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IVY LEAF

FAMOUS FOURTH

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20 Aug 67 Ivy Leaf

Lost PFC Uses C-Ration Can To Signal Rescuers In The Air

DUC PHO — Lost, fatigued and after fighting off six Viet Cong, Private first Class Melvin Gilpin, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, continued his trek down a lonely stretch of beach north of Duc Pho until he was able to signal his rescuers with the top of a C-Ration can.

The men from the 3rd platoon were searching and clearing a village. When they were done, the last four men of the platoon were to give one quick final check. Going out of his way to check a hut, PFC Gilpin became separated from his three companions.

The 3rd platoon moved 300 meters south into another village and were getting ready to search it. After a break for chow a head count was taken showing one missing. A squad was immediately dispatched to search the area in which PFC Gilpin was last seen. Unable to find him, the entire 3rd platoon was committed to the search.

An hour and a half had elapsed and the entire company was committed along with tanks and armored personnel carriers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor.

Choppers Searched Above

Choppers equipped with loud speakers were circling the area trying to locate the lost soldier as a complete sweep of the area was conducted.

When PFC Gilpin realized that he was separated, he fired two signal shots in hopes that they would be answered. After waiting in the area for five-minutes an acknowledgement was not received. PFC Gilpin then entered a trench and followed it for about two-kilometers to the beach along the coast of the South China Sea.

Once on the beach he began walking south to link up with another element or make it back to the brigade's forward base camp.

"I was walking along the water's edge and had moved about five clicks," recalled PFC Gilpin, "when I received fire from my right, I was able to spot six VC firing from behind small sand dunes."

Spotted Plane

With a full magazine and an M-79 round in his modified M16, he engaged the six enemy, killing two, later confirmed by aircraft, the other four fled to the treeline.

Spotting an observer plane in the area, PFC Gilpin cut the top off a C-Ration can and signaled the "Bird Dog." The attempt was successful and within minutes a gunship was in picking up the wayward soldier.