

Choppers Greeted 'Warmly' In Hot Tien Phuoc Fighting

LZ BALDY—"Riot 12 receiving fire from three or four positions!" crackled the radio in the command post. "One man hit! We're coming in."

Hey, Cuz, The Name's The Same

LZ BAYONET—An American soldier mentioned an interesting coincidence in a letter to his father, which produced unexpected results.

SP4 Ralph G. Cooksey Jr. (St. Petersburg, Fla.), B Co., 1st Bn., 6th Inf. noted in a letter home that one of the Assistant Division Commanders had the same last name as their family.

Unknown to the 198th Bde. soldier, his father began investigating the family tree, which revealed SP4 Cooksey and BG Howard W. Cooksey were in fact second cousins.

Ralph's father immediately wrote to BG Cooksey. The general answered the elder Cooksey's letter, adding that he would arrange a meeting with Ralph Jr.

The two newly-found cousins met and talked at the battalion's forward fire base Fat City, north of Chu Lai.

SP4 Cooksey later asked how it felt having a general as a cousin replied, "I really don't feel any different than before," and pointed out that "our conversation was centered around other members of the family."

Each has gone his own way again. BG Cooksey has moved to Long Binh to be Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations at Hqs. USARV, and SP4 Cooksey remains with his company at LZ Bayonet near Chu Lai. (198th IO)

Luck O' Irish Again Prevails For O' Sullivan: Shamrock, DFC

CHU LAI—Weaving his helicopter through dense fog and heavy fire, a Brooklyn pilot demonstrated the luck of the Irish once again.

WO1 John O'Sullivan was serving as pilot of the command and control helicopter of the 4th Bn., 21st Inf., 11th Inf. Bde. when the unit came under attack.

As the battle progressed, one soldier was felled by an extreme case of battle fatigue, and a dustoff was called.

Because of the inclement weather and hostile fire the three attempts to evacuate the casualty by chopper were unsuccessful. Disregarding all danger, O'Sullivan volunteered to attempt the evacuation.

With a thorough knowledge of the area and skillful maneuvering of his craft he dropped onto a hastily prepared landing zone and picked up the man.

For his action O'Sullivan, assigned to the 174th Avn. Co., 14th CAB, received the Distinguished Flying Cross. (AMERICAL IO)

The distressed helicopter was the command and control ship of the 2nd Bn., 1st Inf. whose commander, LTC Sinclair L. Melner (Reno, Nev.) and CSM Harold L. Sturdivant (Sacramento, Calif.) had been flying into a hot landing zone with ammo resupplies for surrounded A and C Cos.

Since dawn, the 196th Inf. Bde. units had been fighting elements of the 3rd NVA Div. in mountains eight miles southwest of Tam Ky near Tien Phuoc village.

Enemy troops hid in well-camouflaged bunkers, and the situation was becoming critical when LTC Melner made the first resupply attempt in his "Charlie-Charlie."

Vulnerable

As the LZ's rough ring of trees and rubble rushed up to meet the chopper, automatic weapons fire popped from several directions.

Chaplain (MAJ) Donald L. Bartley (Rockbridge Baths, Va.), "along for the ride," found himself a target: "I've never felt so vulnerable and exposed in my life."

The chopper crew chief, acting as door gunner, took a round in the leg, and the ship turned back to secure medical aid for him.

The position of the embattled companies worsened, and the colonel soon was back in the air for a second try.

Aground

Again the "Charlie-Charlie" encountered intense automatic weapons fire but took no hits as it settled into the LZ to deliver ammo to the surrounded companies.

While his ship removed three seriously-wounded men and made a second trip with four more wounded, LTC Melner and CSM Sturdivant remained on the ground to coordinate with company commanders.

Five resupply and MEDEVAC choppers were hit over the battle area that day, and one crashed. Its crew escaped moments before a flaming explosion.

Flying into blazing LZs on resupply and MEDEVAC missions isn't new to LTC Melner. He received a Silver Star for similar action last November. (196th IO)



Anyone Home?

A soldier from the 11th Inf. Bde.'s C Co., 4-21 cautiously checks out "Charlie's" lair. He was taking part in an operation in the Song Ve Valley, 12 miles west of Duc Pho. (Photo by SP4 Rodney Preuss, 11th Inf. Bde.)

Village Pagoda Yields Cache

Professionals Find Enemy Weapons

SP4 Richard Ellashek (Youngstown, Ohio) and SP4 Kenneth Bates (Louisville) searched the village pagoda and found 13 Russian and Chinese 82mm mortar rounds behind the altar.

"We weren't really expecting to find anything, but we discovered a double wall behind the altar and became suspicious," said Ellashek.

"After removing the bricks, we found a large compartment lined with plastic. Someone used a lot of ingenuity to build the secret compartment."

Mortar rounds weren't all D Co. found during the village search which began when PFC Dewey D. Davide (Southgate, Calif.) noticed two VC sneaking toward his platoon near the village.

He killed one VC while the rest of his company started a thorough village search.

An ammo cache there contained the mortars; charges and fuses, many still packed in shipping containers; 300

.30-cal rounds; an American grenade; an M-72 LAW rocket; and assorted ammo.

After searching the village, the company's tunnel rats impregnated tunnel walls with CS.

"The company has taken belated revenge," said CPT John T. Goorley (West Monroe, La.), D Co. commander. "We've destroyed VC supplies and denied them a rest area. (198th IO)

Fastest Gun In West Ends Cannoneers' Digging Woes

By SP5 A.C. BARNETT

LZ CENTER—The men of B Btry., 3rd Bn., 82nd Arty. were hard at work digging up the "pad" that supports their 105mm howitzer.

It was hot and dusty, the ground hard and the heavy timbers and ammunition boxes were awkward to free from the clay-like soil. But these men were happy—in fact they were overjoyed; this was the last time they would ever have to dig up a pad.

New Guns

The isolated fire base, 35 miles northwest of Chu Lai was a maze of industry as the men prepared for three new howitzers to arrive from Hqs. Btry.

The latest model howitzer was designed to adapt the old WW II weapons to the unusual demands of this insurgency type conflict.

Modifications on the new M-102 form an impressive list, but one change in par-

ticular won the immediate approval of every cannoneer that ever swung a pickaxe.

No longer does the gun require a pad. Each new "tube" has its own pad—a large metal platform that easily supports the weapon and requires only a series of stakes to secure it to the ground.

No Sweat

Sharing the enthusiasm of his men, the CO of B Btry., CPT Richard J. Madsen (Battle Creek, Iowa), was quick to explain the advantages of the new howitzer. "Ground preparation now takes minutes instead of hours and saves a lot of sweat over here."

Within five minutes of its arrival the M-102 was ready to deliver its thirty-pound projectiles at the rate of three rounds per minute, making it the undisputed "fastest gun in the west." (DIVARTY IO)