment, 25th ARVN Division were called on to recon an area in which a platoon of North Vietnamese had been engaged with tactical air strikes and Diamond Head gunships of Bravo Company, 25th Aviation Battalion. A ground inspection of the contact area uncovered 38 enemy dead.

The Communists were also hurt logistically during September as Tropic Lightning troops

uncovered small weapons and food caches in contact areas and base camps throughout the Division area of operations. The most significant find occurred in the First Brigade area when the Regulars of Charlie Company, 2d Battalion (Mechanized), 22d Infantry discovered a large medical supply cache while operating with Vietnamese Regional Forces in the Boi Loi Woods. The Triple Deucemen hauled over two tons of assorted medical supplies and food stuffs from a series of bunkers in the war torn jungle, severely hampering enemy resupply activities in the Tay Ninh area.

The Warriors of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry closed out a month of heavy action, stopping 30 North Vietnamese regulars in a fierce day-long fire fight in the southern Boi Loi Woods.

OCTOBER

Two weeks of light action were broken on 13 October when a large force of Communist troops again attempted to overrun Patrol Base Kotrc (formerly Rittgers) near the Cambodian border. Initial probes of the Wolfhound defenses were scattered by accurate artillery fire from the



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howitzers of the 2d Battalion, 77th Artillery.

Four hours later at 2:00 a.m. the North Vietnamese launched another ground attack under cover of heavy RPG and 122mm rocket fire. Alert troops of Delta Company, 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry and 1st Battalion, 49th ARVN Regiment repelled the enemy aggressors before they could reach the perimeter defenses. A dawn reconnaissance of the area uncovered seven enemy dead and several weapons left behind by the Communist force.

On 21 October, Task Force Jones comprised of elements of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry; 2d Battalion, 34th Armor; 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry and two Vietnamese Regional Force companies embarked on a 72-

hour mission designed to ferret Communist soldiers from the caves of Nui Ba Den. Moving down the mountainside, the Allied task force eliminated 34 enemy in close fighting over some of the most difficult terrain in the Division area of operations.

The following day, elements of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry; 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry and 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry supported by gunships of the 116th Assault Helicopter Company and 25th Aviation Battalion trapped a large Vietnamese force of a VC/NVA regiment in a cul-de-sac along the Saigon River north of the Ho Bo Woods stopping 47. The infantry-armor task force pushed through well-built fighting positions engaging an enemy at times

only meters away as he dodged through the thick brush and bomb craters that are the Ho Bo Woods.

Stinger and Diamond Head gunships provided aerial fire power, eliminating small groups of North Vietnamese as they broke into open areas under pressure from Tropic Lightning ground units. Moving out of its night defensive position the next morning, the 2d Brigade force met no further resistance and found 47 of the enemy had been eliminated.

The month of October closed with a series of small contacts throughout the Division area of operations, setting the tone of action for the early days of the enemy's Winter-Spring Campaign in November. Honed to a fine edge by four months of successful pursuit and interdiction during the enemy's Autumn Campaign, Tropic Lightning troops remained as ever: Ready to strike... anywhere, anytime.

Williams



Project Helping Hand

By SP4 Bert Allen



Tropic Lightning soldiers have taken pride in a sense of civic responsibility since World War II. Several units of the 25th Infantry Division have been recognized for projects which have contributed to a better life for residents of other nations in which the division has served. Tropic Lightning's service in Vietnam is no exception.

With the help of 25th Division chaplains and the entire 725th Maintenance Battalion, eleven courageous Roman Catholic Sisters are caring for 130 orphaned children. The Sisters are "parents" for the children at the Vien Rose Orphanage in Hoc Mon village midway between Cu Chi and Saigon.

At the end of a quiet village street stands the complex of orphanage buildings. A pale yellow wall surrounds the orphanage giving the Sisters the necessary bounds in which to give the boisterous youths proper guidance and schooling. A large Roman Catholic Church at the orphanage serves as both the religious and educational center for the children. The Nuns teach all their classes at the orphanage.

Children of all ages are cared for by the Sisters at Hoc Mon. The youngest may be an infant, merely days old. In this case they are cared for in a well equipped nursery similar to those in a small Stateside hospital. The older children are quartered in large dormitory-like buildings which have individual areas for playing and studying.

Primarily, the orphanage is self-sustaining. The Nuns purchase piglets which are raised on scraps from the orphanage's dining hall. When fully grown, the hogs are taken to Saigon where they are sold and more piglets are bought; and the cycle begins again. There is little profit in the enterprise but it serves a vital purpose. From

the profits come the funds which are used to purchase necessary food and clothing for the children.

Providing the essential but scarce or expensive items is the task of the men of the 725th Maintenance Battalion who have adopted the entire orphanage. Captain Frank Mayer of Waverly, N. Y., Civic Affairs Officer for the 725th, describes the battalion's response to the project as "fantastic".

He went on to say, "Some men have written home requesting clothing and gifts for the children. During the Christmas season we had a 3/4-ton truck making daily trips to Hoc Mon loaded with boxes of gifts for the children and the Nuns.

"The battalion mail clerk, Specialist Four Richard C. Horton of Strang, Neb., wrote home just prior to Christmas about the orpha-



Loper

Silberblatt

nage and what the children were lacking. His description was picked up by a syndicated columnist and as a result we have received a large number of gifts from the Midwestern states."

Mayer makes trips to the orphanage every week to determine the needs of the Sisters and the children. It is not unusual for him to be accompanied by a voluntary work crew ready to construct, paint or repair buildings and fixtures. These voluntary crews have painted several of the buildings and constructed outdoor sanitation fixtures as well as swing sets and gym equipment for the children—and often the GIs—to play on.

On his return to Cu Chi, Mayer may bring with him a child or one of the Sisters who is ill. He takes them to medical facilities at the 25th Medical Battalion or the 12th Evacuation Hospital where they can get the best possible treat-

ment. If the case is severe, the patients are flown to Saigon for further treatment.

Each week a MEDCAP team composed of men from 725th Maintenance Battalion, 25th Medical Battalion and Division Support Command goes to Hoc Mon to care for the orphans. In addition, villagers may also receive treatment from the team. Besides the medical teams there are PSYOP teams of both American and Vietnamese soldiers willing to discuss problems and assist the people in creating a better life for the future.



Loper

The children have been brought to Cu Chi Base Camp several times for parties and events. Each time the Tropic Lightning soldiers have enjoyed entertaining the orphans as much as the children have enjoyed being entertained.

Commenting on the total effort, Mayer said, "The soldiers receive as much reward as the children do from our participation in the support of the orphanage. The troops are always anxious to go to the orphanage to see the kids and what needs to be done. The soldiers have done much for the children and much more will be done. The kids are the focal point of the troops' life here in Vietnam."

Allen



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