

Chaplain Recalls Visiting Montagnard Missionaries

BAN ME THUOT — The chaplain of the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, Captain Alan Tyson of Forest City, Ark., and his assistant, Specialist 4 Jerry W. Mullins of Kettering, Ohio, received a vivid illustration of the methods used by Viet Cong to harass the people of South Vietnam.

Chaplain Tyson and Specialist Mullins spent two days visiting with a group of Christian Montagnards in the Drung Valley north of DaLat.

"These people have been forced to pick up and move everything they own about four or five times in the last eight or nine years strictly because of VC harassment. The VC have kidnapped them and killed their people," said Chaplain Tyson.

The chaplain and Specialist Mullins were guests of Mr. and Mrs. George Irwin, who are missionaries from the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church working with the villagers. Specialist Mullins and the

Irwins' adopted children are old friends.

"Their parents were also missionaries and were killed during Tet," said Specialist Mullins. During Tet, all the missionaries were forced to leave the area.

"It was a warm Christian atmosphere," said Chaplain Tyson of his visit with the villagers. "I regret that there was not time to lead a service.

"Mr. Sau, one of the tribespeople, is the main character in the book about the mission and

these people, 'The Bamboo Cross' by Homer E. Dowdy. He was one of the first Christians here. Both he and his brother are now ministers. We spent a day with them and had dinner in their hootch."

"Unlike most missions," explains Specialist Mullins, "these people have taken over the load and carried on the ministry themselves. Because of Tet and the missionaries leaving them, they have definitely got going on their own. They have four churches in a

village of 1,200, supporting themselves."

In addition to building churches, the people in the area also have started a school. Both men reported that visiting the third grade class which sang "How Great Thou Art" in their tribal language was a moving experience.

Chaplain Tyson related his experience to many of the men in the battalion. "I thought they would be as interested in these people and their struggle as I was," said the chaplain.



MR SAU, one of the first Christians in the DaLat area, presents a bracelet of friendship to Chaplain (CPT) Alan Tyson of the Famous 4th Division's 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry.

(USA Photo by SP4 Michael Tousey)

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