



*Lacquerware*

# THE HURRICANE

JULY 1969

NUMBER TWENTY-ONE

A PUBLICATION OF II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM



*The Old Guard  
of the Army*

# Third Infantry

**G**entlemen, take off your hats to *The Old Guard of the Army*." With these words, General Winfield Scott named the Army's oldest active regiment, the Third Infantry "Old Guard." It was September 1847, and the regiment was leading General Scott's victorious Army into Mexico City ending the Mexican War.

Today, those and many other triumphs are reflected in a colorful crest that finds itself in Vietnam with the "Red Catchers" of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade.

Symbolized at the top of the crest is the black tricorn hat and buff strap of the post-Revolutionary War Army. On June 3, 1784, "The Old Guard" was organized as the First American Regiment. Following the Indian Campaigns of 1794, and the War of 1812, "The Old Guard" was consolidated with several other regiments to form the Third Infantry.

One of the most glorious periods for the regiment began in 1846 with the Mexican War. It is commemorated by the hill, battlement and field in the colors of Mexico, recalling the victories at Cerro Gordo Heights, Monterey Fort, and Chapultepec.

Completing the crest is its motto, *Noli Me Tangere*, Do Not Touch Me!

The Third Infantry has participated in the Indian Campaigns, the Spanish-American War, Philippine Insurrection, and in World War II as part of the 106th Infantry Division. Following the War, "The Old Guard" was deactivated in Germany, but on April 6, 1948, it was reactivated in the nation's capital and organized as a two battalion regiment.

In keeping with its esteemed tradition and glory, "The Old Guard" was given the assignment of guarding the heart of the land, Washington, D.C. Simultaneously, the 1st Battalion, stationed at Fort Meyer, Virginia, became the Army's official ceremonial unit which today guards the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and performs similar ceremonial missions. The 2d Battalion was stationed at Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C., until November, 1966, when it was assigned to the 199th Light Infantry Brigade, Vietnam.

In the 32 months of combat it has added the Valorous Unit Award and three Vietnamese streamers to the 39 well-earned battle streamers on "The Old Guard's" colors. If General Scott were here today, he would be proud to repeat, "Gentlemen, take off your hats to The Old Guard of the Army."

THE HURRICANE  
JULY 1969 NO 21  
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Lacquerware has been a Vietnamese tradition for over five centuries (cover photo by SP4 Steve Wood), but representative works from South Vietnam in international competition come from a factory in Phu Cuong less than 30 years old. For an insight into this delicate art see page five.

Surrounding Saigon is the nation's industrial hub and most populous province—Gia Dinh. But at least one old citizen (rear cover also by Wood) doesn't seem concerned with the municipal hustle. The critical province which shares many common headaches with other world population centers, is reviewed on page 24.

What is contained in an enemy support command? Check page 32 and you'll find it includes everything from power tools to American food stuffs and trucks.

The New Zealand "Kiwi," lauded from Gallipoli to Singapore, today roams Phuoc Tuy Province as part of the 1st Australian Task Force. (page ten).

The Editor

The Hurricane is an authorized monthly publication of II Field Force Vietnam. It is published by the 16th Public Information Detachment and the Information Office, II FFORCEV, APO San Francisco 96266. Views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Feature stories, photographs and art work of general interest to II Field Force personnel are invited.



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53D SIGNAL BATTALION Photo Support

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# Mo Cong

## Upgrading Regional Force Units

by Lieutenant Tom Sileo

A Mobile Advisory Team (MAT) has a unique mission—to work itself out of a job. And, MAT III-34, is trying to do just that.

Comprised of five men, as are all MATs, team III-34 is now training its seventh Vietnamese regional force company. But perhaps its most memorable assignment was Mo Cong, a hamlet about 70 miles northwest of Saigon.

Mo Cong, a hamlet of about 2,000 people, is in the heart of Viet Cong territory. A veritable island in a sea of VC, it was the home of Captain Gary Forbes' MAT III-34, for the past few months.

Captain Forbes' team has been all over Tay Ninh Province and, according to Lieutenant Colonel James Cloud, deputy province senior advisor for Tay Ninh, is one of the finest.

"Of my ten MATs in the province, team 34 is the best. All teams do a real fine job though. They spend from 60 to 90 days with a Vietnamese RF or PF Company, or in some case two companies, and teach them all we know. The teams try to make the company an independent, professional fighting unit, able to resist and defeat the VC," explained Colonel Cloud.



Entrance to Mo Cong compound—for 90 days the team's home.

"These guys are the unsung heroes of this war," said Major Mowton Waring, Tay Ninh Province S-3 advisor. "These guys, who move into bunkers and live, eat, sleep, work and fight along with the Vietnamese RF troops, don't get much publicity, but they do one heck of a job."

Each five man MAT has a senior advisor and an assistant advisor, plus light and heavy weapons advisors and a medical advisor.

"Our particular team has been together for about eight months now and we know each other well. There's a kind of camaraderie among us," states Captain Forbes, of Avant, Oklahoma. "Between the five of us, there's about 68 years of service experience."

Before a soldier is placed on a MAT, he has to either have some experience with an American unit in Vietnam, or be serving his second tour of duty here. Most team members are of the latter group.

Prospective members attend school and are given further instruction on the M-16, M-79, M-60, .50-caliber machine gun, M-1, Browning Automatic Rifle and mortars. In addition they are given 36 hours of Vietnamese language training.

The team's mission of advising



Lieutenants Hughes and Xep discuss upcoming exercise while Sergeant Harris looks on.

their Vietnamese allies may seem simple. But it's not. Besides helping the Vietnamese militarily with such things as tactics, perimeter defenses, operation planning and ambushes, MATs help with resupplying, logistical problems, medical problems and civic action. MATs help the Vietnamese civilian as well as the Vietnamese soldier.

Sergeant First Class John Kelly of Covina, California is a veteran of World War II, in which he served as a Navy corpsman. This is the third tour in Vietnam for team 34's medic.

Kelly treats an average of 60 persons in Mo Cong and surrounding areas weekly. "Their ailments run the gamut from colds and bicycle accidents to bullet wounds," says Kelly. "Then of course there is disease and—well, you name it."

Leaving his Middleburg, Virginia home to come to Vietnam again, Sergeant First Class George Swain is now the team's heavy weapons infantry advisor. He supervises the training of mortar crews, helps with heavy weapon maintenance and gives classes on the .50-caliber machinegun.

"With weapons, the Vietnamese catch on fast. They have a knack for learning them. They really like those .50-caliber machineguns too," said a smiling Swain. Recently Swain got

a pleasant surprise. "Our last assignment was with Company 160 of the Vietnamese 3-51st Battalion at Mit Mot, a little west of Tay Ninh City," Swain began. "Captain Nhu, the battalion commander tried to get us to stay with his men longer than two months and even went to see Colonel Cloud about it. He was worried when he learned that we were coming to Mo Cong. So, to help us fight the VC, Captain Nhu sent us his personal 82 mm mortar for our use. Now that's quite a compliment."

Calling in friendly artillery can be the deciding factor in a battle and the man who handles this chore for MAT III-34 is Artillery First Lieutenant William Hughes, a native of Levittown, Pennsylvania. Hughes has made a lot of friends with his radio and to Regional Force Company 126 at Mo Cong, he is "number one."

"It's dangerous here at Mo Cong with only ourselves and a Vietnamese company, in VC territory. But artillery is the equalizer," commented the short, affable Hughes. "The artillery, plus new equipment gives the Vietnamese a sense of security and a new confidence."

Second Lieutenant Xep, acting Company Commander of Company 126, heartily agreed. "Before the Americans came we had no artillery,

no medivac, no good weapons. Now we have these and my men are eager to use their weapons against the VC."

Talking with the Vietnamese troops one soon learns that they like both the MAT and the operations they go on.

New Jersey's addition to the team is Sergeant First Class Crawford Harris of New Egypt. The light weapons infantry advisor, and a veteran of over 20 years in the Army, Harris spends most of his time showing the Vietnamese soldiers about weapons and trying to get the best possible equipment for them.

"We get a lot of ground probes, mortar and recoilless rifle attacks, but with better weapons the Vietnamese now stand in there and throw fire back at the VC," said Harris with an air of triumph.

Discussing the team's job, Harris is convinced that a MAT assignment is one of the most interesting in Vietnam.

"We've been well accepted in all our assignments. It's diversified and interesting. You have to be a soldier, electrician, carpenter, cook, teacher and ally rolled into one."

Speaking specifically of the progress made at Mo Cong with the RF Company, a thin, short-haired Captain Forbes emphasized that the team is only advisory in nature.

"But," he added, "we made good progress with the troops. Their fire discipline is better now and they're getting more professional. In the past they used to bring transistor radios with them on operations, bunch up on roads and throw smoke grenades unnecessarily. But that's changed now."

There are many duties which must be performed. The team members are required to go on three night ambushes a week and they urge the company to set up ambushes as frequently as possible. Then, of course, there is always the language problem.

To counter this problem, a Vietnamese interpreter is attached to the MAT whenever one is available. MAT III-34 is lucky. They have an interpreter, Sergeant Huynh Le. Le looks upon his job as a way of helping his country and of improving his English.

"I am proud to be doing this job. The team and I eat, sleep, talk and fight together. They help my country and I help them," said Le in perfect English.

Why was a MAT sent to Mo Cong? If there was no American support at Mo Cong the VC would take over the hamlet.

Mo Cong lies along one of the

many VC infiltration routes to the south. Only seven miles east of the Cambodian border, it is both militarily and politically valuable.

While a MAT is there the VC are kept out. And if the VC took control of Mo Cong, they could claim control of all the land in Tay Ninh Province north of Nui Ba Den mountain. Though technically the hamlet is still considered neither pro-government nor pro-VC, and the road to Tay Ninh City is still not secure, GVN support in the village is growing, understandably so.

The mother, whose little boy's cut foot was treated by SFC Kelly, the schoolteacher whose school was renovated and supplied with books and the hospital workers whose hospital was painted all have reason to welcome Captain Forbes' crew.

The Mo Cong compound itself is dry, hot and dusty. Sandbags and empty howitzer cannisters serve as building material for the bunkers. The yellow, red-striped GVN flag flies on a makeshift flagpole.

One of the hamlets poor but happy residents is Father Muan, a Catholic priest. Spiritual leader of the Catholic section of the hamlet, Father Muan came to Mo Cong in 1958, when he fled from Hanoi. He is one of the team's principal supporters.

"The Americans keep the VC out and stop the VC from taxing the people and taking their lumber and crops. Now the people realize how much they can really defend their homes. They feel secure," said Father Muan didactically, sipping a cold drink.

But there is another "enemy" for the Americans at Mo Cong to battle. Loneliness.

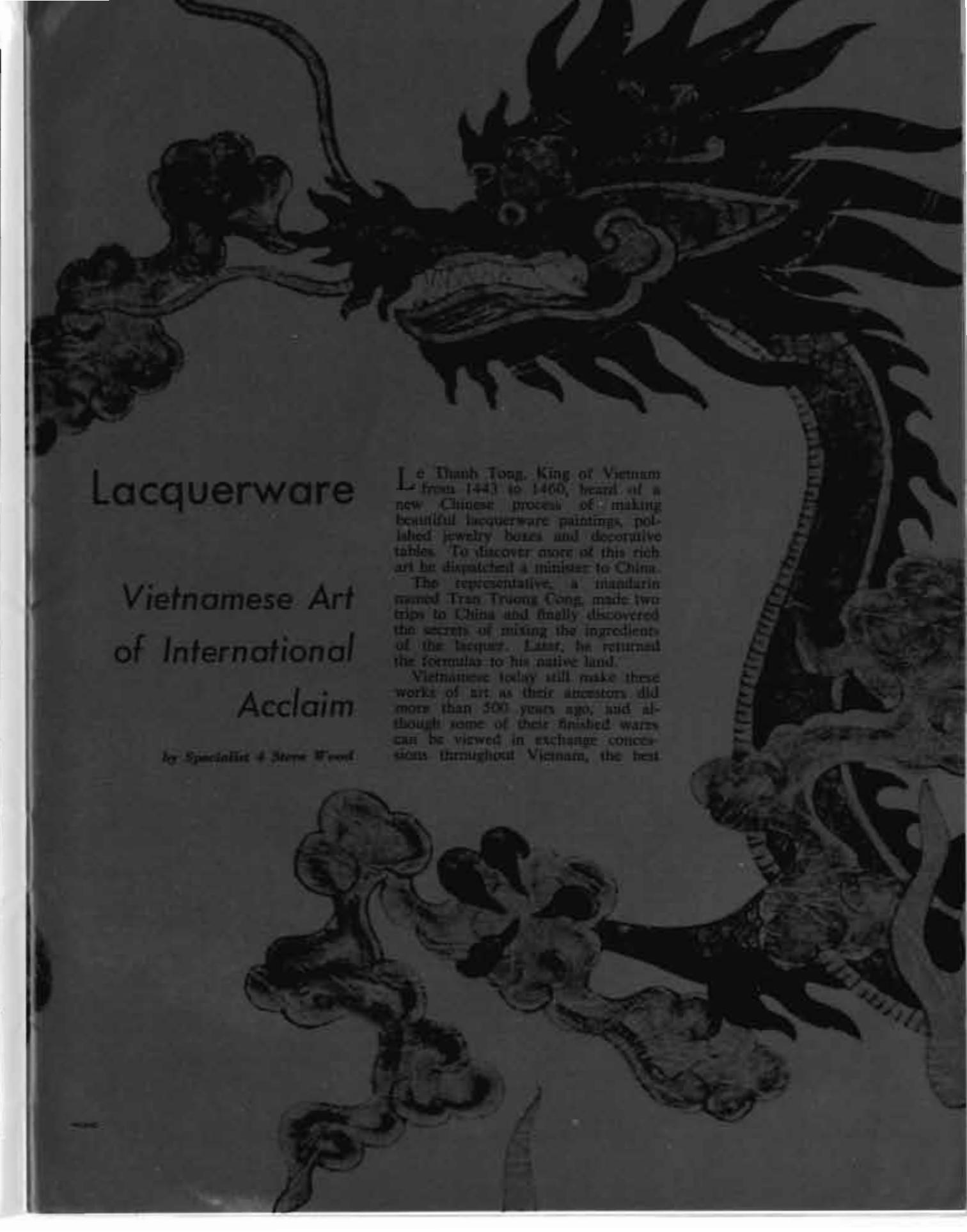
At sunset, listening to the beating of *Cao Dai* drums clashing with the guitar playing of one of the Vietnamese soldiers, SFC Harris commented, "Though we all enjoy our jobs, there's nothing like being with an American unit. It gets a little lonely here, especially when two or three of the team are on an operation with the company."

Like the over 100 Mobile Advisory Teams working in the III Corps Tactical Zone, Captain Forbes' team is professional. Recently, during a series of VC attacks on Mo Cong, the team's five members helped rout the enemy and restore the hamlet residents' confidence in the RF forces ability to defeat the VC.

As Lieutenant Colonel Cloud remarked, "Besides being friends, medics, electricians and teachers, these men are damn good soldiers."



There are many MATs across the III CTZ. Sergeant First Class Richard Carrache, medical advisor for MAT 111-41, found the additional duty as local physician and dentist for the village of An Lo, Bien Hoa Province taxing, but rewarding. Most patients cooperated, although some remained apprehensive.



## Lacquerware

### Vietnamese Art of International Acclaim

by Specialist 4 Steve Wood

Le Thanh Tong, King of Vietnam from 1440 to 1460, heard of a new Chinese process of making beautiful lacquerware paintings, polished jewelry boxes and decorative tables. To discover more of this rich art he dispatched a minister to China.

The representative, a mandarin named Tran Truong Cong, made two trips to China and finally discovered the secrets of mixing the ingredients of the lacquer. Later, he returned the formula to his native land.

Vietnamese today still make these works of art as their ancestors did more than 500 years ago, and although some of their finished wares can be viewed in exchange concessions throughout Vietnam, the best



*Inlaid mother of pearl and semi-precious stones, highly lacquered and polished into*



*a magnificent art treasure—the mark of Thanh Le's internationally acclaimed work*



of these highly polished works usually are found in the expensive art shops of Europe and America.

The lacquer is made from a combination of pitch and resin from pine and Asiatic sumac trees and is mixed with various clays depending on the background color needed for the painting.

The wooden base of each picture is plywood and properly applied it turns into a gleaming background for brightly colored roosters, stallions and demure maidens, which are painted on top of the lacquer wood.

Once the lacquer is applied and the subject painted, the painting is often sold as a finished product. But some artists apply more layers of clear lacquer to protect their paintings and give them brilliance.

Since the pitch of both varieties of

trees and the paint's coloring agents were readily available within Le Thanh Tong's kingdom, the art thrived. Today it flourishes for the same reason near where it was first practiced in South Vietnam—Phu Cuong City, about 20 miles north of Saigon, capital of Binh Duong Province.

Many of the paintings available to American servicemen in shops and concessions near military bases in Vietnam are still made by the same age-old formula. They are made, on special order from shops, by individual families working in their own homes.

The art is handed down from father to son in these families, and the exact proportions of the lacquer's ingredients are closely guarded family secrets.

## For 500 years Phu Cuong has been the center of the industry.

The women and children polish the finished paintings by repeatedly rubbing them with their bare hands using clean water. They work in the dust-covered open porches, on the dirt floors of their homes, often sharing their polishing areas with ducks and chickens looking for a drink.

An average size painting, perhaps two feet long and one foot wide, takes a week to complete. Its quality is dictated by the standards of the shop that orders it and ultimately by the shop's customers.

But the artists that produced these "family" pictures are not the ones that have displayed their works in the United States, Europe, Asia and North Africa. Nor are they the ones who won a gold medal in international competition during an exposition in Bavaria, Germany in 1964.

The skilled artists of Thanh Le did that.

More than 300 artists and workers have given Thanh Le its international reputation for fine lacquer-finished products. The Thanh Le factory, a bright, white complex of buildings near a large Buddhist temple at 45-53 Hung Vuong Street in the center of Phu Cuong and the clean glass showcases housed across the street boast of the business' success.

It's artisans work not only with lacquer, but produces hand made rugs, copies of bronze statues, ceramic products from copies of Ming vases and ancient Grecian urns as well.

About 70 per cent of Thanh Le's work is the lacquer business according to its manager, Ho Thanh Son.

The finished products may include only lacquer and paint. But delicately

cut ivory or mother of pearl as well as silver and gold leaf are sometimes inlaid into surfaces, ranging from gold leaf coasters to room dividers with intricate designs and delicately molded figures. Some artists combine all these elements into a single painting.

Whether it's a small, rectangular wall plaque, a bureau top or a painting, each piece shares a common beginning—the lacquer paint.

Thanh Le's black paint is made from the resin of the sumac tree, and ordinary pine pitch and rust to give a black coloring. While the factory uses some red colored lacquer paint, about 90 per cent of its work is done in gleaming black.

The paint itself is mixed with long handles in an aluminum washtub that is about eight inches deep and

four feet long. The tub is fitted with a wooden frame that holds a length of rusted iron pipe with its end stuck in the resin mixture.

A worker stirs a tub of the two resins with the pipe for ten days. As his hands rub loose some of the heavy rust, it falls into the tub and colors the resins a deep black. "The longer he mixes the lacquer, the blacker the paint becomes," says plant manager Ho.

As the paint is prepared, designers trace the outlines of a painting or inlay into a piece of smooth wood. If the finished work is to be inlaid in mother of pearl or ivory, workers are busy cutting small pieces of the ma-

terials to fit the inlay reamed from the board.

Elderly, reliable workers spend their work days hunched over small vises holding pieces of ivory or mother of pearl seldom longer than two or three inches. They cut the pieces from penciled designs with tiny fine toothed saws. Later these jaggedly cut pieces are assembled into an inlay, much like a crossword puzzle, and then covered with clear coats of lacquer. The finished product shows no puzzle-like pattern.

While these materials are being cut, other workers, mostly women, apply the black lacquer paint to the wood as a base coat. They use thin sheets

of wood about five inches square, tipped on one end with bristles, to spread the thick paint.

Each coat takes four days to apply, including drying time. And Thanh Le workers apply 11 coats of paint to each painting as a base before any inlay or other paint is applied!

Mr. Ho estimated that each average-sized painting or inlay takes about three months to finish. Much of this time is spent polishing successive coats of paint and lacquer with bare hands and water so that each coat has its own brilliant shine.

This painstaking effort towards perfection has made Thanh Le's lacquerware known throughout the world in

wood



Artist applies gold paint to a teak bas-relief

exhibitions in Germany, France, Tunisia, the United States, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and Taiwan.

In many exhibitions, such as those in the United States, Thanh Le's art is shown not under the Thanh Le trademark but as the official South Vietnamese entry in international competition.

Thanh Le can, in part, trace its success to the creation of a school of fine arts in Hanoi in 1924, in what was then French Indochina. A young group of artists assembled there gave a boost to the lacquer art and for that matter, to art in general.

This artistic renaissance gave birth to three new fine arts schools in what

is present day South Vietnam—at Gia Dinh, Bien Hoa and Phu Cuong.

Today the business recruits its best designers and artists from these same schools and puts them through a minimum of six months of on the job training apprenticeship.

Such standards which help the business sustain its quality are symbolized by Thanh's crest which mentions quality, tradition and prestige as the factory's aim.

And keeping this quality is quite an accomplishment for Mr. Le, owner and co-founder of the present business in 1940.

Nguyen Thanh Le and Truong Vau Thanh started the business after graduating from the fine arts school at Gia Dinh. They began with ten workers and an investment of 5,000 piasters (about \$420) in a small converted home that is now their showroom.

Mr. Le took over complete ownership of the business ten years after its founding. In 1958, he employed nearly 400 men, an all time high. They were producing beautiful goods for the market in France, as well as for the Vietnamese market.

Today Mr. Le's investment has grown to 20 million piasters (about \$170,000) and he employs 320 persons, mostly women.

The gradual mobilization of the male population into the South Vietnamese Army has forced Thanh Le to hire women. But older men and a few young men not yet mobilized, about 20 per cent of the work force, still design and do the finer work at the factory.

How do the women workers compare with the men?

"They can't compare at all," said Mr. Ho, plant manager. "Not for production or for talent. They work just for salary. The men worked for the art too," he said.

Rigid quality controls have kept quality high at the factory. Thanh Le's quality is something unmistakable. It makes itself immediately known. It's a certain look of beauty, all on display at the factory's Saigon showroom at 150 Tudo Street in the heart of the city.

Thus in a land where both the new is encouraged and the old fondly remembered and revered, the ancient art of lacquerware is still existent. A tribute to the skill and dedication of a few men, justly proud of their trade.

Women must perform much of the work due to the war.





## *New Zealanders Spark First Australian Task Force*

*by Lieutenant Tom Sileo*

The thick bamboo was creaking as the wind blew through it. At times it sounded like people crying, at others like men moving and talking. It was an eerie night in wooded Phuoc Tuy Province, province of the Kiwi.

Throughout the night the Kiwis, alert and apprehensive, waited for the VC to show. There were a few false alarms, but it was the bamboo not the enemy. No contact was made and the patrol returned to the base camp to rest and prepare for its next assignment.

Yes, "Kiwis," once peculiar only to New Zealand, are in Vietnam. There are more than 500 of them based at Nui Dat, whether most people realize it or not. Brandishing their colorful blue, red or green berets, their multicolored dress uniform belts and their kangaroo leather boots, the Kiwis are operating mainly in Phuoc Tuy Province.

One Kiwi 105 mm howitzer battery and two infantry companies, approximately one-tenth of New Zealand's 5,000-man Army, are here as that country's contribution to the war effort.

The New Zealanders are not newcomers to Vietnam. They came in 1965 and have been here ever since. And, unlike the quiet, flightless bird from which



New Zealand troops in Vietnam — holding high the ANZAC tradition

CLEVELAND

they derived their nickname, these soldier Kiwis are making quite a bit of noise and are "flying" extensively.

The 161st Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery, about 135 strong, last year moved over 20 times from fire support base to fire support base. It's part of their job, supporting the 5th Royal Australian Regiment.

The battery, commanded by Major J. O'Brien Horsford, operates six-105 mm M2A2 howitzers on loan from the Australians, under whose operational control the battery falls.

Second Lieutenant Ronald J. Turner, the 161st's administration officer, explained the situation this way. "When the battery first came to Vietnam, we brought our own 105's, L5N2 models. They were a portable gun, able to be quickly broken down and moved."

"But," he continued, "we needed a gun with a longer range. One that could sustain the heavy fire load we place on the guns. So we got the American-made 105's."

And the guns have made their share of noise. Recently Sergeant Michael McKoure fired the battery's 150,000th round at the enemy.

The New Zealanders here are unusual in a few ways. None of the 10,000 National Service soldiers, the equivalent of the United States' National Guard and Reserves, are assigned to Vietnam. All are regular army men and thus the New Zealand units are all professional.

The majority are career soldiers and according to Lieutenant Turner most of them are volunteers. "Our first tour is for 12 months but the second is only 9 months for men who were married during their first tour here."

Many of the Kiwis are here for the second time and, talking with them, they seem to enjoy it. Grenadier Willie Arona spoke of his views. "I don't mind being here. I look at it as a job. Of course I'd prefer being part of an all New Zealand unit instead of being under operational control of the Australians. This is only natural. There's a lot of good natural rivalry between us, but we get along."

This rivalry, likened to that of a Texan and a New England "Yankee," is understandable. A lot of people have the misconception that New Zealand somehow "belongs" to Australia. But Kiwis are quick to display the sovereignty of both themselves and New Zealand.

Actually the Australian-New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) arrangement is nothing new. Kiwis and Aussies first fought side by side in 1915 at Gallipoli, a desolate Turkish



*The Kiwi's on patrol—long miles and lots of sweat.*

CLEVELAND

peninsula. There the all-volunteer ANZAC force fought the Turks and, though they failed strategically, their courage had become legend. They also fought together in World War II, in Europe, Egypt, Korea, Borneo, Malaysia and now in Vietnam. And today ANZAC day is celebrated both in New Zealand and Australia.

Due to this unusual setup, the New Zealand supply and replacement systems are different from the usual.

Supplies come mainly from the Australians who are reimbursed by the New Zealand Government. There is no organic New Zealand supply system.

For the artillerymen, a "trickle" replacement system is used. Since July, 1965, when the 161st Battery arrived in Bien Hoa, the unit designation has not changed. However, the personnel have been slowly rotated, at the rate of about 15 per month.

The opposite is true for the infantrymen. Rather than replace personnel in the companies, the companies stay for one year and are replaced by entirely different ones.

The training prospective replacements receive is abundant. Beside the infantry companies in training, there are 200 men training, both in New Zealand and Malaysia, to replace those who are finishing their tours in Vietnam. The "bush" training they

receive allows them to adapt easily. According to battery medic Ian Blackway, "The forests in New Zealand help us to adapt to Vietnam more quickly than anyone else."

The 161st Battery was awarded the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, with Bronze Star, less than three months after it came to Vietnam. Later it was presented a Presidential Citation for its participation in the Battle of Long Tan, in August, 1966.

Turning from the blue-bereted artillerymen to the colorful green beret wearing infantrymen, the same unit pride is evident. Both "Victor" and "Whiskey" companies are part of the Fourth Royal Australian Regiment (RAR). Each number approximately 120 men and both are, under the Fourth RAR's operational control.

Major L. G. William, Whiskey Company's commanding officer, talked about his men. "Most of my men

were veterans even before they came here. Many served in Borneo and Malaysia and when we came from Camp Terendek (Malaysia) we were well-trained in most everthing except perhaps helicopter warfare. Guerrilla warfare, jungle survival, counter-insurgency, night fighting—these men have had it all."

The New Zealand Army, like the 100,000 square mile country itself, is small. But this has its advantages. "Everyone knows everyone else," says Major Williams. "After all there's only one regular infantry battalion in the Army. And, being one of only 500 or 600 New Zealanders here, makes it something special for the men."

For example, speaking with two sergeant majors, one finds out that they know every other sergeant major in the entire New Zealand Army!

Working with Whiskey Company, to help the Fourth RAR accomplish its mission of keeping Phuoc Tuy Province safe, is Victor Company, commanded by Major M.J. Hall. Resembling its sister company, Victor Company is also made up of mostly career soldiers.

On an ambush patrol, headed by the 3rd Platoon's platoon sergeant, Philip Deazley, a nine year veteran, teamwork and experience is evident. Preparations are made with no confusion and once in the jungle, no orders and few hand signals are given. Up shoots an arm and everyone freezes; a simple nod and the radio-telephone-operator is on the radio.

Once at the ambush site everyone knows what to do. Claymores are set, listening posts established and ambush positions taken, without orders.

During a break in the patrol activity Sergeant Deazley, whose platoon has accounted for approximately 25 enemy kills, was in a serious mood when he talked about the war here.

"In Malaysia and Borneo we fought a smaller, poorer armed enemy.

There wasn't all the outside communist intervention, as there is in this war. It's not so much a political thing with the men here. They're adventurous and career soldiers. And although the men are a little younger than the average soldier ten years ago, basically they're the same."

Corporal James Barber, a patrol squad leader, is a dark-skinned New Zealand Maori, the natives which make up about 40 per cent of the New Zealand force here.

When the first Europeans came to New Zealand they found a Polynesian people, the Maori, with a distinctive culture. But today that culture is dis-



New Zealand troops have a traditional rivalry with their Aussie counterparts—like Texans with New Englanders.

integrating. There is not enough land to afford a livelihood to more than a small percentage of the Maori. Hence many of them are being absorbed into the city culture as they move to the big cities.

Corporal Barber, who drew some parallels between the Maori and the Montagnards of Vietnam also spoke of the war.

"The guerrillas or insurgents in Malaysia back in 1955 were not as well-equipped as the VC are but they were more cunning. But what helps us is that we came here as a company. Each unit has its own peculiarities and Victor Company is a jovial bunch. We have a tradition of pride much as the American Big Red One has."

But being small in number, from a small country, has its disadvantages. Captain Graham Williams, 161st Battery's executive officer recalled an incident which has been fairly common in the past.

While at Long Binh, Captain Williams was approached by another allied officer and conversation followed.

"Hi, pal, what army are you in?"  
"I'm from New Zealand."  
"Is that part of Australia?"  
"No, definitely not."  
"Funny, I never knew you fellows were over here."

"Well, there aren't very many of us here but we've been here since 1965. Our territory is Phuoc Tuy Province. We're trying to do our part in the war. We're here trying to do our share."

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Supplying an overseas army is old hat to military logisticians. But disposing of no longer needed equipment while in a war zone is a relatively new experience.

The Long Binh Depot operates a Property Disposal Office (PDO) on the outskirts of the large Long Binh army base and in the coastal city of Vung Tau. These two places serve as collection points for cast-off materiel from the III and IV Corps.

Visitors to the Long Binh PDO must travel several miles on a rutted, pot-holed, dusty road paralleling the fortified barbed wire perimeter of the Long Binh base to get there. It is many miles of such bad roads which account for most of the PDO's largest single item—motor vehicles.

In past wars, fought with front lines, worn-out or damaged jeeps and trucks were usually deliberately destroyed and left behind by advancing troops. In Vietnam, however, leaving anything behind on the battlefield or roadsides would only help the Viet Cong, who are notorious for their ability to convert scrap materials into lethal booby traps, mines and weaponry.

Once past the security guard at the PDO gate, there seems to be very little to distinguish the PDO's storage yard from a salvage yard in the indus-

by Private First Class Josef Herman

Disposing of old equipment while in a war zone—a new experience



## Property Disposal

### Finding New Uses for Cast-off Gear

trial section of any big American city. Mounds of tangled truck frames, piles of greasy engines and stacks of worn tires are spread out over the 110 acre compound. Covering all is a layer of orange dust, finely ground by the heavy wrecking trucks which come and go seven days a week.

Much of the equipment is first stripped for "closed loop" items, such things as multi-fuel engines, radio equipment and other specialized gear which are always retained by the military. Frequently needed serviceable parts like jeep windows, transmissions and differentials are also kept on hand for reissue to maintenance units in Vietnam. But other stripped parts may be sent to Okinawa, Taiwan or the United States, to be rebuilt in assembly line fashion.

Mr. Robert L. Peters, a Department of the Army civilian, is in charge of the PDO. He has a staff consisting of 41 Vietnamese employees and a number of servicemen from the Long Binh Depot. Some work in the two trailers which serve as offices while others are heavy equipment operators and mechanics, working in the yard itself.

Peters, who has worked as an excess property sales officer at Fort George Meade, Maryland, for six years prior to coming to Vietnam, described the PDO's function. "We get all equipment whose cost of repair would be higher than the replacement cost to the United States Government. Also, all materials which are left over after a civilian contractor completes a project for the military."

By dealing with steady customers, Peters tries to maintain a balance between incoming and outgoing material. Customers are only accepted after they have been checked out by U.S. intelligence agencies.

"Actually," noted Peters, "we don't have anything to do with the money end of the transaction. That is taken care of by the Long Binh Depot. Our job here is to put the stuff into lots for the customer to see prior to submitting his bid at the Depot."

The availability of an organized supply of scrap metal has also benefited the Vietnamese economy by supplying it with high grade smelting material for the growing metal industry. Hong Dang A, a Vietnamese metal dealer, for example, buys metal from the small Vung Tau disposal yard. And presently, the newly formed Vietnam Steel and Rolling Mill is negotiating a term contract for the purchase of substantial quantities of both light and heavy metals.

Not only big business benefits from



*Nuns from a nearby orphanage regularly search the yard for building materials*



*Tires are purchased by civilian firms for retread and resale*



*The new PDO should prove a great saving to the US Treasury.*

the PDO. Enterprising local mechanics also make use of the facility, and Mr. Peters has a high regard for their technical skill. "Sometimes," he said, "they'll come in and buy three or four salvageable 2 1/2-ton military trucks in order to assemble one running vehicle."

A purchasing agent for a Vietnamese company which buys and rebuilds used sedan-type vehicles had an apropos comment about American cars. "They use plenty of gasoline," he said. However, he did not complain about the prices he paid for them.

Wednesdays at the PDO are special. That day is set aside for United States Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored good-will activities.

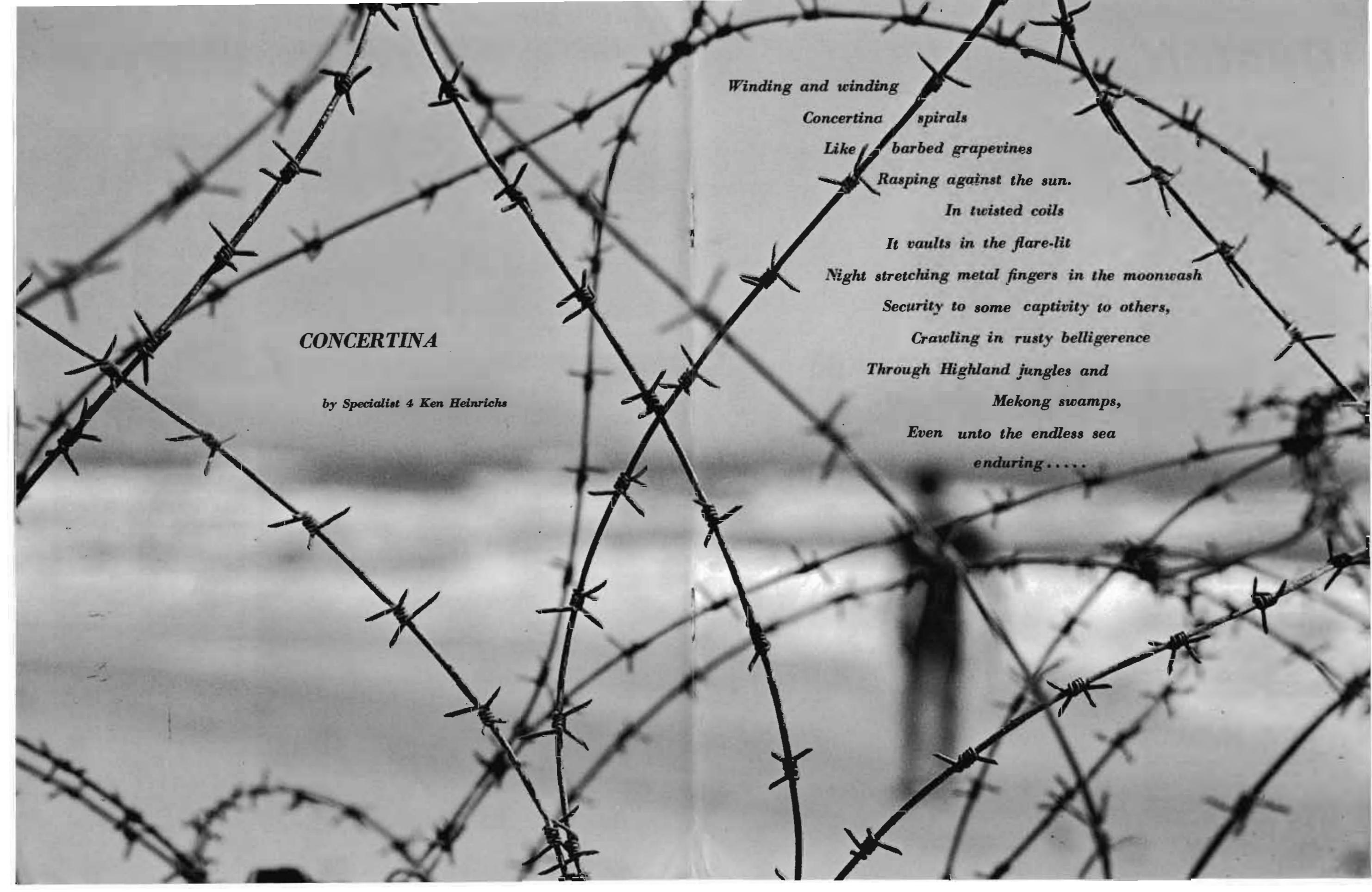
Village project directors, refugee parish missionaries and nuns from orphanages come to the salvage yard on Wednesdays with USAID-approved requisitions to pick out items they need for village or parish projects. They usually choose light construction materials such as tin sheeting, short lengths of pipe and lumber for a schoolhouse or playground equipment.

Two nuns from a nearby orphanage are regular visitors. They care for nearly 150 children and are always in need of beds, mattresses and other material. On one occasion they decided they could put a discarded air-conditioning unit to good use in their sweltering tin-roofed orphanage.

On their next visit, however, they complained that the airconditioner was "number ten—no good." Mr. Peters, who had tried to talk the nuns out of taking the unit in the first place, was hard pressed to keep a straight face when he replied, "That is why the airconditioner is at the PDO in the first place, because it is no good."

As far as the sisters were concerned that entire visit turned out to be "number ten." They could find no beds or chairs or even any tin roofing. Perhaps, Peters could get them an old piano for their orphanage's school? Even a violin would do, because one of the sisters could play both. He promised to do his best.

According to Peters, giving away or selling excess salvageable materials in the war-zone will save the American taxpayer money in several ways. "I believe," he said, "that a lot of money will be saved by not having to send this stuff back to the United States, like we did after World War II and Korea. More will be saved by not having to sort, classify and store acres of items which have 'no usefulness after the war.'



## CONCERTINA

by Specialist 4 Ken Heinrichs

*Winding and winding  
Concertina spirals  
Like barbed grapevines  
Rasping against the sun.  
In twisted coils  
It vaults in the flare-lit  
Night stretching metal fingers in the moonwash  
Security to some captivity to others,  
Crawling in rusty belligerence  
Through Highland jungles and  
Mekong swamps,  
Even unto the endless sea  
enduring.....*

# Dustoff

by Specialist 4 Jon Steinberg

The crew of "Dustoff Two-Zero" is relaxing in the operations room atop the 3rd Field Hospital. For the first time there is a break in the steady stream of missions which has summoned them to the rice paddies and forests south of Saigon.

Previously in the afternoon "Dustoff 20" had made three hurried runs into the area around Can Giuoc to aid Kit Carson Scouts, working with elements of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade who had been injured by well-concealed booby traps.

Suddenly another radio message and the four-man crew scurries to the waiting ambulance for the ride to their still-warm chopper.

Specialist-4 David King unties the big blade, and Captain Greg Stafford starts it spinning. As Specialist-4 Howard Roser prepares his medical supplies and Crew Chief King yells "clear" into the intercom, Warrant Officer Dan Boyd lifts the chopper upward, over Saigon, and turns the controls of the "flying ambulance" over to pilot Stafford.

Aircraft commander Boyd uses one of the ship's three radios to get clearance from Saigon and Tan An artillery. Then the call to the field.

"Dallas Four-Four—this is Dustoff Two-Zero—I understand you have two Uniform Sierra litter. Is that affirmative?"

"Roger that. What's your Echo Tango Alpha?"

"Will be your location in zero-two or zero-three minutes. What's your tactical situation and recommended direction of approach?"

"Report no contact for 24 hours. Advise you approach from southwest. We'll let loose with smoke when you are in sight."

"Roger. We'll keep an eye out."

Within minutes of the call from the field, "Dustoff 20" has the tiny, nipa palm surrounded landing zone (LZ) in sight and is making an approach.

"Dustoff Two-Zero, this is Dallas Four-Four. We have you in sight, the smoke is out, you're a little to the north."

"Roger. We have you sighted now, we'll be landing in zero-one."

After a pass over the LZ the unarmed chopper makes a direct approach over the banana trees adjacent to the LZ.

## To Save Lives and Conserve the Fighting Strength

The chopper's doors are flung open as the skids hit the ground and the medic hands two stretchers to a waiting soldier. Forty-five seconds later two soldiers, a sergeant and a captain are aboard. Mr. Boyd pulls pitch and Dustoff is speeding 50 feet above the ground toward Saigon.

Medic Roser immediately determines the extent of the injuries and relays his diagnosis to the aircraft commander. In this case he calls the 68th Medical Group's medical regulator officer (MRO) for instructions as to which of the 44th Medical Brigade's hospital is to receive the casualties.

"Wide Minnow, this is Dustoff Two-Zero. We're enroute to Saigon from X-ray Sierra 7183 and have on board two U.S. litter with multiple shrapnel wounds. ETA to Saigon is zero-four minutes and there will be a two-litter exchange."

In this case the 68th Group instructs the chopper to continue to Villa Five—the radio call sign for the 3d Field Hospital—and then calls the hospital.

"Villa Five, Villa Five—Wide Minnow, Wide Minnow. Dustoff Two-Zero will be at your location in zero-two minutes with two Uniform Sierra litter. Exchange will be two litters."

Then again to the field: "Dallas Four-Four, this is Dustoff Two-Zero, your Dustoff is complete, your patients are being taken to the 3d Field."

"Roger, thanks, for coming again."

"Roger. Keep your heads down, give a call whenever you need us, thanks much, out."

Roser administers emergency first aid to the wounded officer, Captain Endrizzi, of the 199th.

"Somebody's been setting booby traps all day in our area," said Capt. Endrizzi. "While we were resting in our fire support base we spotted a Viet Cong setting another trap. We took out after him. We looked through the thick underbrush and banana trees, but no VC. While Sgt. Kennedy and I waited along the road somebody blew another trap. The next thing I knew we were being loaded aboard the Dustoff chopper; it seemed as though the chopper landed just as we were hit."

The captain is barely through his



last sentence when Specialist King kicks the cargo door open and the 3d Field medics begin removing their patients.

Sirens wailing, the ambulance speeds from the chopper pad to the 3d Field triangle area where medical specialists await the arrival of the two injured men.

As medics cut away the muddy clothing, Captain Donna Rowe, the chief nurse in the 3d Field's emergency room, cleanses the open wounds on her patients' legs. Immediate surgery is required to remove the shrapnel

and close the wounds before infection can set in.

It is now 40 minutes since the call from the field requesting Dustoff. Sergeant Kennedy was the more seriously injured, so he was operated on first. Throughout his three-hour operation and later the captain's, a surgical team worked quickly and efficiently to remove the fragments from the patients' legs.

As the two men rested in the hospital ward the next day, work was progressing that would ensure their complete recovery. The doctor who

performed the surgery had recommended that both men be evacuated from Vietnam. After the chief of professional services at the 3d Field reviewed their cases, and concurred in the doctor's decision, the information was forwarded to the 68th Group's MRO.

Daily, the medical regulating officer from each of the Brigade's four medical groups compiles and forwards a list of all patients in need of out-of-country medical evacuation (the 68th Group covers the populous III and IV Corps Tactical Zones) to the Bri-

gade MRO, who reviews the administrative procedures involved in obtaining off-shore destinations through the Far East Joint Medical Regulating Office.

Explaining the workings of the Brigade's medical regulating system, Captain Michael L. Wiener stated: "Most of the out-of-country medivacs are patients who have been stabilized at one of the 22 Brigade hospitals. Usually if a patient will require a convalescence period of 30 days or more he is evacuated out-of-country. In those cases where less

time is required for recovery, the patient is transferred to the Sixth Convalescence Center at Cam Ranh Bay and then returned to duty."

Because of the tactical location of the Brigade's 116 Dustoff helicopters throughout Vietnam, no man is ever more than an hour from a Brigade hospital. From the time a wounded man is picked up in the field by Dustoff until he is returned to duty, he is in the hands of well-trained and experienced medical specialists.

To ensure each patient's well being and complete recovery, the Brigade

Medical Regulating Office administratively controls patient evacuations from Brigade hospitals to other in-country and off-shore facilities, so that each patient will be at that particular installation which offers the medical specialty which his case requires.

Within four days of their battlefield rescue, Endrizzi was recovering in Japan and Kennedy in Okinawa. Before he was medevaced to Japan, Captain Endrizzi summed up his feelings. "Dustoff has saved the lives of so many of my men, I guess this time it was my turn."



STEINBERG

**1623**

Litter teams arrive to receive casualties

***"Dustoff has saved the lives  
of so many of my men, I guess  
this time it was my turn."***



STEINBERG

**1624**

Evacuees rushed to awaiting helicopter



STEINBERG

**1625**

Wounded soldiers placed aboard



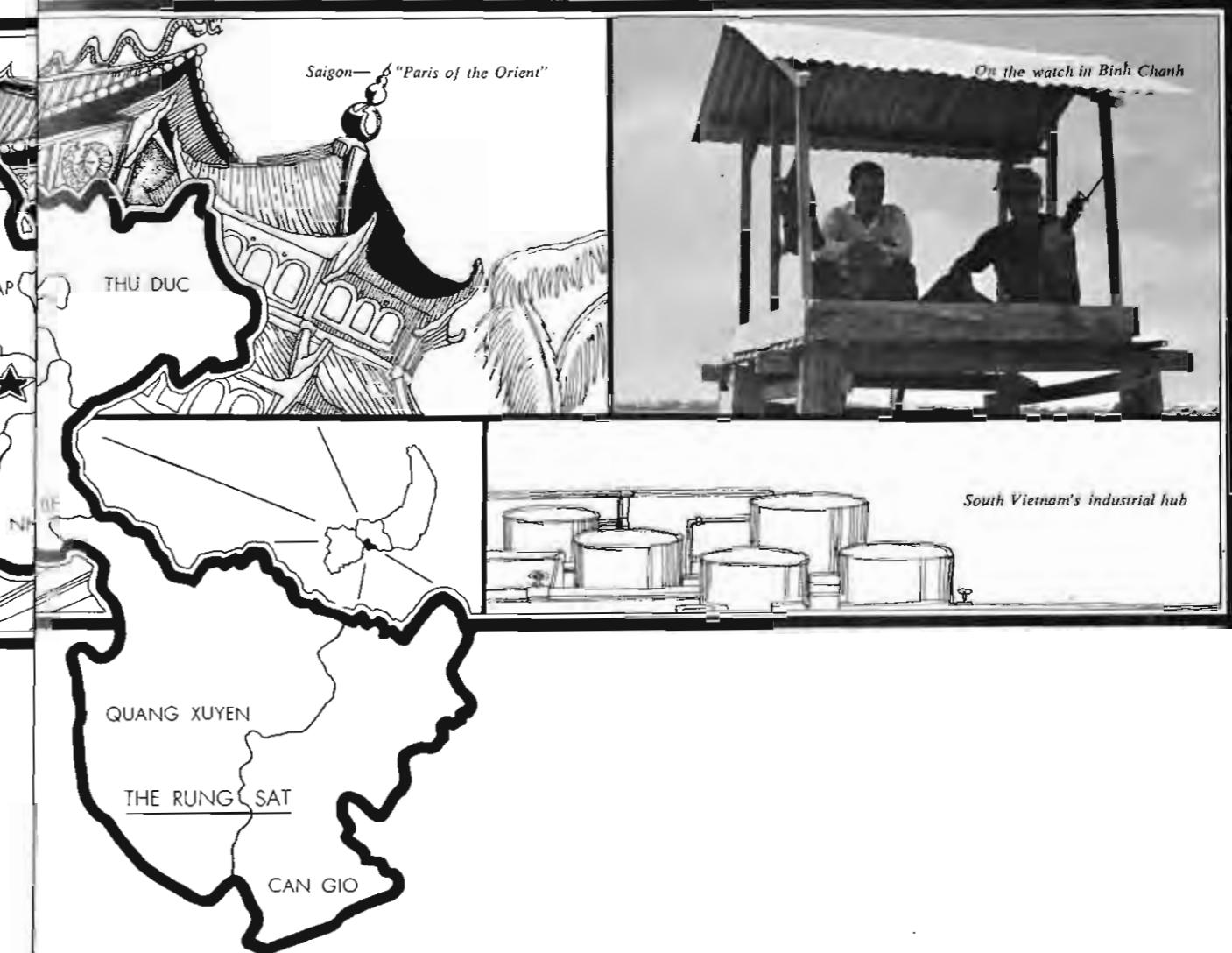
STEINBERG

# Gia Dinh Province

## Industrial Heart of South Vietnam



*Jungles of the Rung Sat*



QUANG XUYEN

THE RUNG SAT

CAN GIO

the Republic.

From a standpoint of strategy, the interests of Saigon and Gia Dinh are interrelated. The defense of both city and province are combined under the Capital Military Assistance Command. But despite military exigencies and of the fact that more than half its population of 1,200,000 lives in the metropolitan complex spilling over the northern and eastern boundaries of the city, to think of Gia Dinh as merely an extension of Saigon would

be a mistake.

The intense urbanization of these areas has given rise to considerable commerce and industry, making them fairly indistinguishable from Saigon itself. It is true that many citizens of Gia Dinh are currently employed inside the capital city, yet, agriculture is still the most important facet of Gia Dinh's economy.

The 1968 Tet truce attacks forced many citizens of the outlying rural areas to flee their homes and take up

safer residence near Saigon. Although main force units have since been driven from Gia Dinh and many local Viet Cong elements have been rooted out, a lot of the former refugees are still fearful of returning to their homes.

Many prefer the life of the city to that the rice paddies. As one U.S. military advisor put it, "You aren't going to introduce these people to Hondas, electricity and night life, then watch them go back to the rigors

of the farm. A lot of them will stay near the city despite the problems of overcrowded living conditions, sanitation, and unemployment."

Nevertheless, a sizable proportion of the refugees have returned to recover their property, and are planting the fields once more with rice, flowers, tobacco and the variety of vegetables that grow well in the fertile soil of the province.

Variety is the word for Gia Dinh. To the south of Saigon lies the dis-

trict of Nha Be, population 53,464, a sleepy land of lush rice paddies and coconut trees.

Tide-influenced rivers, canals and streams provide an abundance of water for rice and offer good fishing as well. Nha Be is also the site of the nation's biggest petroleum depot, which houses tanks for the Shell, Esso and Caltex oil companies and employs near 600 local citizens. Giant ocean-going tankers steam 30 miles from the mouth of the wide Dong

by Specialist 4 John Greenfield

Surrounding the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon, a city of over 2,000,000 people, are six of the eight districts of Gia Dinh—the most heavily populated, diversified, and perhaps the most fascinating province in



Off-loading oil from tankers. Over 50 per cent of the petroleum used in South Vietnam comes through Nha Be

Nai River to deposit more than 50 per cent of the oil used in South Vietnam.

Major John F. Donne is the U.S. district senior advisor for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS). Through the efforts of Major Donne, plus his advisors, and Vietnamese soldiers themselves, enemy attacks by fire have been largely curtailed. No known main force NVA/VC units are located in Nha Be at this time and the Viet Cong infrastructure has been weakened to the point of virtual ineffectiveness.

To the southeast of Saigon is Binh Chanh, similar to Nha Be in appearance and population (54,579), but a district with a much larger security problem. Ninety-five per cent of the population is engaged in farming and many of these rural dwellers are still frightened from rallying to the government. Hence, the self defense programs have not jelled as they have in some of the other districts. The Viet Cong infrastructure is stronger here, consequently Binh Chanh is more susceptible to infiltration and the people less able to resist VC threats.

Main force enemy units lurk on the

border between Binh Chanh and Long An Province and squads of VC continue to penetrate the Allied defensive net.

"We'll get contact just about every night," said Major Robert P. Woods, district senior advisor, "but the situation is improving. I doubt if the enemy could slip in an outfit as large as a platoon now."

Battalions of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade, units of the 5th Vietnamese Rangers, regional force companies and popular force platoons (RF/PF) patrol the district.

Major Woods lauds the progress being made by the RF/PF soldiers.

"They're learning to call in artillery and air strikes more efficiently. And they use their own ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) artillery from Bravo Battery of the 61st—another Vietnamese unit."

Booby traps are the biggest problem for friendly patrols, indicating a substantial number of VC and VC sympathizers. One unit recently found 49 booby traps in a one kilometer square area.

Civic action has been kept at a minimum because of the lack of security but, thanks to the vigorous

work of the district chief, Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Ba Di, both security and public works are on the upswing. Recently completed projects include the building of various hamlet offices, footbridges and water tanks.

Northeast of Saigon lies Tan Binh, home of Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base. With 383,500 people, it is one of the two districts of Gia Dinh most directly affected by the capital's population overflow. Tan Bien lists among its industries two textile mills and numerous smaller concerns, including ice plants, slaughter houses, rice mills, nail factories and welding shops.

Mammoth Tan Son Nhut, continually vying with Bien Hoa for the title of "world's busiest airport," is an economic boon to the community. Five thousand American personnel from Tan Son Nhut and other Saigon area military and civilian installations live in Tan Binh, thus creating a large number of jobs for domestic workers.

But twenty per cent of the district's population is engaged in agriculture and Tan Binh's rice crop is among Gia Dinh's largest.

Major Raymond Blanford, district senior advisor, is pleased with the

"amazing coordination" between the Vietnamese 53rd RF Battalion and the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne. "They have combined all phases of their operations," said Major Blanford. An indication of the improvement in Tan Binh's security is the fact that only three known propaganda attempts, all by leaflet, were made during the month of April. As late as September 1968, it was common for the enemy to stage indoctrination talks in many of the district's hamlets.

Hoc Mon, the northernmost district, supports a healthy agricultural area with a population of over 138,000. A diversified crop includes rice, tobacco, fruits and vegetables while livestocks are also important to the economy.

Hoc Mon enjoys a relatively high standard of living, producing enough foodstuffs to feed her own people as well as to export a considerable quantity. Security is better in Hoc Mon than in some of the other districts.

Adjacent to Saigon on the north is Go Vap, similar to Tan Binh in that it is a heavily populated district (381,000) with a variety of minor industries. Southern Go Vap is intensely urbanized. However, the northern portion of the district encompasses a countryside of striking beauty.

Go Vap is renowned as the flower capital of Vietnam. Driving north on highways 17 and 19 a lovely tropical paradise continues to unfold until, suddenly, the scenery makes an abrupt change. Trees become broken, gnarled and leafless; the ground is no longer planted in neat rows but overgrown with jungle. Deserted houses dot the area—the legacy of the 1968 Tet truce attacks.

Major Han Van Tan, district chief, and Major William K. Adams, district senior advisor, have been working with the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne and the U.S. Navy "Seabees" in restoring this obliterated part of the district. Schools, village and hamlet offices and personal dwellings have been either rebuilt or patched.

Thu Duc, on Saigon's northeastern flank, is a lively district of 124,000 people, noted for its heavy industry. The Bien Hoa-Saigon Highway, South Vietnam's four lane answer to an American freeway, bends north through Thu Duc. Heavily travelled and even more heavily patrolled, the highway is fostering the nation's first major industrial complex by provid-



Congested waterways are a problem for sanitation officials and municipal planners alike





*Agriculture remains the province's primary endeavor*

ing two essential elements to development—a medium of transportation and a measure of security. In addition, the complex is located on relatively higher land that is free from flooding during the monsoon season.

Large synthetic fiber plants, textile companies, and also the Thai Binh brick factory, paper plants and even a cement-fiber roofing concern, are located here.

The most conspicuous of the major Thu Duc industries are the huge water purification and electric plants, operated by the Government of Vietnam, and the Ha Tien Cement Plant. All three can be easily recognized on the western side of the Bien Hoa-Saigon Highway, just north of the Newport Bridge. The industrial complex employs over 6,000 people, half of whom live in Thu Duc. Many others are engaged in

lighter industry—ice plants, saw mills, and home weaving organizations.

Agriculture continues to employ over half the district's population. But with the exception of the immediate Bien Hoa-Saigon Highway area, Thu Duc also has security difficulties.

The district chief and the district senior advisor, though, are hopeful that the exceptional coordination between the U.S. and Vietnamese military units in the district will lead to adequate security for all of Thu Duc.

The Republic of Vietnam is in the very difficult position of trying to win a war, develop its economy and restructure its government, all at the same time. Even with generous support from the U.S. and other allies, South Vietnam has discovered that it

is impossible to obtain a meaningful military victory without simultaneously developing the economy and establishing an awareness of and support for the control government. But such development cannot take place without lasting security.

Working along these lines, two programs have been introduced into Vietnam this year. One is the Village Development Program, designed to return much of the financial and military power of government to the village. The second is the Popular Self Defense Program, which undertakes to organize and arm village civilians for their own defense.

Despite certain inherent problems, both programs appear to be working well in Gia Dinh, to the pleasure of Colonel Nguyen Van Ton the province chief, and Colonel James A. Herbert, province senior advisor.

# The Rung Sat

## *“Killer Jungle” of South Vietnam*

by Specialist 4 Steve Wood

Twenty miles southeast of Saigon lies the Rung Sat Special Zone—the 723 square mile “killer jungle” of South Vietnam—a silent mangrove mudland yielding daily to the flooding tides of the South China Sea. (see map page 24)

Before it was defoliated to hamper Viet Cong traffic in the maze of waterways criss-crossing the swamp, thousands of spreading mangrove trees and nipa palms covered the briny expanse. But today much of the zone is nothing but mud and mangrove stubble. It is surrounded by Long An Province in the south, Gia Dinh and Bien Hoa Provinces in the west and Phuoc Tuy Province in the north, and contains the main shipping channels to Saigon, the Long Tao and Soirap Rivers.

The Rung Sat is a delta, the result of thousands of years of silt washed from the Central Highlands during the mammoth monsoon rains. It is still expanding southward into the South China Sea at a rate of three miles a century.

Although the defoliants have caused the enemy to be more cautious the many waterways still offer a fairly safe route. To further discourage the Viet Cong, the South Vietnamese and U.S. Navies based at Nha Be, Gia Dinh Province, patrol daily with small swift search boats and minesweepers.

U.S. minesweepers attempt to prevent the Viet Cong from mining the channel and disrupting shipping in the Long Tao River, while the patrol boats check passing sampans and freighters for contraband.

“Actually there can't be any more than two platoons of VC stationed permanently in my district—at most 40 men,” estimated Major Elliott R. Worthington, district senior advisor of one of the two districts in the Rung Sat, Quang Xuyen. “The land won't support more, there's no fresh water,” he emphasized.

“The VC here act as scouts and guides for larger units, often North Vietnamese troops, that pass through the Rung Sat or enter it specifically



*Thatched houses of Can Gio, fishing village of the Rung Sat*

to plant mines or attack shipping," said the 32-year-old Georgian. "They move by sampan at night or else they swim," he said.

Swimming is closer to the truth in Quang Xuyen. Almost 15,000 people live there in eight hamlets crowded along the jungle's northwestern fringe. It is the only arable part of the dis-

trict and water for the rice paddies is obtained from the murky Soirap.

Although there is a lack of drinkable water, the residents have a variety of foodstuffs. Their rice diet is supplemented with crabs, clams, shrimp and other seafoods that they literally catch at their doorsteps.

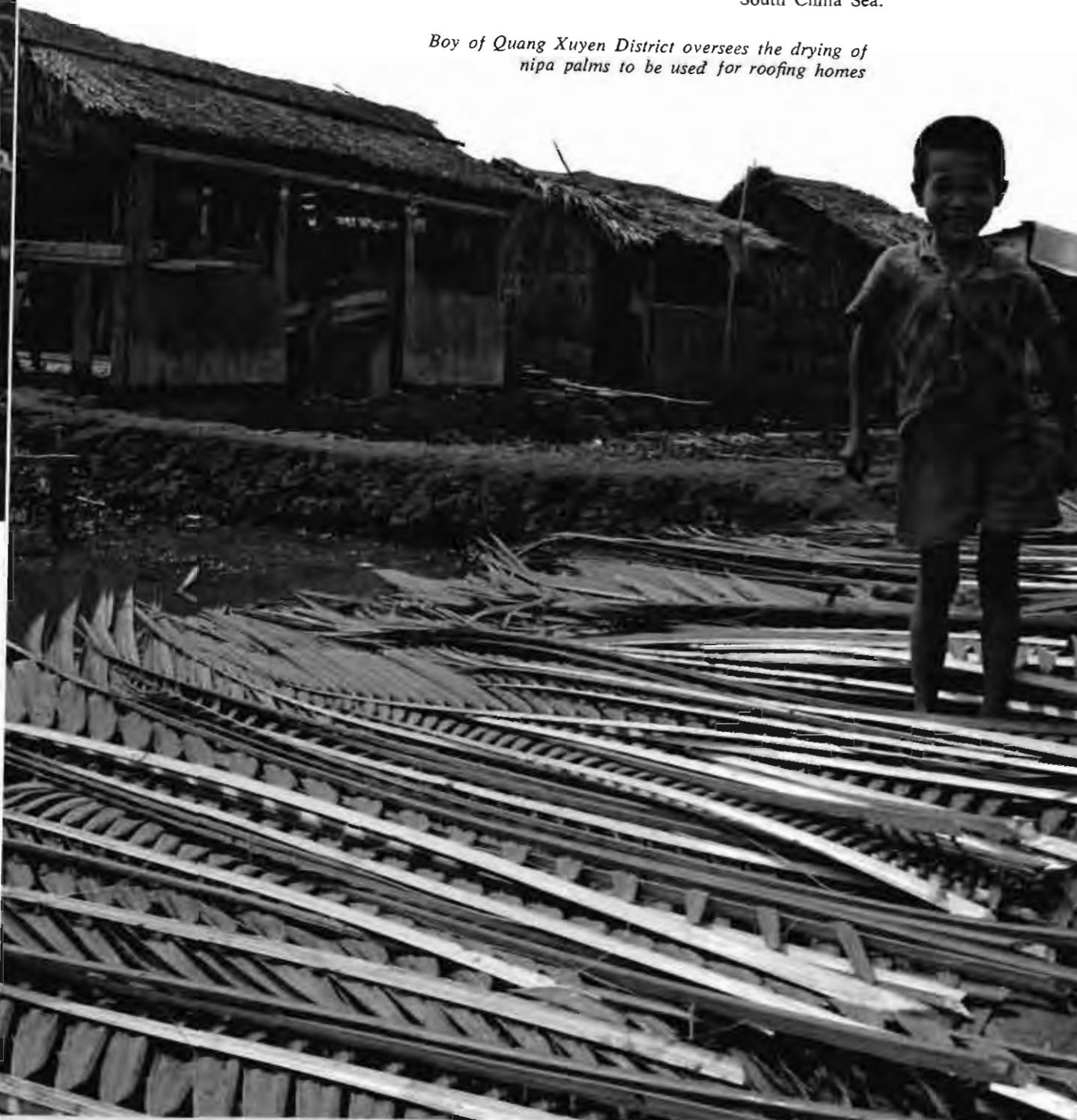
During the rainy season the people collect water in cisterns and 55-gallon drums, but from November until May they pay about 100 piasters per gallon

to have water delivered to their homes.

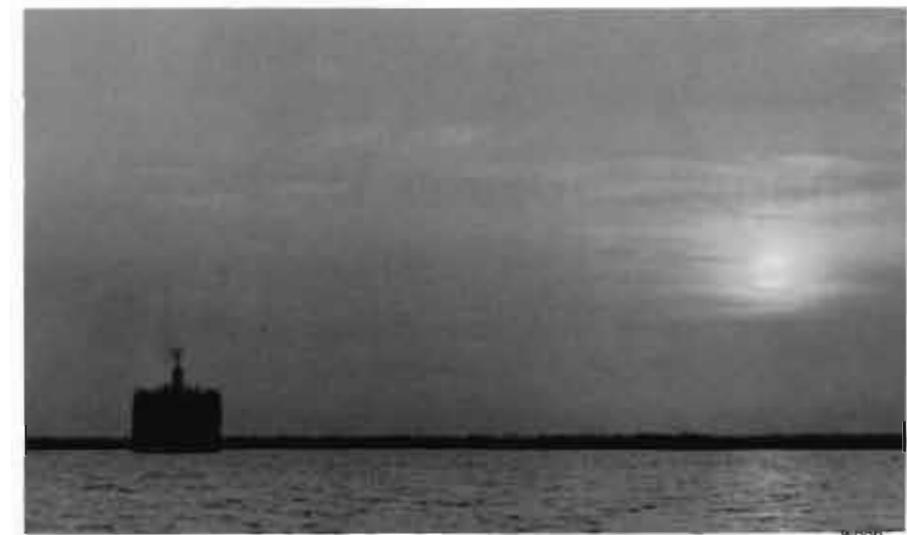
On the other side of the Long Tao River is the district of Can Gio. Can Gio City, the district capital, clings to a narrow strip of sand at the swamp's southern most point. At Can Gio fishing boats anchored against the surf, with the white eyes painted on their bows pointing seaward, and fishing nets suspended from bamboo poles to dry, mark the boundary of the city of the "killer jungle" and the South China Sea.

WOOD

*Boy of Quang Xuyen District oversees the drying of nipa palms to be used for roofing homes*



*The Long Tao River is the main shipping channel to Saigon's ports.*



WOOD

WOOD

*Sampans are used by the enemy to travel the jungle's waterways*



WOOD

*Much of the Rung Sat is now only mud and mangrove stubble*

# Enemy Support Unit Uncovered in Hau Nghia

by Specialist 4 Gary Rausch

A routine roadside check of identification cards last September unlocked one of the most clandestine and complex organizations in the Viet Cong infrastructure.

Led by a dedicated province police chief, Ngo Van Hue, and his American advisor, Chuck Sothan, a small team of law enforcement agents traveled from the Mekong Delta to the Central Highlands nabbing disguised members of the VC underground.

Striking around the clock, members of the Mobile Special Police Operation, with the assistance of many U.S. and Vietnamese military units and civilian police bureaus, apprehended 63 hardcore Viet Cong leaders of the 83rd Rear Service Group.

The team's first lead came last September at a mobile check point in the village of Suoi Sau near Trang Bang. When Nguyen Van De was stopped there, he admitted knowing the hiding place of Viet Cong weapons and ammunition. And while being questioned, he pointed out a boy passing on a bicycle as the son of Muoi Be, one of the leaders of the 83rd.

Nguyen Van Cuong, 15, and his sister, 16-year-old Nguyen Thi Ba, had been trained by the Viet Cong. Chief Hue found Muoi's wife, a head nurse caring for enemy wounded leaving the Saigon area, and his son in the Binh Duong village of Lai Thieu.

Shocked at being discovered, Be's wife offered little resistance when apprehended. She led the Ngo team into the Gia Dinh Province hamlet of Lan Tay in Hoc Mon District.

The team swooped into Lan Tay by helicopter and there uncovered a cache that included 12 boxes of medical supplies, and over 14 tons of supplies, tools and uniforms. They were transported to the U.S. 25th Infantry Division's headquarters at Cu Chi.

Rear service groups have long been a thorn in the side of the Government of Vietnam. In the III Corps, the 83rd Group is composed of an estimated 1,200 Viet Cong and some VC sympathizers. Each of the group's seven divisions contains six companies.

The division's major branches include quartermaster, food, clothing, finance, hospital, first aid and weapons. Their mission—to provide supplies and support facilities for Viet Cong units in their region.

The workings of the group are quite involved. Rice mills are operated and the products stored in homes of local sympathizers while delivery of the food supplies to local field units is being coordinated. Village families are hired to sew military uniforms, for which they are paid ten piasters each. Finance distributes monthly living allowances to members of party installations and military units and allocates operational fees for special-purpose installations and activities such as

workshops and radio broadcasts.

The medical division, directed by a doctor and assisted by 13 specialists and nurses, operates a hospital and numerous first-aid stations in villages and along supply routes. Mines, grenades and rudimentary rifles are produced in the weapons workshop, where spent cartridges are returned from the battlefield for reloading.

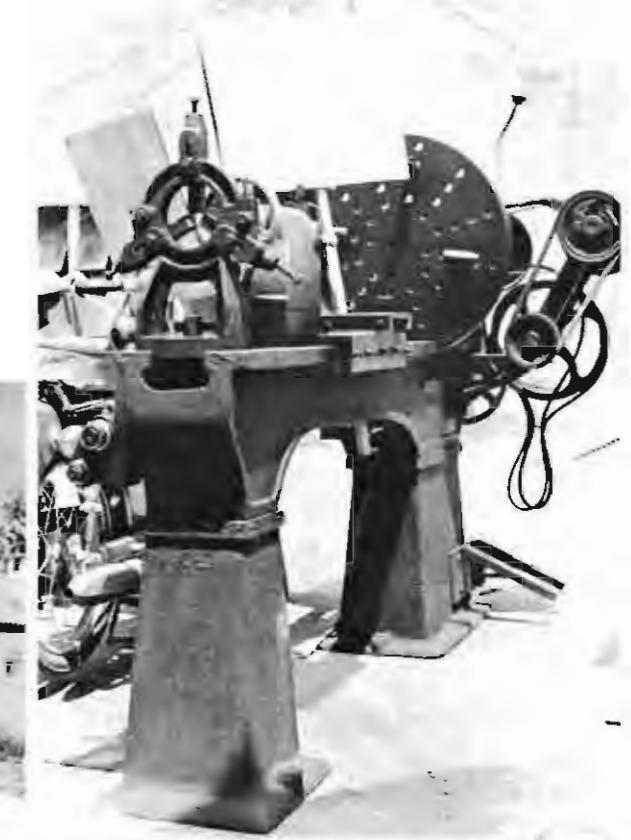
Ngo Van Hue, who spearheaded the attack on the 83rd Rear Services, is the police chief of Hau Nghia Province. Chuck Sothan, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), serves as the province's public safety advisor.

Ngo has spent 22 of his 45 years in law enforcement. In the last three, over 200 of his policemen have been killed doing their jobs. The capital city of Bao Trai was attacked three times last year. When two battalions stormed the city on May 5, Chief Ngo ordered defense of the police station with the cry, "fight or die." His small 40-man force repelled the enemy, killing 70.

Using his dynamic energy—plus his good luck charm, a golden boar's tooth—Chief Ngo turned his attention toward the 83rd and the operation against the VC organization began. The specific mission was to apprehend as many high ranking officials as possible, thus severing all communications and supply lines.

Suspects usually submitted willingly

American trucks and a lathe (right)  
were among confiscated items



Also captured were sewing machines  
and sacks of USAID flour

to arrests but there were exceptions. Sothan recalled a touchy situation during the final week of the operation.

"I never saw a gunfight so intense," says the former lieutenant of the Maricopa County, Arizona, Sheriff's Office. "The fire was so heavy it took the bark off the trees. We had two wounded and the dustoff helicopter couldn't land because of the terrain. It had to hover above the ground."

"We were loading one of the wounded aboard when a round deflected off the machinegun and hit another

man. About then I started to think back to late summer when we first organized the operation."

At the beginning of the operation, Chief Ngo told his men to avoid any fighting because, for mobility's sake, they would be operating with a small, select team. A message was circulated to every district in the country, directing cooperation and support for the elite team.

Suspects were trailed for days from province to province. "I can't say enough for the cooperation given us by all parties," interjects Chief Ngo. "The United States Army and Air Force, our own Vietnamese Army, National Police, National Police Field Force (NPFF), Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF) plus the

other province chiefs and public safety advisors gave us everything we needed."

"The team worked day and night, trying to throw off the VC by hitting on Sundays, in the afternoon or ten o'clock at night," explained Sothan. "They had the misconception that the Vietnamese police and Americans were lazy and wouldn't work at night or on Sundays."

The team arrested three suspects in Long Khanh at three one afternoon and that evening flew north into II Corps. There it followed up leads in Nha Trang, Cam Rahn Bay, Dalat and Lam Dong.

"Chief Ngo got into one area up there around 4:30 p.m. and had to make an arrest before 5:30," says Sothan describing one incident. "Using a U.S. helicopter, he had a five-minute briefing and was on his way."

"You should have seen the surprised looks when he made the arrest and told the prisoners he was from Hau Nghia down in III Corps."

The operation was a total success because the team was after a specified organization. They knew each sus-

pect's habits, occupation and where he was at all times. They were organized and well-trained.

Arrests were made so quickly that many daytime captures went unnoticed by other villagers. Chief Ngo would immediately conduct an interrogation, sometimes while racing down a dusty road in a jeep. As soon as a new lead developed the prisoner would be taken to the nearest village for confinement and the team would move to the next location.

Air assaults were also common. Very often the team wouldn't return to Bien Hoa until three a.m. Helicopters were used when other transportation was impractical or when the suspect was near a large concentration of VC. Then National Police and Field Force troops plus Kit Carson Scouts would join the mission.

The policemen were hand-picked for each operation. Chief Ngo used only his most trusted men. Once, a suspect placed 75,000 piasters on the hood of Chief Ngo's jeep in an attempt to bribe him. The detainee claimed that it was all the money he had but Hue frisked him and uncovered another 150,000 piasters; then he "booked" him as his prisoner.

Others caught in the net were poor, and only out to make a few piasters. But the top prisoners were wealthy capitalists like Huynh Van Cu, one of Saigon's richest clothing material manufacturers, and Tran Ba Tung, an engineer who joined the VC infrastructure back in 1944.

Among other notable prisoners was Phan Thi Khang, to whom Muoi Be gave money for sewing machines to make uniforms which were stored in Saigon. And there was Tran Ba Tang, a medical leader who frequented many pharmacies, buying medicine to keep the authorities off his trail.

The VC transportation system was involved and the most difficult to break, primarily because it made use of so many people. For example, once an agent obtained food, clothing and supplies in Saigon, he would approach a young boy on a Honda to act as a liaison between provinces. "No one ever gives a second look at a boy on a Honda," frowns Sothan. "Can you imagine stopping every boy in Saigon riding a Honda?"

The boy would then hire a driver to haul the goods to a distribution or hiding spot. The trucks, difficult to pick up because they are constantly moving, had forged government papers and ID cards to travel between districts. Money to hire drivers and trucks came from VC taxation.

Often the boy would only be told



Members of the 83rd Rear Service Group discuss operations prior to their apprehension

to lead the truck to a designated spot on the road. There the driver would get out, prop up the hood, pretending to have engine trouble, and wait for the VC contact. The latter came along shortly, gave the driver a password and the location of his final destination.

Supplies were carried quite openly in cars and trucks at first, but when the net began to close on the rear service group, goods were hidden in more ingenious places like wheel wells with sliding panels.

Chief Ngo's group pulled the noose even tighter and the Viet Cong went hungry, going without vital foodstuffs such as rice. The enemy had to resort to a diet of coconut meal and corn.

Meanwhile, supply lines for North Vietnamese Army units were being blunted by military action, which caused an even greater impact on the infrastructure. The NVA were relegated to certain supply bases because of the size of their regiments and battalions. It was impossible for them to buy a ton of rice from any one village without word leaking out to

the authorities. Thus the National Police operation wiped out many NVA supply bases. When the mission ended, the National Police operation had netted 100 arrests in 130 days. Of the 63 hardcore Viet Cong, 26 were men and 37 women; 24 of the prisoners carried aliases.

Total value of confiscated material was 100 million piasters, with much of it in supplies. The 16 captured four-wheeled vehicles ranged from jeeps and family automobiles to five-ton trucks, and included five motorbikes.

The foodstuff contraband was also valuable: 297—50-kilogram bags of wheat flour, 150—100-kilogram bags of rice, 892—cans of All-Pure condensed milk, 4,000 sacks of Japanese flour, 3,000 sacks of manioc and six cans of U.S. sardines.

For the 83rd Rear Services Group, Chief Ngo was a nemesis who hounded the group into complete chaos. His persistent determination netted the top suppliers, key transportation officials and the very heart of the 83rd's infrastructure.

## Prisoners included a wealthy Saigon tailor and a prominent engineer.



Chief Ngo questioned villagers and wealthy industrialists alike

*A Vietnamese Legend*

## A LIE AND A HALF

Returning to his native village after a distant journey, a certain traveller told the following tale:

"During my travels I saw a great ship—the very length defied the imagination. A young boy of twelve left the bow of this ship to walk to the stern.

By the time he arrived at the mast, his hair and beard had turned white and he died of old age before he could reach the stern.

A native of the village then spoke.

"I see nothing so remarkable in what you have just related. I myself once

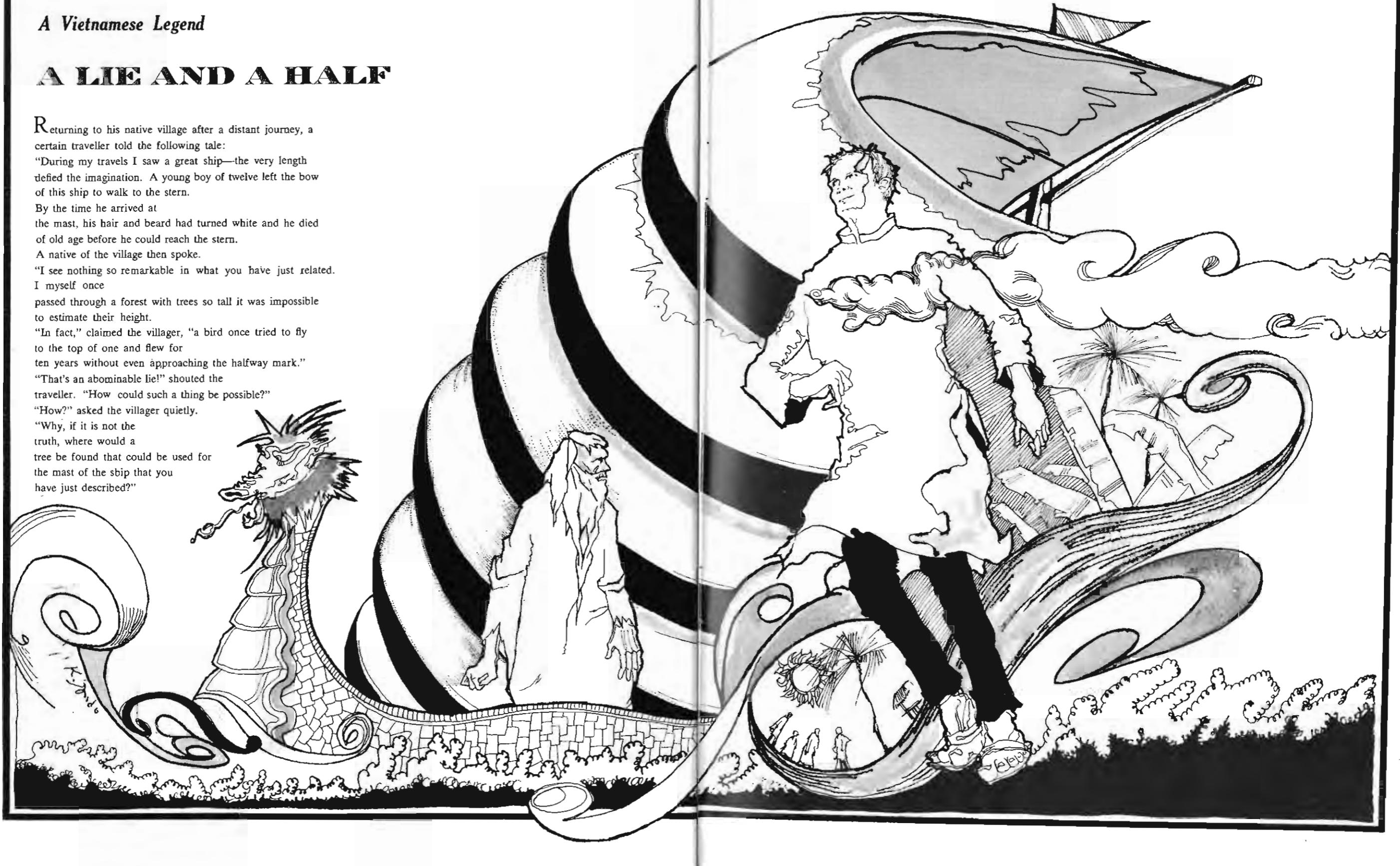
passed through a forest with trees so tall it was impossible to estimate their height.

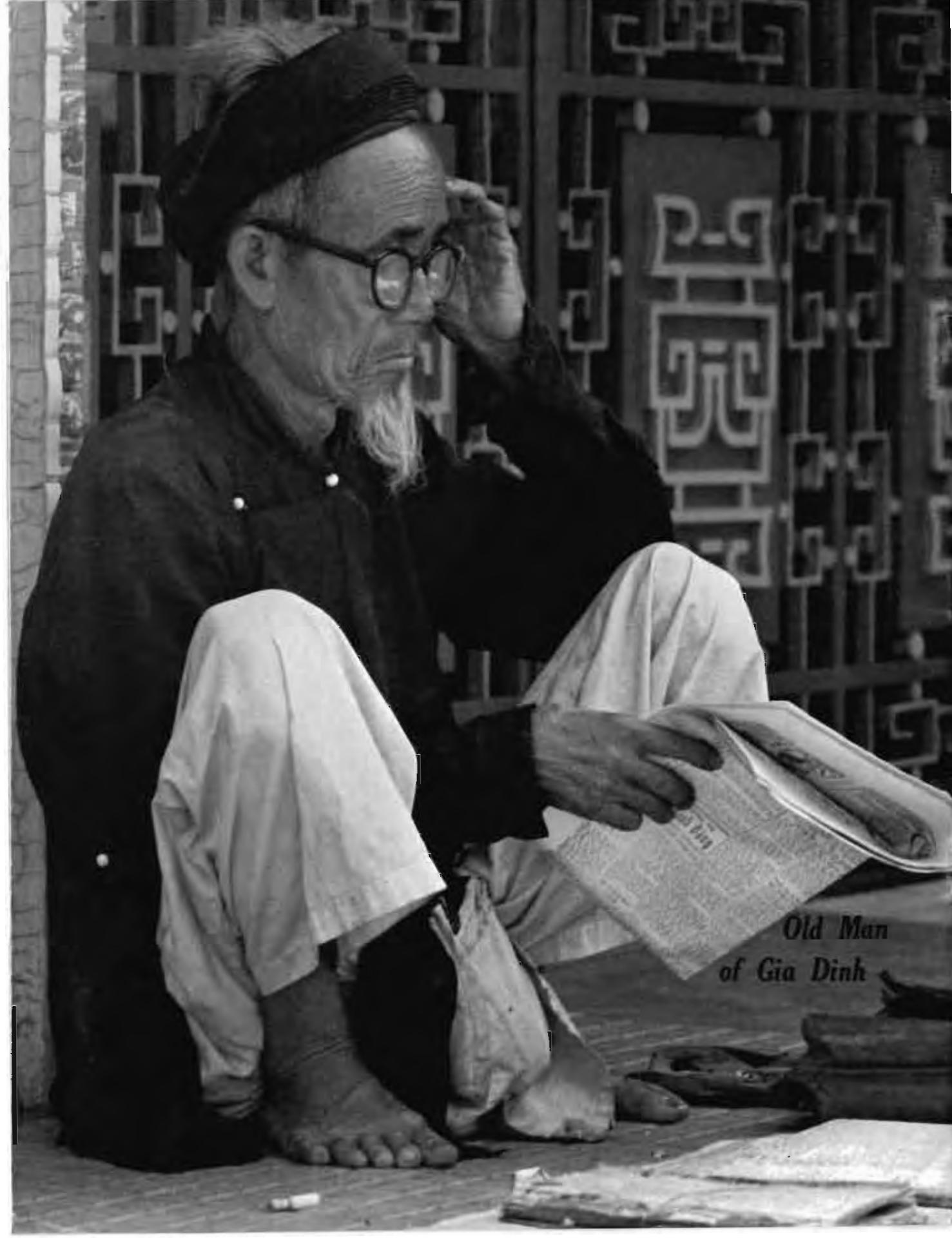
"In fact," claimed the villager, "a bird once tried to fly to the top of one and flew for ten years without even approaching the halfway mark."

"That's an abominable lie!" shouted the traveller. "How could such a thing be possible?"

"How?" asked the villager quietly.

"Why, if it is not the truth, where would a tree be found that could be used for the mast of the ship that you have just described?"





*Old Man  
of Gia Dinh*