

# RICE



## AND REFUGEES

Story by SP5 TOM BOZZUTO

One of the most unkind by-products of war is the dislocated civilian—the man, woman, or child who must seek refuge in an unfamiliar land.

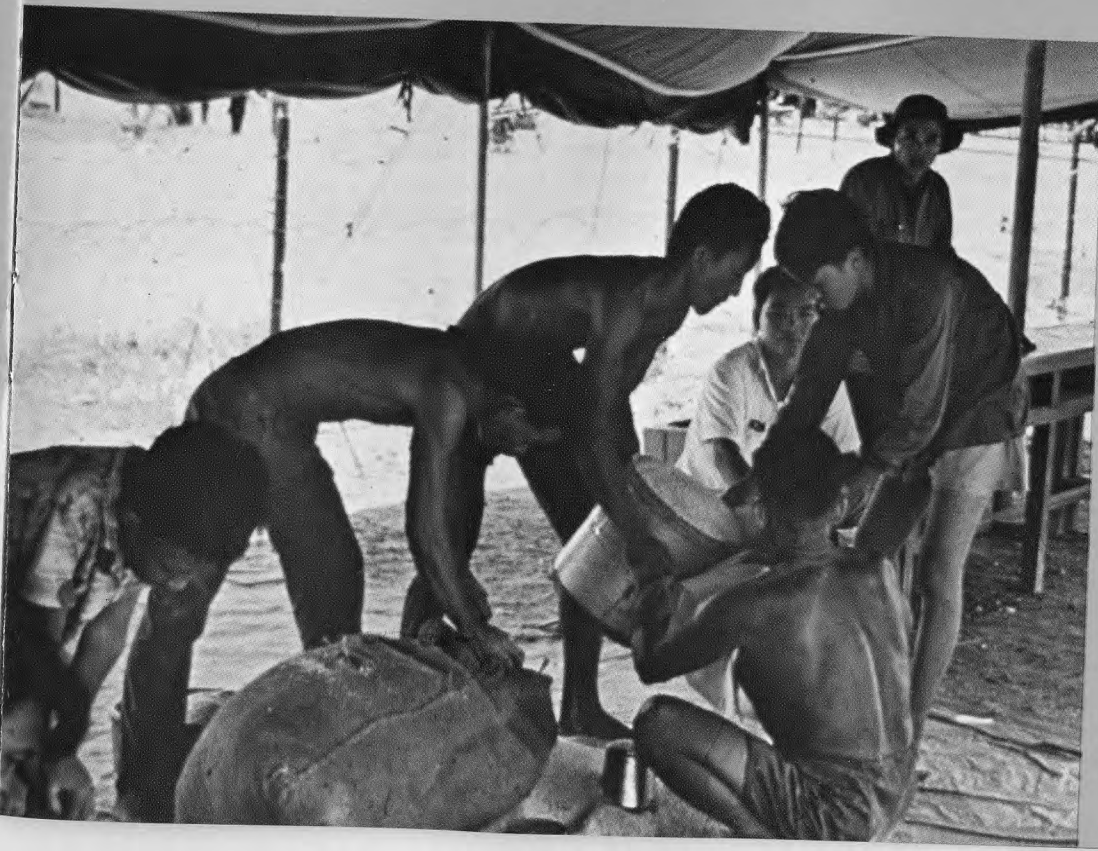
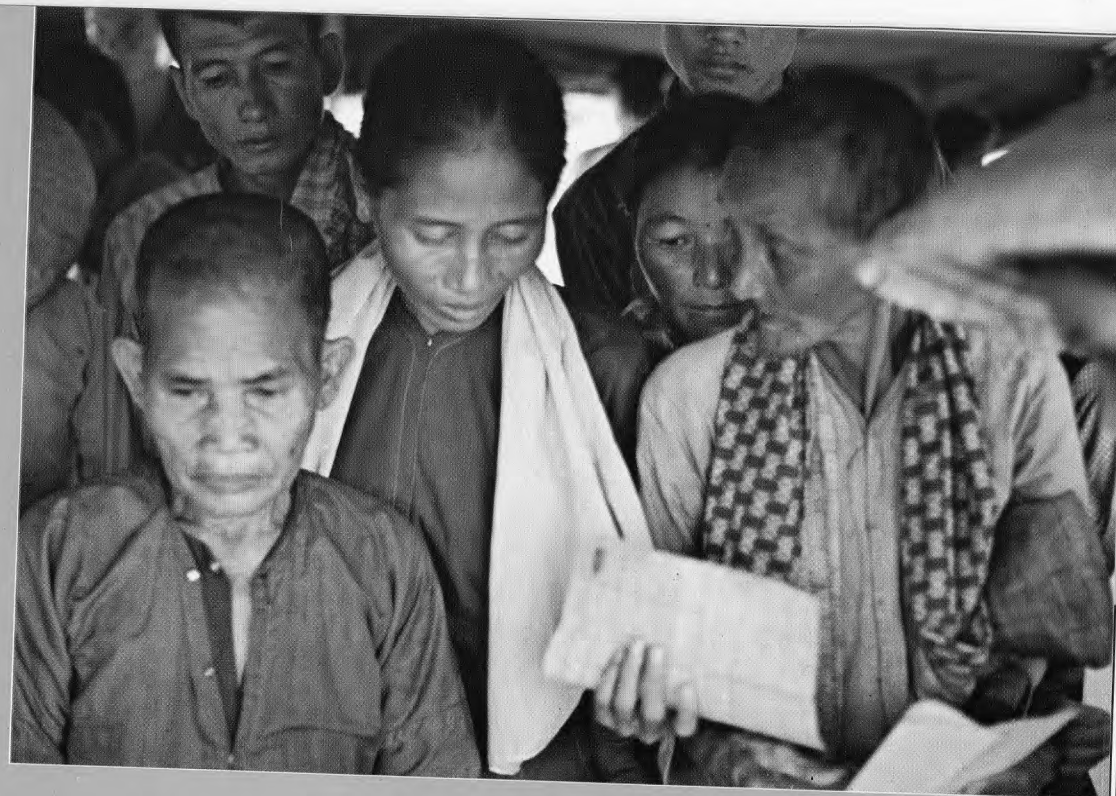
In Cambodia, after the fall of Prince Norodom Sihanouk and with the increased communist activity, a large number of civilians—in particular, ethnic Vietnamese who had earlier taken refuge in Cambodia to avoid the fighting in their home land—had their normally peaceful lives disrupted. And when, at the beginning of May, American and Vietnamese troops made their move into Cambodia to route out the communist forces living in the border sanctuaries, these civilians raced across the border seeking the security offered by the Government of the Republic of Vietnam.

The immediate problem for the GVN and for their American advisors was providing the basic necessities required by the refugees.

According to Major Jasper E. Hunter, of Jonesboro, Ark., the 25th Division's Deputy to the Assistant Chief of Staff for Civil Affairs, "The GVN officials were adequately prepared to handle most problems resulting from Cambodian operations. Evidently, they had contingency plans covering refugee collection and resettlement and had efficiently put these into operation.

"Close cooperation was required," continued Hunter, "between divisional units, II Field Force Civil Affairs Teams and the Government of Vietnam, with the GVN calling the shots."

If a family wished to seek refuge in Vietnam, said Major David King, of Gary, Ind., Tropic Lightning Liaison Officer for Civil Affairs, they would more than likely gravitate towards a U.S. line company or one of the larger villages in the area. From there, they would be sent to one of the main refugee collection points maintained near the border by GVN officials. They would then be transported to the Main Refugee Control Center at Phuoc Dien, in Tay Ninh



Province, where they would be "processed."

Processing included first off, the provision of first aid—usually by 25th Division medical teams—if necessary. The family would next be interrogated by the police, fingerprinted, given identification cards, food, clothing and any other essentials they needed.

At this time, the family head would be asked where he desired to relocate. In many cases this was a relatively easy decision, for a large number of the refugees had relatives or at least friends already living in Vietnam.

The police at Phuoc Dien would then call the officials of the selected province and provision would be made for that family to be transported to their new home.

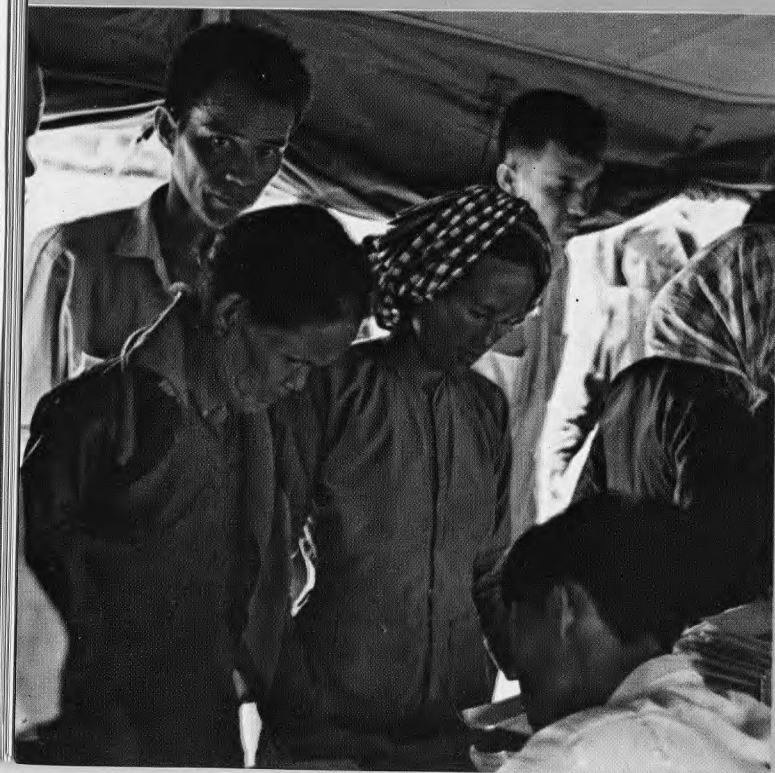
As simple as this entire relocation process may sound, it must be remembered that the GVN was dealing with not one refugee family or even one thousand. In fact, in the two months of the Cambodian campaign, more than 21,540 refugees were received in the 25th Division's area of operations alone.

When asked why there were so many refugees, First Lieutenant Bob Rosensweet, of New York City, leader of a II Field Force pacification team working with the 25th's 2d Brigade, replied, "We're not encouraging Cambodian refugees; we're not even encouraging Vietnamese refugees..."

"There's been friction," continued Rosensweet, "started by rumors and stepped up by newspaper headlines, of massacres by the Cambodians of the Vietnamese and then there's been counter-rumors and stories of reprisals."

Major Hunter added that most of the refugees left Cambodia "because they were afraid of the war and especially of VC reprisals. Many of the refugees apparently had worked on some of the sophisticated rubber plantations in the border area until the communists forced the French managers to leave—thus virtually shutting down production. And many of these workers also seemed to fear that the Americans and Vietnamese would harm them when they began searching for the communists.





Obviously, with so many people becoming dependent upon it all at once, the task of handling and, more particularly, feeding them was a tremendous one for the still-young government.

It was at this point that the communists ironically provided the GVN the assistance they needed. The rice, which the NVA and VC over the years had painstakingly accumulated and had left meticulously camouflaged, proved to be invaluable in feeding the new residents of Vietnam. In the months of May and June, 25th Division soldiers uncovered 1,537 tons of rice, of which 537 tons were used to feed refugees.

The question naturally arises as to why only one-third of the rice was finally given to the refugees. Major Hunter pointed out that, "because of tactical requirements and the large amount of transportation that would have been required to handle such a large amount of rice, it became tactically unfeasible to evacuate it."

One should keep in mind that the maneuver battalions were constantly on the move and that they were working under two very definite time limitations, one imposed by nature and the other imposed by politics. If these units had made attempts to evacuate all the rice they found, it would have been impossible for them to search as large an area as they did in the two months of the Cambodian operation.

Therefore, in such cases, it was necessary to destroy the caches. Tropic Lightning units, including those of the 3d Brigade, 9th Infantry, destroyed a total of 460 tons of rice. Another 130 tons were

lost in transportation through spillage. And 90 tons were ruined by the weather.

When the line units did take the time to remove the rice, they found themselves involved in the time-consuming job of loading numerous bulky 220 pound bags onto armored personnel carriers, tanks, 548s (a six-ton vehicle on tracks) and just about anything else that rolled.

From the cache sites, the rice would be taken to the forward-most bases where it would be reloaded on convoys from Division Support Command (DISCOM) and hauled to one of the two Forward Rice Control Points (FRCPs) at Katum or Thien Ngon.

At the FRCPs, men of II Field Force, 2d Civil Affairs Company (6th Civil Affairs Battalion) assumed accountability for the rice. From here, the rice was hauled on DISCOM two and one-half ton and flat bed trucks on a "back-haul" basis. As soon as the drivers dropped off the supplies they had carried from Tay Ninh to Katum and Thien Ngon, which were also the forward supply points for the maneuver battalions—they refilled their vehicles with rice for the return trip.

The rice from both points was brought to the Main Rice Control Point (MRCP) in Tay Ninh West. At the MRCP, the Vietnamese Social Welfare Service for the province, in coordination with the II Field Force Civil Affairs personnel attached to the province advisory teams, received the rice and distributed it to the refugee centers.

Of the rice received at Tay Ninh West, 280 tons were sent to



refugee centers in IV Corps. Another 166.25 tons were distributed to the refugee centers in Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia and Long An Provinces. The remaining 90-plus tons were distributed eventually to centers throughout the II Field Force area of operations.

According to Major King, "The Vietnamese decided who would receive the rice and they provided the transportation for the distribution of the rice. And," he continued, "they did an outstanding job."

The most amazing thing about the entire refugee and rice handling operation is that, despite the uniqueness of the situation, it was done with such efficiency and coordination.

Very few of the refugees were forced to spend more than five days at the centers. During this time, they were fingerprinted, given identification cards, fed and housed, and provided with a location for a new home and a new future.

In some cases, however, the refugees spent much more than a

week at the camp. Some were there several weeks; others were still there as late as August. According to Major Hunter, those who left first were those with the most required skills—mechanics, carpenters and other skilled workmen—or those who had relatives and friends already in Vietnam. Those left behind were those least able to fend for themselves. The eventual resettling and training of these refugees is a major social, economic and political problem still facing the Government of Vietnam.







# REGIONAL/POPULAR FORCE ACADEMY

Story by SP/4 RICH DOMBROWICKI

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Recently, at a hamlet three miles northwest of Cu Chi, an operation was conducted by the Regional Forces of that area which rid it of a Viet Cong terrorist force. The success of the operation by the Vietnamese government unit was in part attributed to a new training program now being conducted at the Tropic Lightning Academy (TLA) in Cu Chi.

"The program is designed to make instructors of selected members of the Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF) of the hamlets and villages near Cu Chi, Duc Hoa and Trang Bang," said Captain Paul A. Manos, TLA operations officer. "These personnel then return to their respective units and pass on the information."

The program represents another step towards the eventual goal of

the complete Vietnamization of the war which is the key to the future defense of South Vietnam.

The RF/PF school consists of four days of classes taught by six Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) non-commissioned officers. Class size varies from 35 to 40 men and a new cycle begins each week.

The program originated from discussions between 25th Infantry Division commander, Major General Edward Bautz and the Hau Nghia Province chief. The province and district chiefs select their best men and send them to the school.

Captain Donald Parnell, TLA deputy commandant, pointed out that, "This is mostly a Vietnamese venture. We (TLA) prepared

it and host it, but only supervise. The ARVNs are responsible for the most important part—seeing that the instruction is correctly given and properly received."

"Our instructors are all top-quality professionals," Manos explained. "They are dedicated men and are quite enthusiastic about the program. They realize it's an important step for the future."

Chief instructor is ARVN Staff Sergeant Nguyen Quang Loc. He speaks English very well and is, therefore, a very valuable asset to the Academy. "He's good, a sincere and conscientious person," Manos said. "He knows his stuff and handles everything very well. We're lucky to have him."

Instruction is given in various subjects. Topics include orienta-



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tion, combat tactics and strategy, map reading, airmobile and medevac operations, first-aid, interrogation procedures, enemy tactics and more.

"We need such training," Loc said. "The men have seen much war, it is true. But here they learn why the VC operate the way they do. We teach them the importance of knowing what to expect from the enemy and how to counteract his tactics."

Another key instructor is a former VC sapper now a Kit Carson Scout. Le Van Song, 28-years old and an 11-year combat veteran, handles an integral part of the instruction—mines, boobytraps and enemy tactics. "He speaks from experience gained from service on both sides, which makes him an authority on this particular style of warfare," Parnell remarked. The study of enemy mines and boobytraps is one of the most vital aspects of the training. Song shows the class the arsenal of VC explosives, explains how each works, where the enemy tends to use them and how to disarm them."

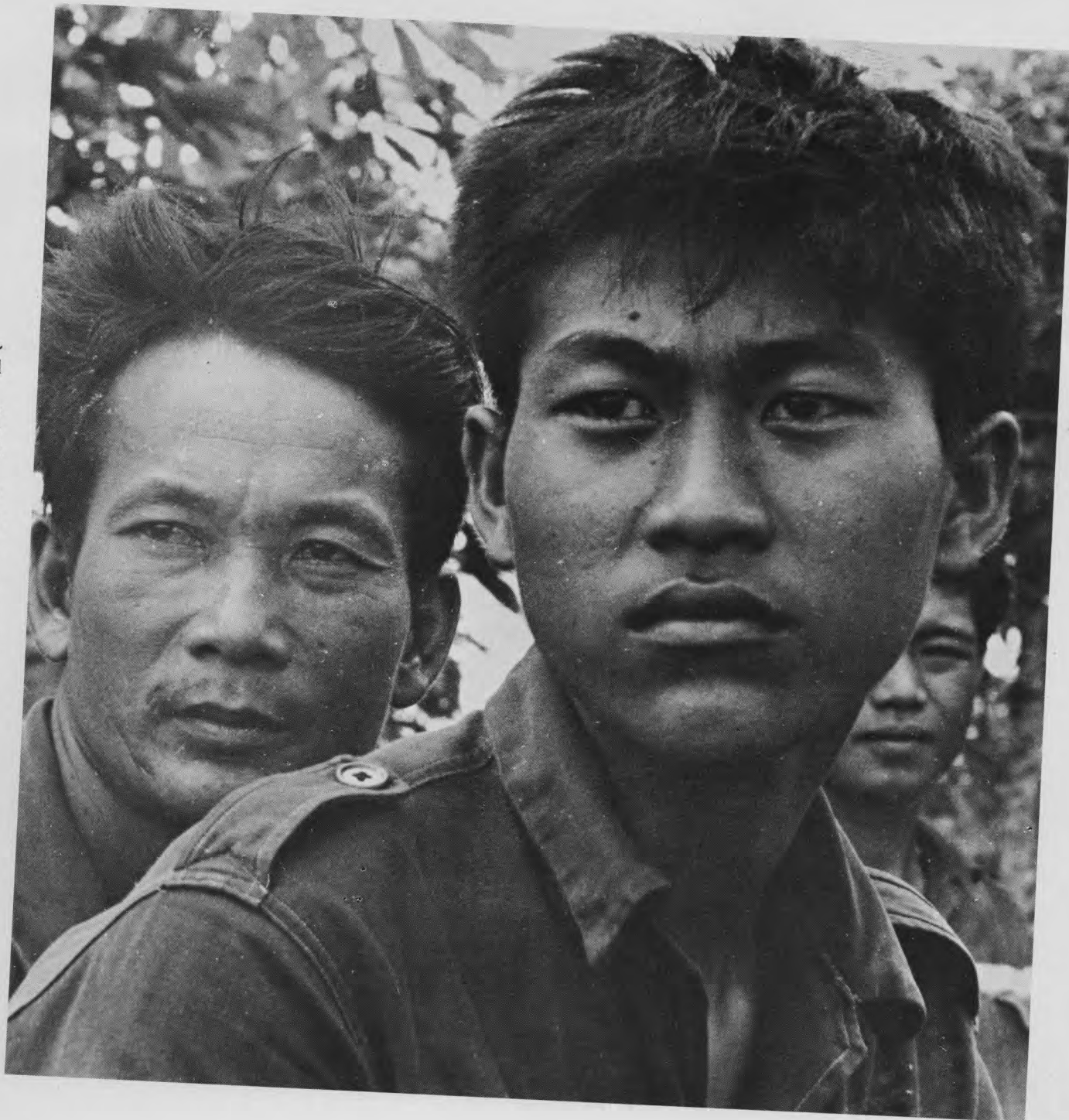
Song also gives a demonstration on sapper techniques. "It is remarkable to see how fast and easily he crawls through the barbed wire without a sound," Loc added. This shows the men that they are up against a smart and crafty enemy so that they must learn their lessons well."

"We hope to instruct about a thousand men," Parnell said. "It's still too early to tell how effective the program will be, but we have high hopes. The students are attentive and most are grasping what is being taught."

Feedback on the progress of the training will come from the province and district officials who send the men to the school. They will observe how well the newly-briefed instructors carry out the program.

After each four-day session ends, the RF/PF soldiers return to their units with a set of lesson plans prepared by the TLA staff and written in Vietnamese. Using these plans as a guide, the men impart their new knowledge to their fellow soldiers.

"It gives them confidence to carry on the Vietnamization program," Parnell said. "They feel that they project the program and that's important."







# CHINA BEACH

# IN-COUNTRY R&R



To a soldier in Vietnam, the best place to be is someplace else. Someplace else like Sydney, Bangkok or Hong Kong for R&R. Someplace else like home for good.

Now there is someplace else in Vietnam; a place with beaches instead of bunkers, night life instead of night patrols and steaks on barbeques instead of Cs in cans.

Someplace else is the China Beach in-country R&R center, a bit of world tucked into a cove near Da Nang. At China Beach,

a soldier can shuck the war for three days to surf, swim, sail and sleep.

Nobody hassles anybody at China Beach. Nobody wears their rank on their swimming trunks or carries it into the weight room.

The only problems a soldier will encounter are determining how much sun to soak up, how much food to take in and how much beer to wash down.

One soldier from the 25th Division summed it all up. "China

Beach is a place where you can unwind and get away from the everyday hassle," he said. "The beach is fantastic. It reminds me of Diamond Head in Hawaii.

"The people here go out of their way to make you feel at ease. They treat you as if you were a human being. Like a civilian. The meals are great. You get your choice of three entrees at lunch and dinner. And you don't have to go through messhall, stand-in-line stuff. You're waited on by Vietnamese girls."







China Beach was a local R&R site operated by the Navy before becoming the in-country center for all of Vietnam. Danny Barrett, who runs the reception operation, explained the philosophy of the 36 permanent party who run the show.

"We want people who come here to feel that they have nothing to do here that concerns any of the military services. They're here to forget where they've just come from. So, we try to maintain an entirely civilian atmosphere."

A civilian atmosphere means civilian clothes. The only soldiers in uniform are the 46 men who pull security around the center.

At China Beach, every building is now or will soon be air-conditioned. Maids change bed linen every morning. And the R&R site is one of the few places in this land where breakfast isn't served before the sun comes up. Soldiers can get their morning meal as late as 9:30.

And their first drink a early as 9. The bar opens when the sun is low in the sky and stays open long after it has dropped over the horizon. Sometime in between, there's a happy hour when beer flows free.

The sun shines strong this time of year at China Beach. The beach is the prime attraction during the day. The grainy white sand stretches along a half mile of shoreline.

According to Ed St. Ange, who runs the boathouse, the water temperature remains 25 to 30 degrees below the air temperature. "Except at night," he said. "Then the water feels warm compared to the air. But you're not supposed to go swimming at night so it doesn't make much difference."

St. Ange keeps 12 sailboats on the cooler by day, warmer by night water. There are four Boston Whalers, four Aerocraft and four Sunfish. "We also have a ski-boat," he said. "It usually goes out in the morning before the wind chops up the water."

Soldiers who get bored with swimming and sunning all day long will find many other ways to spend their time at China Beach. There's an indoor basketball court, a weight room, an 18-hole miniature golf course, tennis courts and a tape-music room. Footballs, basketballs, volleyballs and softballs can be checked out for the throwing, shooting, spiking and slugging.

Then there's always the bar.

When the sun dies at China Beach, the clubs come alive. There's a floor show every night and, following that, two or three first-run movies. During his three days at the R&R center, a soldier won't see the same live group or celluloid story twice.

The 25th Division has 145 allocations to China Beach every month. Specialist Four Sam Bogus of Cleveland, Ohio, is the man at Cu Chi who decides which men from which units will go to China Beach when. . .

"When our allocations come in, we give a few to officers and 10 or so to the re-enlistment people," Bogus said. "The remaining 130 slots are divided among division units based on their relative strengths."

"Infantry line units get twice the allocations as do support and rear units."

Bogus advises soldiers who want to go to the in-country R&R center to contact their S-1 clerk. The clerk will initiate paperwork which must be in Bogus' hands at least 24 hours prior to the beginning of the R&R.

If and when the paperwork is approved, men going to China Beach will have to spend the inevitable day or two hitching rides, sitting through orientation sessions and meeting take-off times before they can bare their backs to the sun.

It's the individual's responsibility to get from his unit to Cu Chi. And he must be at the division base camp no later than 8:30 on the morning of his departure. At 11:30 a.m., he'll be trucked to Cu Chi's 8th Aerial Port. From there, he'll be flown to Ton Son Nhut Airbase.

Flight 848 from Ton Son Nhut to Da Nang takes off at 4 p.m. Two hours later, the bird will land and a bus from China Beach will take R&R soldiers the last leg.

Travel time does not count against leave time. "Every man who goes to the in-country R&R center is guaranteed three full days at China Beach," Bogus said. "Really, from the time the man leaves his unit until he gets back, he'll probably have been away from five to seven days."

In between the coming and going, soldiers get their glorious days of beach, bed and bar at a place that's one of the nicest in Vietnam merely because it doesn't feel, look or seem like Vietnam.

China Beach. Someplace else.



