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Wounded 'Doc' Puts Lives Of Buddies

Story By SGT Jeffrey Tarter



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Doc Becomes Patient
When the patrol finally reached an evacuation point, 'Doc' Scott stayed with the wounded on their way to the hospital—this time as a patient himself.

"They thought I was a bad case," he admits. "I felt real good out there the first day, but when I got to the hospital, I just about passed out."

The bond between a combat medic and the men he treats is a close one, even in the relative security of a firebase. He is the man they consult before going on sick call, the man who reminds them to take malaria pills and hang mosquito netting, the man who keeps an eye on field sanitation, the man who gives refresher classes in first aid. Their welfare is his direct concern—and they know it.

And sometimes a medic does nothing more than sit and listen sympathetically.

"Even if you're feeling fine," 'Doc' Scott says, "it always helps to have someone who's willing to listen to all your gripes. I guess a lot of the time that's one of the most important things we do."



Doc' Puts Lives Of Buddies First

THEY DON'T TOTE black bags or deliver babies, but to the men they treat in the field, the combat medic is the war's equivalent to an old-fashioned country doctor.

In theory, combat medics administer only first aid. Yet, in the jungle they quickly learn to treat almost anything from the common cold to jungle rot and malaria, shrapnel wounds and shock.

"They get really astute at diagnosing what they find—they become the real doctors of the battalion," declares Captain Steven J. Soper of Independence, Mo., a battalion surgeon with the Famous Fourth Division's 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry.

Work Means Life Or Death

Because these "country doctors" usually work far from professional medical help or equipment, their first aid skills often mean the difference between life and death.

"The way we fight here," Captain Soper notes, "I rarely see a critically injured man. The medic is the first to see him, and then he's evacuated by helicopter directly to the hospital."

Knowing that the lives of his friends depend on him, a combat medic routinely pitches in wherever the fighting is deadliest, and keeps going when other men can quit.

Thus it wasn't unusual when Specialist 4 Ted Scott of Springfield, Mo., a medic with the 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry, took part in two jungle

firefights within 10 days—and came back both times with his steel helmet shattered by enemy rounds.

"On that last mission," 'Doc' Scott recalls, "the point had just gone through a draw. That's when they yelled for me—they had contact up front. I took off running.

"I'd just gotten to this ditch when they yelled 'get down!' Zingo: I felt that thing rip through my helmet. I thought it was like last time, because it felt just the same. The first time it just bounced my head a little bit.

Felt The Blood

"This time I reached up and there was a gob of blood, so I stayed down behind that rock. I was there for about six hours—unconscious for a lot of that time.

"Meanwhile they set up a perimeter. Then that night the NVA dropped Chicoms (grenades) and some people said there were B40s shot at us, and sniper fire all night long."

Though still dazed by a bad scalp wound, 'Doc' Scott went on working through the night, rescuing and treating men wounded by enemy fire.

The next morning, evacuation helicopters tried to reach the patrol to bring out the wounded. But dense forest blocked all approaches. The only way out was on foot.

"We knew what kind of situation we were in," he said. "So we took off humping. There were men I wouldn't

have told to walk three steps. But they were determined to get out of there."

The wounded medic arranged litters for the most seriously hurt, made sure that the other casualties had men to help them, and continued to tend and cheer up his patients throughout a grueling three-day march to safety.

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