

VUNG TAU EXTRACTION

By Jim REGAN

Long ago, in the Vacation Land of Southeast Asia... a quiet night around the TOC. Me and the CO were hanging around, listening for any "calls" from the bush. Only one team deployed and it was in a quiet AO. The RTO answers the land line and says someone from Vung Tau is on the line. I take the call and the guy on the other end is the Desk Sgt. in the R & R Center at Vung Tau, RVN. Got one of your Rangers here, he says. If you get here before 0600 hrs, with your CO it won't end up on the blotter report. Thanks, we will see what we can do.

The CO, Cpt. Griffiths calls over to the 2/20th ARA, Blue Max, and gets the Ops Officer to lay on a slick. I call back to Vung Tau and contact my buddy, a 1SG at Big Daddy Aviation and lay on ground transportation. Bring a case of Bud, say he. No sweat. Otto!!! Me and the CO get to the pad and the slick is cranking.

Only a major in the left seat and the Crew Chief in back with me. Cpt. G is in the right seat "playing" with all the stuff the pilots play with to fly those birds. The Crew Chief goes funny faced and asks me who in the world is that guy up there. I tell him he is one of those Rangers and wants to fly helicopters! Thought the Crew Chief would lose it. Once we're airborne the Major takes a nap and we head for Vung Tau.

Out from VT I call on the FM and get my buddy at the pad. He has a jeep and driver, we hand over the Bud, climb in and take off for the hoosegal. We arrive and approach the Desk Sgt. We're here for that Ranger you have locked up. The CO shows his ID and signs for the Ranger. Back we go to what looks like a modified Conex container. There sits this forlorn Ranger. When he sees us he wants to die. Don't say a word, says I, get your stuff and let's go. My buddy takes us back to the pad, laughing all the way. You see, he and I extracted some Troopers from jail in Sumpter, SC back in the early '60s the slick is refueled and cranking. Off we go, heading back to PV, as the sun slowly climbs in the East.

Back safe and sound at PV we thank the major and the Crew Chief and head to the company area. No, the Ranger didn't get an Article 15 or anything like that. He did, however, become proficient with burning that stuff back by the latrine for several days!!! By the by, like all the other Rangers in the unit, he was one hard chargin' guy who knew his job and did it well. No Ranger left behind!!!

A little about that Major, I'll call him Major "C". I later met up with him 'bout '82, at Babenhausen, FRG. He was a Col. and turning over the Artillery BDE. We hugged and all the folks thought we were nuts. Then he starts telling all who would listen about his days "Shooting" for the Rangers and extracting them from Vung Tau. My Corps CSM thought we were all "oppy doop". Years later, around '90, a fellow sticks his head into my office at Fortress Belvoir HQ.. "Can I get a set of quarters on this post, Sergeant Major?" he asks. He is now a three star general. Wow! He comes in and we start our act again, hugging, laughing, and my boss, a one star, comes in and doesn't know what to think. We get the quarters squared away and I go down after he moved in. I give a class to his Enlisted Aide. In comes the General and I tell him I'm checking to make sure he keeps his AO squared away. The Sergeant looks terrified but then me and the General laugh and hug again. What friends we make in the military! Lots of similar talks out there where COs and NCOs took care of their troops. Jim RLTW