



## Villagers Wine-Dine Skytroops

By PFC James McCabe

FSB BUTTONS — Vietnamese villagers from Song Be turned Christmas Eve into "American Appreciation Day" for 50 1st Air Cavalrymen.

The 2nd Brigade Skytroopers were invited into the villagers' homes and wined and dined in the most gracious Vietnamese manner.

"We wanted to say thank you very much for your help in the Song Be area," said Colonel Yem, Phuoc Long Province chief.

It all started several weeks ago when six villagers asked Colonel Yem to arrange for some American soldiers to spend Christmas in their homes to show appreciation for U.S. efforts.

Other villagers heard about the idea and soon the project snowballed until 25 families were involved.

Fifty cavalrymen from the three battalions at Fire Support Base Buttons attended the feast, with two dining with each family.

"I've never eaten so much in my life," said Private First Class Jeffrey Johnson. "Those people were really great."

Shrimp, chicken, fish, mushrooms, dozens of Vietnamese delicacies and even watermelon were set before the Skytroopers.

"We were served a tremendous eight-course meal, topped off with a big cigar," said Private First Class Bob Stack. "They really went all out to make us feel welcome."

"After the meal they presented us with gifts and pictures," said Private First Class Mike J. Kane. "They really treated us great and we enjoyed ourselves immensely."

## Cache Finder . . .



(U.S. Army Photo by PFC James McCabe)

The cache was still there when the 10-year-old Hoi Chanh went back to the spot where he had buried a machinegun and two SKS's before rallying to the Republic of Vietnam. The boy led 1st Air Cavalrymen from Company D, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, back to the pickup zone. See story, page 8.

## Cavalrymen Find Weapons Cache

By PFC David Roberts

FORT COMPTON — A rusty AK-47 and two old SKS's led 1st Air Cavalrymen from the 3rd Brigade to one of the largest weapons caches found in the division's area of operations.

The cache contained 50 9mm sub-machineguns, 500 60mm mortar rounds, 310 B-40 and B-41 rounds, one machinegun, 86,000 small arms rounds and an assortment of charges, fuses and small hand weapons.

"It was almost unbelievable

that the NVA had stored so many eggs in one basket," said First Lieutenant Edward L. Nelson, Jr., 2nd platoon leader. "Most of the weapons were new and still packed in grease."

The cache was found by Skytroopers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, while on a search and clear mission three miles west of Fire Support Base Fort Compton.

"We'd moved less than 100 meters from our overnight posi-

(Continued On Page 3)

## COL Mertel Takes 11th Avn. Command

PHUOC VINH — Colonel Kenneth D. Mertel has assumed command of the 1st Air Cav's 11th Aviation Group. The new commander succeeded Colonel Les Scoucek, who has been assigned to MACV.

Entering the Army in 1942, Colonel Mertel saw enlisted service in World War II. After attending Infantry Officer Candidate School, he received his commission as a second lieutenant in 1945.

He has seen overseas duty in the Philippines, two tours in Korea and two tours in Europe. He is serving his third tour in Vietnam and his second with the Air Cav Division.

Colonel Mertel first joined the Cav in 1963, when it was known as the 11th Air Assault Division. He served as the aviation staff officer. When the division was deployed to Vietnam he took over command of the Jumping Mustangs, the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry.

Colonel Mertel has lectured and written extensively on air mobility and Army aviation. He has a long list of published works, ranging from monthly

columns in "Army Aviation Magazine" to special articles in various publications to the book, "Year of the Horse — Vietnam," which describes the day by day story of the men of the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, while he was their commander.

Colonel Mertel is married and has one daughter. He is a graduate of the University of Georgia, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education.



COL Kenneth Mertel

# Activity Decreases in Holiday Lull

PHUOC VINH—Skytroopers enjoyed a Christmas ceasefire and encountered slightly decreased enemy activity during the week Dec. 20-26.

1st Air Cav units accounted for 193 enemy killed during the period.

This total represents the first week since Oct. 25-31 that enemy casualties have fallen below 300 killed.

Highlighting the week's activity was a day-long duel Dec. 20 between an entrenched North Vietnamese force and a combination of Cav helicopters, artillery and Air Force jets southeast of Fire Support Base (FSB) Mary.

It was the second straight day of fighting in the area. Fifteen NVA were killed by helicopters and artillery on Dec. 19 and 16 more the next day.

The action began with the discovery of two .51 caliber machineguns by LOH (light observation helicopter) crews of Troop C, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry. Both

were destroyed before they could be manned.

Throughout the day, Cav gunships ripped into targets revealed by the low-flying LOH's. Several air strikes and artillery kept up a rain of high-explosive ordnance.

Twice, the Charlie Troop LOH's flew in close to assess bomb strike damage only to come under fire from small groups of enemy soldiers. Cobras silenced the Red gunners in each instance.

Numerous small caches figured prominently in the week's activities.

Almost monopolizing the cache scene was the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry. Charlie, Delta and Echo Companies each discovered arms and ammunition caches Dec. 23.

Charlie Company found the largest cache south southeast of FSB Ellen on a reconnaissance mission.

From an old bunker, Skytroopers pulled two Thompson sub-machineguns, two

.30 caliber machineguns (one an old French model), three individual weapons and miscellaneous ammunition and rocket propelled grenades. The weapons were lifted out and the rest destroyed.

Delta Company, operating northwest of Charlie Company, discovered a bunker just outside its night defensive position. Inside were 20 82mm mortar rounds, an M-1 Carbine and a telephone headset.

The battalion's third cache, found by Echo troops south of FSB Jerri, was in a small bunker complex. In one of the bunkers was a scattered collection of cooking utensils, 200 rounds of small arms ammunition, a 60mm mortar round and two B-40 rockets. The material was destroyed.

Company B, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, came across a fourth cache Dec. 24 three miles southwest of FSB Jamie in War Zone C. Found in a bunker were more than 1,600 small arms rounds, 128

Chicom hand grenades, 768 rifle grenades and seven satchel charges.

Two rice caches were destroyed Dec. 23 by helicopters of Troop A, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, at separate locations in War Zone C. Some 3,180 pounds of rice contained in bags and 150-gallon drums were found in the open and destroyed.

On Christmas day, fighting subsided to a minimum, but there were occasional contacts between allied and enemy units. Four times 1st Cav helicopters were engaged by ground-to-air fire, but the birds escaped damage. The response by the choppers' crews killed five NVA.

While conducting a close-in defensive patrol Dec. 25, 13 miles northwest of Song Be, cavalrymen of Company A, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, were attacked by an NVA squad firing from trees across a small clearing.

The Skytroopers hit the ground and killed four NVA before the enemy force withdrew.

ARVN's, PFs, RFs

# Viet Forces Diversified

PHUOC VINH — ARVN, VC, RF, PF, NVA, NPFF, CIDG — it is getting to the point where one can't tell friend from foe without a program.

Everyone knows that ARVN stands for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam — they're on our side. The VC, Viet Cong, and the NVA, North Vietnamese Army, are the enemy.

But what is an RF or PF? If you were told CIDG elements were in the area, how would you react?

All of these forces can be found in the FIRST TEAM's area of operation. It is quite likely that you will work with, fight with, talk to, or at least see members of the various defense elements during your tour. It might be helpful to know who they are.

South Vietnam has three basic

levels of counter-guerrilla military activity.

The Popular Forces (PF) are drawn from the villages and hamlets, receive ARVN basic training, then return to their homes to defend them.

The Regional Forces (RF) are similar to the U.S. national guard. They also take ARVN basic training, then return to their district or previous units. They wear the ARVN green fatigue uniform with blue beret — the beret is the key to recognizing most fighting units.

Of course, the nation's primary defense mechanism is the Army. It has a three month basic training period, a six month NCO school and a nine month OCS. There is also a four-year cadet school similar to West Point.

The RF, PF and ARVN troops are all paid the same. They are all on active duty.

Four elite fighting units have been created, operating on a higher pay scale.

Each wears tiger fatigues and a distinctive beret — red for Airborne; brown for Rangers; green for Marines; and dark green for Special Forces.

Everyone wears a beret. Infantry and artillery personnel wear light blue, while the mechanized units wear black berets.

There is still another fighting group — The Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG), professional soldiers of various nationalities. They work closely with U.S. Special Forces and wear tiger fatigues but no green beret.

This leaves the NP, National Police, the NPFF, National Police Field Force and the RDC, Revolutionary Development Cadre.

Actually, the RDC is not a defense group but rather similar to VISTA volunteers stateside. These volunteers live and work with the villagers in an attempt to improve rice yields, school systems and other problems.

The National Police is found in large cities like Saigon, directing traffic, catching thieves or carrying out other duties normally associated with police work.

The NPFF is a military security force usually operating in the large cities. Dressed in brown tiger fatigues with M-16's braced against their hips, they stand guard at hotels, public buildings — anywhere terrorists might attack.

## Airborne Sandbags . . .



(U.S. Army Photo by PFC James McCabe) Second Lieutenant Robert Krause (left) and Sergeant Thomas Gutierrez, both of Company B, 8th Engineer Battalion, guide a load of sandbags to the roof of the TOC (Tactical Operations Center) at Fire Support Base Buttons, home of the 1st Air Cav's 2nd Brigade.

# ... For God And Country

By Chaplain (CPT) Patrick J. Boyle  
2/8 Battalion Chaplain

The wise person does not judge and choose according to rebellious instincts or misguided opinion—he chooses according to the teachings of God and in reference to his final end, which is to see God face to face.

He sees God's will in all things—in sorrows as well as in happiness—and surrenders to God's will in all things.

He chooses God's way freely and generously and not merely when God's will is in accord with his own.

Moreover, wisdom leads the man to be content with God's favor and guidance and not to ask for signs and wonders to prove His presence and power.

Wisdom puts charity above everything. Truth and justice alone are not sufficient, for they are never complete without charity. "Charity is the bond of perfection."

The wisdom-orientated individual sees the meaning and the eternal value of love for God, and he uses every opportunity to express this love by prayer and by helping his fellow man.

## Traffic Jam . . .



(U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Tom Benic) Traffic gets a little heavy sometimes as 1st Air Cavalrymen await their turn for a haircut at Jose's Barbershop at Fire Support Base Vivian. Specialist Four Jose Ontiveros handles up to 20 "customers" daily.

## Red Cross Links GI to 'World'

By SP4 Ron Wright

FSB BUTTONS — 1st Air Cav Red Cross representatives play an important role in Vietnam — acting as a direct liaison between Skytroopers and their families stateside.

Robert D. Means, assistant

field director for 2nd Brigade Red Cross, is no stranger to the problems of the fighting man.

He spent four years during World War II flying P-51 pursuit fighters and is well aware of the need for services Red Cross offers.

The Red Cross handles 33,000 messages a year between servicemen and their homes. Some 1,500 a month come from the Cav.

"We handle everything from birth and illness to family concern for the individual soldier," said Means. "Welfare of the immediate family is our primary concern."

When an emergency arises, the Red Cross is quick to act. A man with an emergency at home can be there within 24 hours of the time he receives the notice.

"In one case, we had the man

on his way three hours after the emergency was reported to his hometown Red Cross," Means recalled.

The Cav has Red Cross offices in each brigade with the division office operating out of Phuoc Vinh. There is also an office at AG rear in Bien Hoa, where emergency leaves are approved.

"The Red Cross can only be efficient if the soldier knows how to use it properly," Means said. "If his family knows to contact the local Red Cross rather than writing to the serviceman himself, we can have him on his way the same day rather than forcing him to wait until we contact the home chapter from here, not to mention the seven day delay caused by the mail."

With the Red Cross nearby, the Skytrooper knows he's only a phone call and a 19-hour ride from home if the emergency is demanding.



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- Lay-out Editor . . . . . SP4 Dennis Keenon

### Battalion Correspondents

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# Analysis Team Checks Craters

PHUOC VINH — Its technique may not win plaudits from scientists, but the 1st Air Cavalry Division's "crater analysis" team gets the job done.

The 1st Cav's 1st Battalion, 30th Artillery, crater analysis team, whose job is totally unrelated to the test tube and stuffy lab atmosphere of science, goes to work the minute incoming rockets start hitting.

The team — Sergeant First Class Hugh B. Jackson, Staff Sergeant Selwyn R. Thompson and Specialist Five Alan J. Nickerson — examines craters left by incoming rockets to determine the type of round, angle of impact and direction of origin.

The information, often gathered while other incoming rounds are hitting, enables artillery units to get an accurate idea of the enemy's location and to engage it with effective counterfire.

Speed is an important part of the team's job.

"Usually, we've gathered our information within 10 minutes after the round has hit and we have passed it along to artillery," Sergeant Jackson said.

Hearing the sound of incoming rockets overhead, the team doesn't run for the cover of a bunker but for its jeep and the area of impact.

"Most times, the remains of the incoming rockets are too hot to handle when we reach them," said Specialist Nickerson.

# Laundrymen Don't Scare

FSB BUTTONS—Five tons of clothes and more than 12 thousand gallons of water are enough to scare any laundry man.

But it's all in a day's work for 1st Air Cav Quartermaster Sergeant Lucas Gatson and the 12 men who work with him.

Located at Fire Support Base Buttons, home of the 2nd Brigade, the laundry serves two battalions in the Song Be area. The huge volume of laundry keeps the shop open 20 hours a day.

Sergeant Gatson insures that laundry brought in by individuals, platoons or companies will be clean and ready for pick up in two days.

"It's a big job but we have the equipment to handle it," Sergeant Gatson said. "Yet we're ready to move out on an hour's notice."

# Cache Found—

(Continued From Page 1) tion when I spotted two SKS's and a rusty AK-47 laying on the ground," Specialist Four Bill Meyer, pointman for the second platoon, said. "We moved in for a closer look and saw what appeared to be an old NVA bunker."

It turned out to be a 15-foot square underground arsenal, fully equipped with a bamboo floor and shelves.

Two 82mm mortar rounds had been set up as booby traps guarding the entranceways to the cache. Specialist Meyer, quick to spot the booby traps, warned the Skytroopers of their presence.

The weapons were removed from the bunker and humped back to the forward observation base by the Air Cavalrymen. It took four hours and seven sorties to move the weapons from the jungle to Fort Compton.

The remaining munitions along with the two 82mm mortar rounds that had been set as booby traps were destroyed in place.

# Candlepower . . .



(U.S. Army Photo by PFC James McCabe)

Slashing through the night with 120 million candlepower, Flashlight One, operated by the 1st Air Cav's 1st Battalion, 30th Artillery, destroys the enemy's cover of darkness from high atop Nui Ba Ra mountain. Specialist Four Ed Olenik makes sure that the light will operate properly later in the night.

# Searchlight Cuts Defense

By SP4 Ron Wright

FSB BUTTONS — Carrying a torch for Charlie, Flashlight One, situated atop Nui Ba Ra mountain puts 120 million candles into action at the flick of a switch.

Slashing through the darkness, the searchlight cuts the last defense of the enemy against the firepower of the 1st Air Cav's 2nd Brigade — night.

Shining from a height of 1,000 feet above Fire Support Base (FSB) Buttons, home of the 2nd Brigade, the searchlight beacon

can illuminate a large circle around its mountain perch.

Both maintenance and operation of the light is the responsibility of a team from 3rd Platoon, C Battery, 4th Battalion, 60th Aerial Defense Artillery, presently under operational control of the Cav.

"This is the best of our stations," said Private First Class Roger Phillips. "It gets dangerous on ground level bases, shining a light through the smoke of an attack — the light is an obvious target for enemy."

The mountain-top searchlight is one of several spotlights operated by the platoon. Teams switch from one to another every few weeks.

In addition to the visible light, now familiar to the defenders of

FSB Buttons, the light can produce an infra-red light used primarily for the defense of the mountain top.

From its relatively secure position high in the air, the team puts its beam into action each night when one of the bases call on it to light up the defensive perimeter.

Only an occasional complaint — "Hurry up, it's cold up here" — comes over the radio from Private First Class Donnie Leonard, as the cold mountain breeze shares the night with the light.

But the defenders of FSB Buttons and other firebases around Song Be know they can depend on the men atop Nui Ba Ra for light anytime it's needed.

# Test Fire . . .



(By U.S. Army Photo)

Skytroopers from the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, test fire the M-60 machinegun to insure that it will function properly in a real firefight.

# RVN Native Heads 'Bird' Repair Crew

By SP4 Barry H. Bjornson  
BEARCAT — A Vietnamese leading a team of Americans?

It's a familiar sight for the men of the 1st Air Cav's 15th Transportation Battalion stationed at Bearcat.

Nguyen Huu Uy is the foreman of an 11-man civilian aviation team working with Skytroopers in the Cav's helicopter maintenance battalion.

They perform major overhauls on CH-47 Chinooks of Companies A and B of the 228th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion (ASHB).

Uy left his native Vietnam at age 17. He spent 12 years in the United States, working for his aeronautical engineering degree at Northrop Institute in Inglewood, Calif. He worked several years for Boeing in Pennsylvania.

He returned to Vietnam with the Lockheed aircraft maintenance team because he wanted to aid in the struggle for peace in his country. Two of his brothers serve in the Vietnamese armed forces.

The employment of civilian teams to work on the mighty Chinooks is a new idea. Formerly, all Chinooks were sent back to the States after 1,800 flying hours. There they received complete overhauls, coming back to Vietnam a new aircraft.

Due to the cost and lost flying time, the aircraft are now overhauled here after completion of 1,800 air time.

There are 24 Lockheed teams working throughout Vietnam. Another team will soon arrive in Bearcat, due to the large amount of work.

The team, consisting of an inspector, an electrician, five sheet metal men and four mechanics, does a thorough job on the aircraft.

The men go over the Chinooks carefully, dismantling and cleaning everything. If a part looks worn, it is replaced. Areas of high stress get close attention.

The effort of the team is a major factor in keeping the air in the airmobile 228th ASHB.



A member (above) of Combat Tracker Team No. 1 (62nd Infantry) checks out the bushes while on a mission with the 1st Air Cav's Company C, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry. The tracker team's job is to "re-establish contact with the enemy." Two trackers (below) check out a structure, looking for a cache. This time the Skytroopers came up empty handed.



Bruce (above), a black Labrador Retriever, and his handler, lead Combat Tracker Team No. 1 (62nd Infantry) and members of the 1st Air Cav's Company C, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, on a mission near Fire Support Base Buttons. After an uneventful day (below), the team—one of four assigned to the Cav—hikes back to basecamp.



# Trackers 'Dog' Charlie's Steps

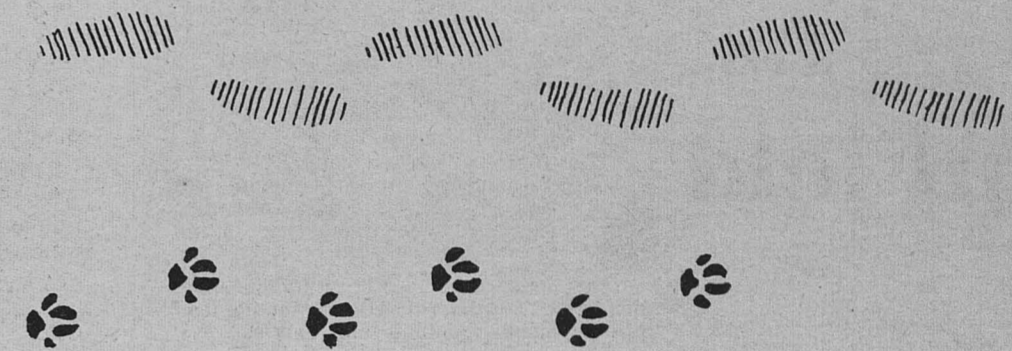


Photo-Story by PFC James McCabe

**FSB BUTTONS**—On a sharp hand signal from the platoon leader, the squad dropped into a crouch and froze—everyone, that is except Bruce.

With his ears perked up and his nose delicately sniffing, Bruce carefully probed the dense elephant grass for the scent of the enemy.

Bruce is a black Labrador Retriever, a tracker dog, belonging to the 1st Air Cav Combat Tracker Team No. 1 (62nd Infantry), currently operating from Fire Support Base Buttons.

"Our mission is to re-establish contact," explained First Lieutenant Richard Braumer. "We are normally used, say, if a unit springs an ambush and some of the enemy soldiers get away."

One of four combat tracker teams assigned to the Cav, Team No. 1 spends three weeks working out of a brigade headquarters, then returns to the division's Phuoc Vinh basecamp for a week.

Operating on a mission basis, the tracker teams receive their assignments from the brigade. They stay on a mission as long as they're needed.

"If we don't find what we're looking for in one day, sure, we'll stay a week, two weeks, a month as long as we're tracking," said Lieutenant Braumer.

Bruce, the glamorous member of the team, is "worth somewhere between \$1,500 to \$1,800," estimated Private First Class Walter Phillips, the team's dog handler.

"From 1965 to 1967, Bruce was used in Borneo and Malaysia by the British," said Lieutenant Braumer. "He was sold to the Americans when they started a combat tracker program."

Since his assignment to Vietnam, Bruce has been wounded twice. He spent two weeks in a hospital last January recuperating from a claymore-inflicted injury.

How does the enemy feel about combat tracker teams and their keen-nosed "point-dog?"

"They know that we are being deployed because they lay deceptions, backtrack," said the lieutenant.

"All dogs, visual trackers, have some kind of price on their heads, but we don't know how much," added PFC Phillips.

Bruce had no comment on that.

# Grunts Learn Fast InField

By PFC Robert Hackney

FSB JAMIE—Lessons on life in the field come fast and must be absorbed immediately by the new men in the 1st Air Cav as Private First Class Jerry Olson and others soon find out.

"I thought I'd be handed an M-16 before I got off the plane," said PFC Olson. "That was the first of my surprises."

The rifleman from Charlie Company, like all new men joining the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, was first given a welcome and then a briefing explaining his job by the battalion commander.

An intelligence report familiarized him with his company's past and current activities, and the job that the battalion was performing in its area of operations.

Then came the field.

"At first I looked around so much to see what was going on that I didn't even know where I was walking," said Private First Class David Burl, another new Skytrooper. "But after I saw nobody else was worried, I calmed down."

One adjustment the new man faces is becoming accustomed to the sounds of the jungle at night.

"The first night I had guard, I thought I heard an enemy company moving out there," said PFC Burl. "I just knew they were going to come charging right at my bunker."

Also, a new man has to pick up the slang, nicknames and improvised uses for the load of equipment the infantryman carries.

He also finds that it takes at least twice as long to perform simple tasks that the experienced grunt handles in minutes.

"The first time somebody asked for a '38' (can-opener), I started looking around wondering if I was supposed to have a revolver," PFC Burl laughed.

But, with the help of experienced veterans, the new man rapidly learns how to mix his peanut butter and jelly to make C rations tastier and how to set down his box ammunition without making noise, acquiring the skills and knowledge that enables him to live in reasonable comfort and security in the jungle.

# RANGERS

## 2/7's SGT 'Ski' Prepares Recon Platoon for Patrols

By PFC Robert Hackney

FSB JAMIE—You might call it "rangerization" but by whatever name, members of Sergeant "Ski's" 1st Air Cav recon platoon are believers.

Sergeant First Class Thomas L. Orzechewski took the Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, recon platoon through an intensive nine-day training period to prepare it to function like a ranger unit, staying out in the field for five days, then coming in for two days to resupply.

Its objective will be to find landing zones and "hot" areas where line companies can be inserted. And this is the way Sergeant "Ski" wants it.

"The recon platoon should be more capable of looking for and finding the enemy," the sergeant said. "The advantage is in being a small-sized force with greater mobility.

"Long range is no handicap — the recon platoon can move anywhere in any direction and still make its objective."

Sergeant Orzechewski, orphaned during the Korean War, was adopted by an American family and brought to the United States in 1954. He wanted to return to Korea, so when he was old enough he

joined the Army and served two years in Korea as an infantry instructor.

His first Vietnam tour was also with the Cav as a recon platoon leader and now the nine-year Army veteran, is back training soldiers in the FIRST TEAM's 1st Brigade.

After a day of test-firing and zeroing weapons, the recon platoon spends three days practicing tactical formations such as fire and movements and the quick kill technique under simulated combat conditions.

Then everybody packed up and goes on a four-day mission to the field.

"A quick reaction to contact situation is most important, and this must be learned," Sergeant "Ski" said. "Once you practice and learn how to do it, it's as easy as eating with chopsticks. At first it's hard but after you practice it, you can catch a fly in mid-air."

Sergeant "Ski" feels that the American soldier is not at a great disadvantage fighting an unconventional jungle war.

"We can adapt to the environment easily because of our supply and support," he said. "But the key to success is to have devoted people."



Where does a hard working 19-year-old English fashion model go for some sun and sand? Anna Leigh seems to have found the answer on the French Riviera where she certainly softens up this rocky strand of beach.

# Thanks for the Memories

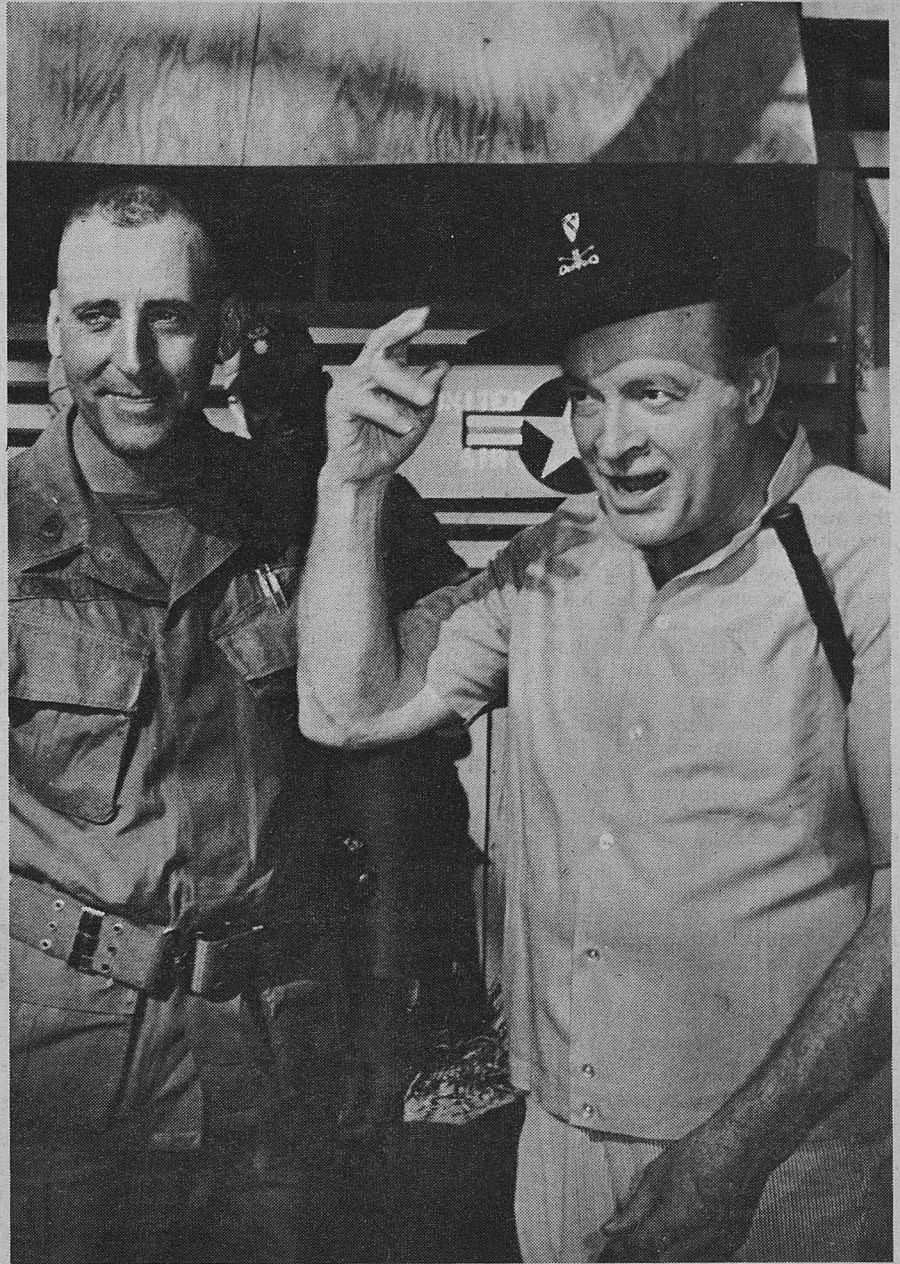
*Phuoc Vinh*

*Dec 25, 1969*

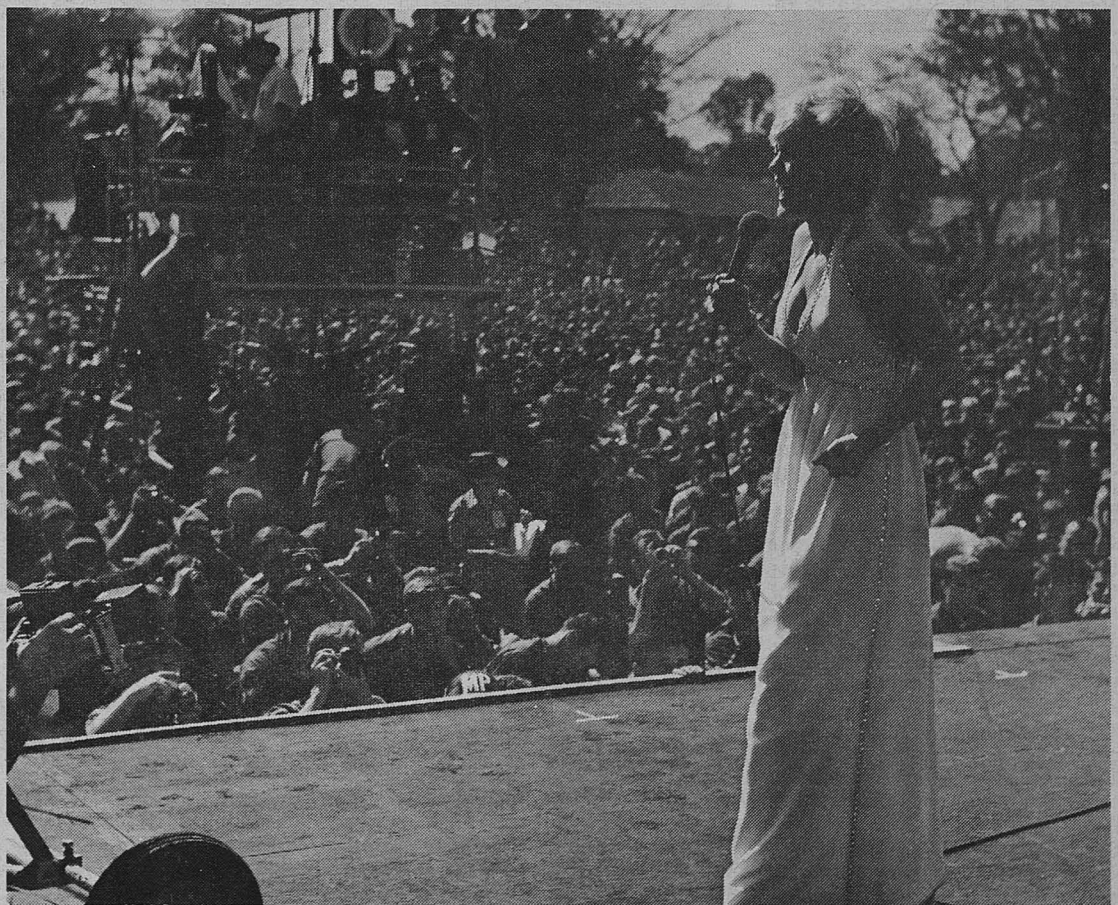
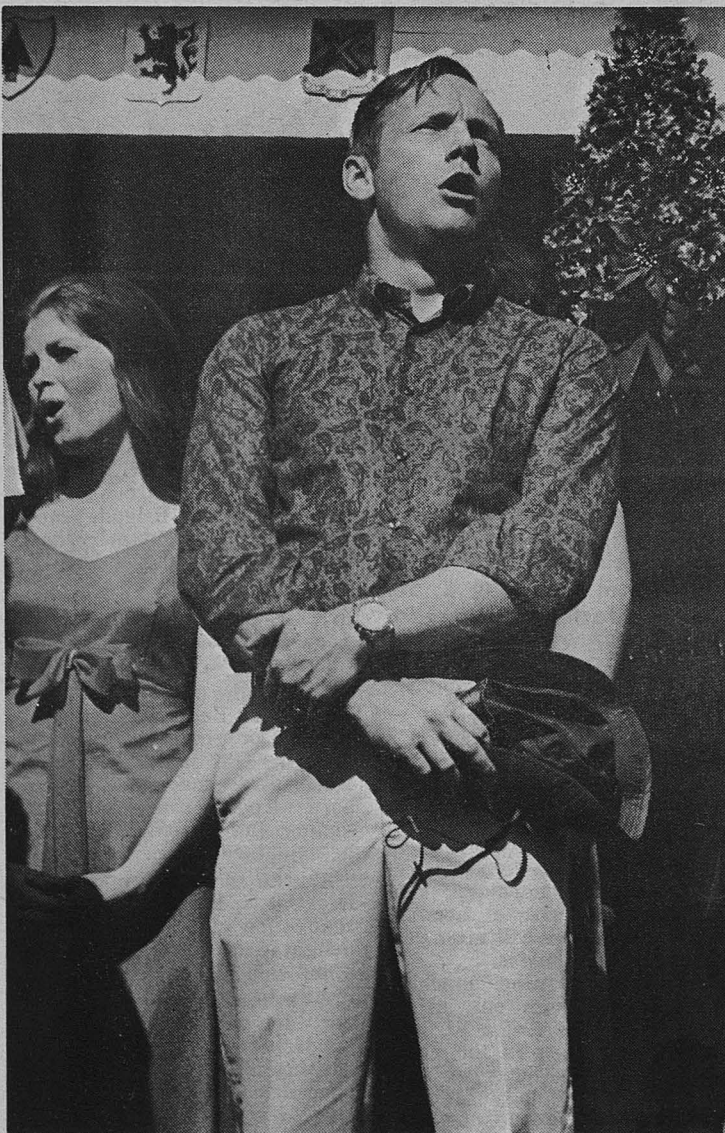
*Dear Mr. Hope:*

*Skytroopers of the 1st Air Cav Division would like to thank you for making Christmas, 1969, one we'll never forget. Your troupe gave our spirits a tremendous lift during your three-hour performances in Lai Khe, Cu Chi, and Long Binh.*

*Thanks for the memories,  
1st Air Cav Skytroopers*



Bob Hope accepts the traditional cavalry hat from 1st Air Cav Sergeant Major Lawrence E. Kennedy following Hope's performance at Lai Khe. Members of the Hope Christmas show included the Les Brown band, astronaut Neil Armstrong, singer-actress Connie Stevens, singer-dancer Teresa Graves of the "Laugh-In" television show, dancer Suzanne Charny, the 13-girl dance group "The Goldiggers" and Miss World, Eva Rueber-Staier of Austria.



Astronaut Neil Armstrong (left), first man to walk on the moon, joins with the Bob Hope Christmas show cast in singing the finale, "Silent Night." Actress-singer Connie Stevens (above) belts out a tune for Skytroopers at Lai Khe. Air Cavalrymen also saw Hope shows at Cu Chi and Long Binh.

**Cavalair  
Staff Photos**

# Civilians Working In Vital Positions

By PFC David Roberts

**FSB BUTTONS** — While their fathers and husbands are fighting the NVA, more than 300 Vietnamese civilians are doing their part at home by working at this 1st Air Cav basecamp.

Filling vital jobs, ranging from kitchen help to construction of bunkers, the women and youths are most often working to fill the economic gaps while the men of the family are fighting with the ARVN forces.

"They are hired just as they would be in any other job back in the States," said Captain Bryan J. Fitzgerald, civilian personnel officer of the Cav's 2nd Brigade.

A civilian seeking a job at Fire Support Base Buttons first undergoes a thorough National Police investigation which checks family background and personal history.

Records are sent from the local National Police to Long Binh, where a security clearance is issued. After a medical examination, the Vietnamese is ready to start work.

"The workers range in age from 16 on up," Captain Fitzgerald said.

Most of the fringe benefits giv-

## Youngster Leads Way To Cache

By SP4 Ron Wright

**FSB BUTTONS** — Children bury the darndest things, as Company D, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, found out when a 10-year-old Hoi Chanh directed it to a cache site containing one machinegun and two Russian SKS's which he buried himself just before rallying to the government.

"We thought maybe we were being led into an ambush," recalled Specialist Four Benjamin P. Gueverra.

Under the cover of a heavy ARA (aerial rocket artillery) prep, 1st platoon combat assaulted into the area of the cache with the young rallier in the lead.

The trail to the site led the platoon through an old Chieu Hoi Center, across a swamp and about a mile through heavy jungle.

"Our guide had numerous lapses of memory about the exact location of his weapons and this did little to allay the thought of ambush," said Specialist Four William Wilmer. "But, at last, the old VC hut in which they were buried was located."

The silence of the hump back to the pickup zone was interrupted by the crack of an AK-47 from the dense jungle.

"It must have been a lookout from the cache site," said Staff Sergeant Robert J. Teague. "He seemed to be on the same trail we used."

Snapping into immediate combat posture, "we threw everything we had at him," recalled Sergeant Teague, and "we received no further fire."

As Cobras raked the woodline just in case, the Skytroopers were extracted, leaving the enemy short three weapons and one young soldier.

en to workers in the States are also accorded to Vietnamese civilians. They work an eight hour day, six days a week, with time and a half for overtime.

They receive double pay for working on Vietnamese holidays and are given medical benefits and disability compensation. In case of pregnancy, full wages are paid two weeks prior to and two weeks following delivery.

"The jobs give these people spending power they've never had before," said Lieutenant Michael Olenczuk, assistant civil affairs officer. Almost 100,000 piasters are paid the civilian help at 2nd Brigade every three days.

Civilian labor frees 1st Air Cavalrymen for other duties and, just as important, gives a boost to the economy of Song Be, capital of Phuoc Long Province.

## In Stitches



(U.S. Army Photo by PFC James McCabe)

A former VC sewing machine used for making enemy flags is now being used by Sister Mary Thomas to teach Montagnard girls to sew. 1st Air Cavalrymen from Company C, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, captured the machine when they found a VC flag factory and gave it to the school in Song Be.

## Machine Sews Allegiance

By SP5 George Vindedzis  
**FSB BUTTONS** — A one-time Viet Cong sewing machine captured by 1st Air Cavalrymen is now being used to sew up the allegiance between local Montagnards and the government of Vietnam.

Found in a cache south of Fire Support Base (FSB) Mary, the sewing machine was carried by Skytroopers through the heavy jungle to a pickup zone, and from there, backhauled to FSB Buttons, home of the Cav's 2nd Brigade.

When Company C, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, came to Buttons for base defense, company commander Captain Gerald E. Knapp approached Chaplain (Major) Eugene Allen to see if he knew of anyone who might be able to use the machine.

Chaplain Allen did. In the provincial capital of Song Be, just north of the brigade basecamp, Sister Mary Thomas operates a training school for Montagnard girls.

The chaplain knew that the

The pilot called in artillery from FSB Mary and requested an Air Force bombing run to silence the enemy gunners. The doorunner spotted one NVA half-concealed in a bunker, firing an AK-47 at the LOH. A burst of machinegun fire ripped into the bunker, killing its occupant.

With artillery and fighter-bombers making runs, it became evident that more than a few NVA were in the area.

Cobras, LOH's and artillery tore into the position through the afternoon. An assessment at dusk revealed that 15 enemy soldiers had died.

The following morning, a Charlie Troop LOH pilot brought his bird down to tree-top level, searching for signs of activity. A

sharp-eyed observer spotted an unmanned .51 caliber machinegun resting in a newly-completed firing position.

The pilot noted that the area showed extensive recent use. Cav artillery destroyed the gun and wrecked the position.

An hour later, as the LOH continued its persistent search, it buzzed over a small opening in the jungle and the crew saw a second .51 caliber machinegun, but this one wasn't without nearby triggermen.

The bird's observer spotted seven green-uniformed North Vietnamese regulars and 10 bunkers.

As the surprised NVA dashed for cover and their weapons, a Charlie Troop Cobra was already making a run on the position, and Cav artillerymen at FSB Mary were preparing for another fire mission.

The choppers destroyed all 10 bunkers, killed three NVA and counted four enemy soldiers killed by artillery. The machinegun was blown apart.

Cav helicopters continued surveillance through the day. LOH's and Cobras came under fire several more times but weren't hit.

Two Cobras and a LOH were fired on while checking one of the Air Force strikes shortly after noon and killed nine of 10 enemy troops seen moving through the dense foliage.

The second day's action left 27 NVA dead. Of the 42 killed in the two-day fight, 15 were credited to helicopter crews and the remainder to artillery and Air Force air strikes.

## Wheels Get Shiny Coat

**QUAN LOI** — Trailer wheels, even aluminum ones, aren't exactly a hot rod's dream when covered with red Quan Loi clay and a healthy coat of Army O.D. green paint, but Specialist Four Don Bentkowski knows potential when he sees it.

Specialist Bentkowski knew what he had to do as soon as he found out that several of the worn out trailers around the 1st Air Cav's 3rd Brigade motor pool had aluminum wheels, wheels that would fit a jeep.

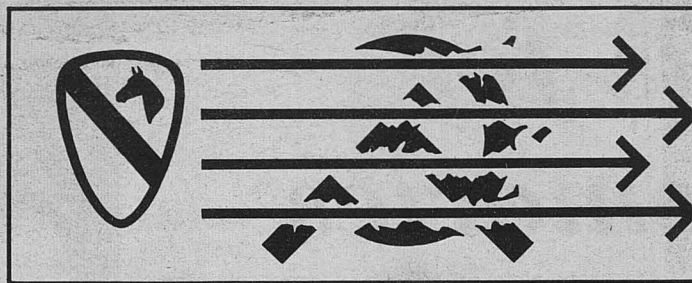
"I used to work in a body shop in Chicago, my hometown, so I know how good polished aluminum can look," he said.

Getting the paint off took all of Specialist Bentkowski's spare time. The process was simple enough. "I'd just jack up one wheel at a time, put it in gear, and hold some sandpaper against the rim while it spun," he explained.

A little touching up the hard-to-get-at spots and a wheel is ready for the basic trainee's delight — a can of Brasso and a damp rag.

With the name "Road Runner" lettered across its hood, the jeep is ready to do a little running in real style, thanks to Specialist Bentkowski's efforts.

"Now if I can just find an old, worn out supercharger..."



### ACTION OF THE WEEK