

Jungle Saves Trooper From VC at Soui Da

A 3rd Bde., 4th Inf. Div. trooper sat "on the outside looking in" when the 272nd Main Force (VC) Regiment tried to overrun the brigade's forward element participating in Operation "Junction City."

Sp4 David F. Hodges of Mineral, Va., was the only man of a 12-man patrol not killed or injured during the fierce battle.

Hodges, a member of the 3rd Plt., Co. B, 3rd Bn., 22nd Inf., was situated outside the perimeter when "human wave" attacks started. His platoon immediately took casualties and the situation looked hopeless as the screaming Viet Cong came charging in.

"Four of the guys told the rest of us to get out of there and pull back," Hodges said quietly. "Seven of us tried to move back to the camp's perimeter, but the firing was real bad and we had to take cover behind a few

mounds of dirt instead."

The seven men, with Hodges the only man not wounded, were behind thick jungle cover and most of the Viet Cong didn't bother with them. Capt. Walter Shugart, Co. B commander, commented that the enemy was more interested in overrunning the base camp and weren't worried about isolated pockets.

"A whole pile of VC were coming down a trail right at us, but went to the right or left when they got to our front. Finally a guy—I think he was a medic because he carried a bag and no weapon—ran off and brought back four buddies to take care of us."

Hodges was the only man able to fight. He raised his M-79 grenade launcher, fired one of his three remaining rounds, and killed the advancing Viet Cong. "Even after that they still kept coming down the trail," he said, "but they never bothered us."

The battle raged on for five more hours and the patrol members sweated it out. They could see Viet Cong getting hit, falling back for bandages, and charging into the camp's perimeter again. Hodges could see Viet Cong all around him, but still they left the stranded Americans alone.

Friendly artillery, firing with tubes lowered for point blank range, tore gigantic holes in the Viet Cong ranks. Shrapnel whizzed past the wounded Americans, but Hodges still remained unscathed.

When reinforcements finally arrived an armored personnel carrier from the 2nd Bn., 22nd Inf., found the Americans and carried back the wounded.

"I was sure glad to get back," Hodges said smiling. The four men who volunteered to stay behind to save their buddies were overrun and killed.

Westy Calls 4th Div. Fight Major Victory

Gen. William C. Westmoreland climbed on the hood of the jeep and stared at the men of the 3rd Bde., 4th Inf. Div. who just hours before had killed 635 Viet Cong during an attack on the brigade's forward base camp during Operation "Junction City."

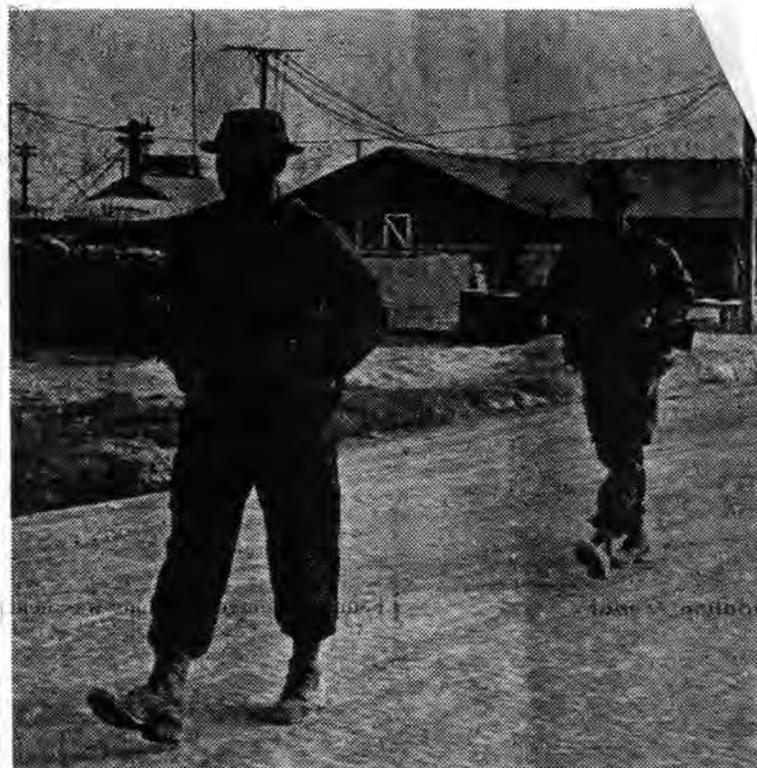
"This battle," the general said, as he squinted into the harsh sun, "is a major victory of the Vietnam war."

He explained the main reason for the gigantic battle and the effect it had on the Viet Cong morale.

"I was out of the country at the time (the general was visiting President Johnson on Guam) and the Viet Cong felt it was a good time to win a large victory and build up their morale. They wanted and needed a victory," he said.

Every man in the forward camp was engaged in the fight—many in vicious hand-to-hand battles.

"It's rare," Gen. Westmoreland said as he scanned the battlefield, "that an artilleryman has to fight like an infantryman, but you men (the 2nd Bn., 77th Arty) did an excellent job."



Volunteers who compose the "McCormick's Raiders, Ia camp for a night patrol in the rubber plantation south of the

McCormick's Raiders

'Clerks, Cooks, Candlestick Me

By Sp4 Larry Craig

Cooks, mechanics and clerks have taken up arms at Hq. Trp. of the 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav., in a newly formed voluntary organization called "McCormick's Raiders."

Knowing their supportive roles were essential to the carrying on of the war was not enough to keep up their morale under the circumstances. In January the troop got a new commander who gave the men a tremendous boost in spirits. He is Capt. John R. McCormick of Corpus Christi, Tex.

He spent the first six months of his tour behind a desk, but as a professional soldier trained in the combat arms, he felt he would be more effective in Vietnam in a combat unit, so he volunteered for reassignment to the "Tropic Lightning" division.

His assignment to headquarters troop was not quite what he was looking for but he soon found that he was not alone in his desire to go where the action is.

Many of the men of the troop had originally volunteered to come to Vietnam hoping to fight the Viet Cong in the jungles and rice paddies and after six or eight months of changing oil, typing disposition forms and frying eggs they were becoming rather bored.

Contrary to the ideas of the line troopers, they were not "pan-sies." To prevent the exodus of a lot of good men to combat units, McCormick came up with a compromise that they found to their liking.

The proposal was to form an operational volunteer unit which would go on patrols and ambushes in relief of the often overworked line troops — 25 men volunteered.

For seven days straight they underwent intensive training in mines, booby traps, anti-guerrilla tactics, map reading, communications, practice patrols inside the perimeter and physical training every morning at reveille. All this was done in addition to their regular duties.

Two weeks ago they went on a daylight rehearsal to an area



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The 2nd Bn., 35th Inf., "Cacti Blue," under the operational control of the 4th Inf. Div. encoun-

