

"It's Good To Help Out"

Village Refugees Receive Ivy Aid

By SP4 Hans Lange

BAN ME THOUT—For more than 2,500 Montagnard and Vietnamese refugees in and around the hamlet of Due Lap, life was beginning to look glum.

They had been forced to leave their villages near the Cambodian border by retreating North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars who were being pursued by Ivy men of the 2nd Brigade, commanded by Colonel Herbert McChrystal. Their very existence was threatened.

But hope was only a few miles away, at Due Lap, since fighting had ceased there. It was a relatively safe spot to seek refuge. And they came—with their salvaged household goods, their elders, and their children.

The great influx of refugees stampeded hamlet leaders. Where could they all be housed? The leaders arose to the challenge and so did the Ivy men of the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William C. Moore of Alexandria, Va.

The industrious Montagnards set up house in abandoned school buildings and make-shift shelters, but they were not homes. Food was scarce, and many of the people were sick or had received injuries in the exodus to Due Lap.

Word of their plight soon filtered to the Cacti Blue civil affairs team, headed by

First Lieutenant Harry F. Bernard of Pittsburgh. They responded with medical aid, food and even tents.

Daily visits to the four primary refugee areas are now conducted. With the battalion surgeon, Captain Daniel Marks of Oak Park, Mich., leading the team, as many as 200 refugees have been treated in a day.

The day for the team begins in the early afternoon. There's other work to tend to in the morning. They load their three-quarter-ton vehicle with a medical chest, food, soap, toothpaste, candy and tobacco. Most of their supplies are donated by Ivy men. There is a chest in the S-5 tent for that purpose and it fills up every day.

Once the supplies are on the vehicle, the men climb aboard—usually two medics, two security men, an interpreter and anyone else who can spare a few hours. Captain Marks makes the trip when time permits.

This particular trip is to a refugee site that the Cacti Blue team has not visited before.

After a short drive from the battalion base camp, the vehicle pulls into the refugee area, and immediately it is swamped by the people there.

The interpreter, Private First Class William E. Carlson of Lander, Wyo., who is also a medic, jumps out first and begins asking

anyone who will listen to direct him to the chief.

Soon the chief is pointed out and PPC Carlson speaks to him.

"Tell your people that we have come to treat their illnesses and injuries. Have them form a line at the rear of the vehicle, we have men there who can help them."

The chief agrees and soon there is a line forming. The medics go to work.

The line keeps moving. Colds are treated, as are open, bleeding sores, skin rashes, boils and other infections. In less than two hours, 170 of the refugees have received some type of medical aid or advice. The day before the number was 200, but that took more than two hours.

"It's good to be able to help these people," says Specialist Howell. "They need so much."

After physical ailments are cared for, candy, soap, toothpaste and tobacco are passed out, giving a boost to the spirit. Food is then given to the chief. He is instructed to parcel it out equally among all the refugees in the camp.

The truck is then loaded again, but this time it's not as full; it is heading back. Tomorrow there will be more people, and more medicine, food, soap and candy for the kids. Only the site will change.