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# ***IVY LEAF***

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## **FAMOUS FOURTH**

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## **'Aloha Airlines' Holds High Score—300 Kills**

By SP4 John Trimble

OASIS—A small helicopter swoops out of the clouds, spraying the ground below with machine gun fire. Three unsuspecting Viet Cong fall.

Aloha Airlines has done it again.

The 3rd Brigade's Aloha Airlines originally functioned solely as an observation outfit. It later flew combat missions in addition to observation flights.

To most people, the name Aloha Airlines is synonymous with an Hawaiian commercial airline. But to the men of the 3rd Brigade, it is a hard-fighting helicopter support section.

When the 3rd Brigade was stationed in Hawaii before coming to Vietnam, its aviation unit took the name of Aloha Airlines as its call sign.

The men in the unit used the name jokingly at first, but later it stuck. Permission was obtained from the actual airline to use the name, and ever since there have been two Aloha Airlines.

The unit originally boasted four OH23 helicopters, "bubbles" as the men who fly the small aircraft call them. Today it has three light observation Cayuse helicopters and one OH23.

Aloha has earned an outstanding reputation in Vietnam, having accumulated a confirmed record of 300 enemy killed. All kills were made by gunners sitting next to the pilot, holding M60 machine guns in their laps.

While flying observation missions in the early days, the small helicopters would often receive heavy fire from enemy ground positions. It was then pilots began taking gunners along for protection.

"We really didn't become a combat unit until we moved to the Duc Pho area," explained Chief Warrant Officer Charles Grigsby of Steubenville, Ohio. "In addition to flying observation missions, we began to fly in support of combat assaults."

"We flew in support of the 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry one day and got a count of 25 NVA killed," continued Mr. Grigsby. "We were flying about 10 feet from the ground. We flew so low the enemy was throwing Chicom grenades at the ship. It was hit 18 times by AK47 rounds."

Aloha's gunners came from many different sections in the brigade.

Staff Sergeant John B. Howard of Louisville, Ky., a mess steward, flew 85 missions with Aloha—on his time off from cooking.

"I flew in the mornings when I was off duty," he said. "Many times the VC and NVA wouldn't suspect that we were carrying machine guns."

Aloha Airlines in Hawaii, having learned of the unit's record with the 4th Division invited all those who had served with Aloha in Vietnam to stop by their offices, if they were ever in Hawaii.

On his R&R Mr. Grigsby went to Hawaii and visited the airlines.

"They gave me the royal treatment," he said. "They took me on a tour of the islands and I had a great time."

The commercial airlines also supplies the helicopter unit, with stickers saying "Aloha Airlines," and with T-shirts that have "Aloha Airlines" written across the front.

Aloha no longer maintains a combat status, but to many men who have served with the 3rd Brigade, the daring maneuvers and blazing machine guns of the bubble will never be forgotten.