

# THE FIRST TEAM



SUMMER  
1970

*The tragic accident that killed Major General George W. Casey and six other Americans occurred as this magazine went to press. We feel that General Casey would still want the members of the Division to read the message he wrote to them for this magazine. We dedicate this issue to General Casey, a brave man and brilliant leader, and to all other 1st Air Cavalrymen who have fallen in Vietnam.*

## ★COMMANDER'S MESSAGE★

First in Manila, first in Tokyo, first in Pyongyang, first to receive the Presidential Unit Citation in Vietnam, and now, first in Cambodia. It was a new first for the FIRST TEAM in its fifth year in Vietnam.

The 1st Air Cavalry's commitment to the defense of freedom in Southeast Asia began in August of 1965. The departure of the 1st Infantry Division this year made the Cav the senior American division in the war.

In its five years, the FIRST TEAM has operated in the highlands and sandy coastal plains of I Corps, II Corps, and in III Corps from Saigon to Cambodia. The division's tactics have changed to meet the new conditions, from brigade size combat assaults in Operation Pershing, to house-to-house fighting in Hue, to the small unit tactics that characterize jungle warfare in northern III Corps, to the combined-armor-infantry sweep into the Fishhook.

Even so, no matter what the terrain, the division's basic mission has remained the same, to help the Republic of Vietnam in its struggle to preserve its independence and defeat Communist imperialism. No matter what the tactics, the division's basic tool has remained its airmobility, the ability to make lightning-quick moves of men and equipment wherever they're needed to engage and crush the enemy.

But there's another essential ingredient in the Cav's formula for success, an ingredient without which all the helicopters, artillery and weapons would be worthless. That ingredient is you, the individual SKYTROOPER.

Your bravery, spirit and proficiency, your willingness to undertake the most difficult tasks, have given the division victory after victory, often against seemingly impossible odds. You are the reason the division has repeatedly been termed by military experts and the press as the best in Vietnam.

This issue highlights the parts played by some of the key members of the FIRST TEAM. The artillerymen, the medics, maintenance men, and logisticians. All these provide critical support to the infantry and share their hardships. And, in addition, the story of the Cav's thrust into Cambodia is told here.

All are integral facets in the mosaic that makes the 1st Air Cavalry Division unique and have kept it the FIRST TEAM from the Ia Drang to the Fishhook.



GEORGE W. CASEY  
Major General, USA  
Commanding

# CONTENTS

Volume 3, Number 3

SUMMER 1970

## FIRST IN CAMBODIA

PAGE 2

## TUBE ARTILLERY

PAGE 8

## FORWARD OBSERVER

PAGE 14

## THE SQUAD LEADER

PAGE 18

## 15TH TRANSPORTATION CORPS

PAGE 22

## WELCOME TO VIETNAM

PAGE 25

## MEDICS

PAGE 28

## CAV ILLUSTRATION

PAGE 32

## CAV COUNTRY

PAGE 34

## The COVER

Front: Photographer Dean Sharp's picture shows a 2nd Bn, 12th Cav Skytrooper at the "Rock Island East" cache in Cambodia.

# THE FIRST TEAM

When President Nixon chose the FIRST TEAM to lead the strike into Cambodia it came as no surprise to Skytroopers, used to tough, important and history-making assignments. Correspondent **Ron Renouf**, was one of several Cav journalists and photographers who went into Cambodia to cover the story. He combines his experience with theirs to produce an in-depth article that begins on page 2.



The men of the FIRST TEAM's artillery lead an existence second only to the grunt in hardship. Home is a small swath sliced out of the jungle, where the tubes pump out rounds to protect and support other division elements. Correspondent and ex-Redleg **Dennis Thornton** starts his report on a firing battery on page 8, and correspondent **Ron Shirk** describes the artillery's "eyes," the forward observer team, on page 14.

Responsibility for that basic infantry unit, the squad, generally falls to a man who never saw combat before Vietnam, and serves only a few months in country before taking his position. These men's feelings about their job, and their relations with their men, are explored by correspondent **Ron Shirk**, a former infantryman. His story begins on page 18.



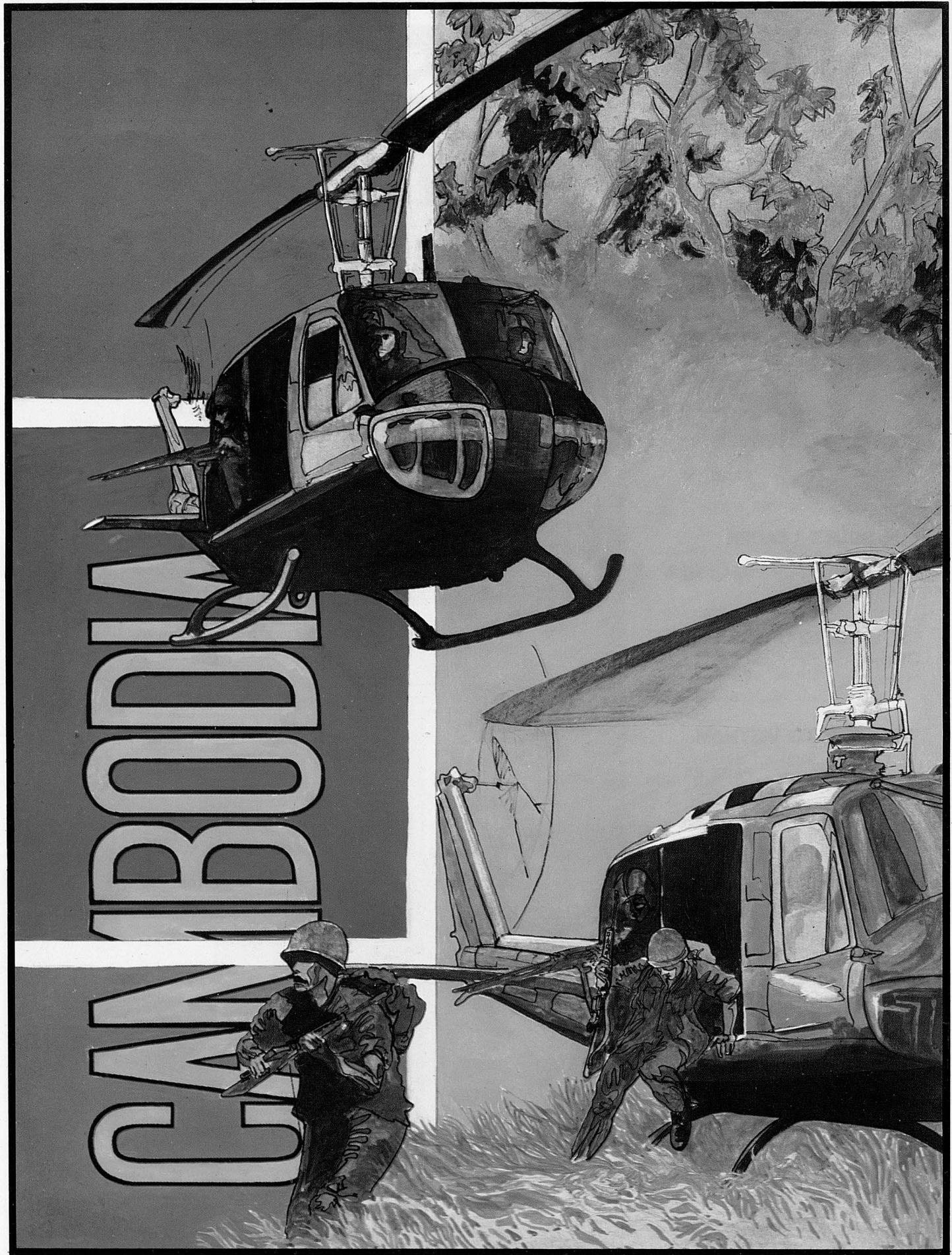
The combat medic's main concern is saving lives, but he must still undergo all the risks of the infantryman who is trying to find and destroy the enemy. Sometimes the medic is a conscientious objector who won't carry a weapon; often he is as willing as the next man to fight. In either case, his bravery is unquestioned, and many a man owes his life to his unit's medic. Correspondent **Dave Charlton**, who was trained as a medic, begins his article on page 28.

Although Skytroopers often don't have a chance to appreciate it, Vietnam can be beautiful. The men who ride convoys through Cav Country do get to see the wide variety of people and places in the III Corps Tactical Zone, though poor roads and the danger of mines and ambushes prevent the trips from being joyrides. Three Cav correspondents report on convoy trips starting on page 34.



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## by SSG Ron Renouf

The long line of helicopters dropped into the landing zone. Overhead, Cobra gunships circled, ready to suppress any enemy fire. It was similar to the countless number of combat assaults the men of Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry of the 1st Air Cav Division had made before...with one difference. When the lead Huey set down in the clearing and Specialist 4 Terry Hayes jumped onto the ground the 1st Cav was ready to meet the enemy on a new frontier—in Cambodia.

The remainder of the battalion moved in behind Charlie Company. It was D-Day, May 1, 1970. The entire world would soon focus on the 1st Cav and units under its operational control as American troops plunged across the border looking for the enemy's major food and ammo sanctuaries.

As President Nixon announced his decision to attack NVA ammo caches and other enemy sanctuaries, segments of the joint ARVN-US task force element moved across the border, led by elements of the 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry (Mechanized) and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, both under operational control of the 1st Air Cav.

The day before, D-Day minus one, Skytroopers were able to boast of being first in Manila, Tokyo, Pyongyang, and the first U.S. division to receive the Presidential Unit Citation in Vietnam. Now, another first was to be recorded by the Cav—the first U.S. division to fight in Cambodia.

On D-Day the men of the 2nd Bn, 7th Cav built Fire Support Base X-Ray, the first artillery fire base in Cambodia. X-Ray was named for the base where the Cav's first major battle in Vietnam took place in the Central Highlands during the 1965 Pleiku Campaign.

Other Cav units quickly moved into Cambodia's Fishhook to reinforce the operation. D-Day plus one brought

Charlie Company, 2nd Bn, 5th Cav to X-Ray. The following day the 1st of the 5th combat assaulted into the northern sector of the Fishhook, setting up FSB Terri Lynn. The 1st Bn, 12th Cav established FSB Evans on D-Day plus four.

Completing the first week, D-Day plus six, two additional battalions of Skytroopers smashed into Cambodia northwest of Song Be and established firebases north of Phuoc Long and Binh Long provinces. The Skytroopers moved from the bases to search for enemy sanctuaries. The new units were the 2nd Brigade's 2nd Bn, 12th Cav at FSB Myron and the 5th Bn, 7th Cav at FSB Brown.

Even before the Cav's ground troops were in Cambodia, the Cobras and LOHs

of the 1st Sqdn, 9th Cav were in the air, their sharp-eyed crews scouring the ground below for signs of enemy activity. They spotted plenty of movement, mostly Communists rapidly retreating from the contact area. Time after time the Hunter-Killer teams swooped down on the fleeing foe, accounting for many of the enemy killed by the Cav in the operation. The Pink Teams also frequently spotted the enemy complexes that contained huge stores of supplies.

D-Day plus one, May 2, 1970, Hunter-Killers of Bravo Troop, 1st of the 9th, found a major NVA military installation, soon to be nicknamed "The City," consisting of more than 300 buildings complete with all-weather bamboo walkways

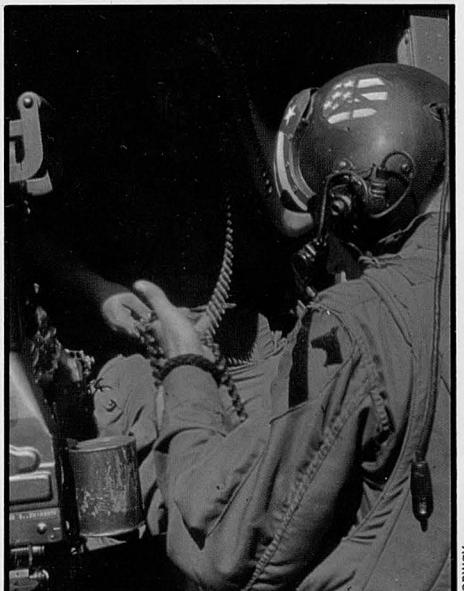


McCabe

*A doorgunner (below left) prepares for a combat assault into Cambodia. The numerous birds (above) involved in the Cambodian CAs recalled the Cav's II Corps campaigns. Once on the ground, Skytroopers found huge caches, sometimes so well dug-in that they were nearly invisible from the air, like the one below found by Bravo Company, 5th of the 7th, on Hill 434.*



McCabe



Conway



Sharp

winding through the complex.

Warrant Officer James Cyrus, a LOH pilot with Bravo Troop, discovered the complex during a routine mission.

"We found the building complex almost by accident, 12 kilometers west and 25 north of the Cambodian border. We were looking for something in the area, but didn't see anything at first.

"Then I spotted one hootch well camouflaged. Unless you were at treetop level, it would be almost invisible.

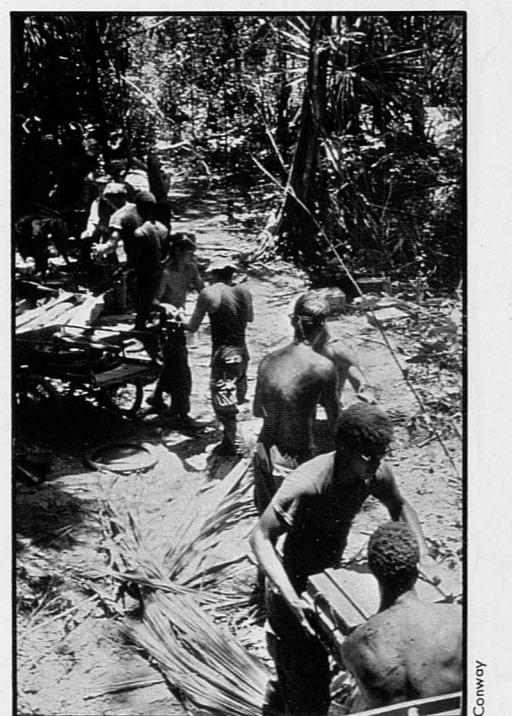
"I just followed the bamboo walks from hootch to hootch, and saw the street signs, bridges with walkways and ropes and what looked like a motor pool and lumber yard," he added.

The 1st Bn, 5th Cav was inserted the following afternoon in an area four kilometers north of the complex area. Charlie Company deployed and swept toward the huge military installation.

Refugees, flooding Highway 7 near the new FSB Terri Lynn in an attempt to escape North Vietnamese forces, confirmed the location of the installation



Among the thousands of weapons uncovered at "The City" cache were these light machineguns, brand new and still packed in cosmolene (below, left). Skytroopers use NVA-built bamboo walkways as they evacuate the material.



Conway



Conway

we've ever had," commented Captain Kevin Corcoran, the company commander.

The complex was three kilometers long and one-and-a-half wide. The buildings were bulging with arms and ammunition. In the first 24 hours of the search of the complex, Charlie Company captured four bunkers loaded with .51 caliber ammo, and one building full of weapons ranging from an old flintlock to shotguns and new SKSs, 15 .30 caliber anti-aircraft machineguns complete with wheeled carriages and extra barrels and six cases of .9 mm machineguns with drums and magazines.

Uncovered later were numerous 60 mm mortar tubes and 60 mm ammo, crated 120 mm mortars, repair kits for numerous types of weapons, two bunkers of 57 mm recoilless rifle rounds, 57 mm recoilless rifles complete with stands, two bunkers of explosives, det cord and shaped charges, and medical supplies. Many of the weapons were still packed in cosmolene—protective grease.

Also discovered in "The City" by Charlie Company's Skytroopers was what appeared to be an NVA R&R center, elaborately laid out and complete with a swimming pool.

Meanwhile, tankers from the 2nd Squadron, 47th Armor, opcon to the 1st Cav, interdicted Highway 7 in the southern portion of the Fishhook. Patrolling the area around their CP, the armored vehicles overran countless enemy bunkers that the troops methodically destroyed.

The Cav's other initial Cambodian assault, north of Phuoc Long and Binh Long Provinces, also had spectacular results.

Scout pilot Charles L. Frazier of Charlie Troop, 1st of the 9th, was on a routine recon 10 miles northeast of Bu Dop near the 2nd Brigade's FSB Myron.

"We saw a road running out of a small village. Following the road, which had been heavily used recently by trucks, we could see pallets stacked off the side of the road," recalled Frazier.

"But the overhead jungle canopy was too thick to see very far inside. Next day two of the pallets we'd seen previously were gone and we found truck tracks leading to the spot. We followed them and saw three two-and-a-half ton trucks loaded with troops in complete NVA field uniforms. They heard us and tried to dismount the truck and hide. We engaged them and killed 23 of them and destroyed their trucks."

Learning of the discovery, Lieutenant Colonel Francis A. Ianni of the 2nd Bn, 12th Cav sent Delta Company to make a combat assault into the contact area. The Skytroopers landed 500 meters north of the site and moved south, spotting two individuals but losing their blood trails in the jungle. Two platoons began sweeping the area. Fifty meters across the road they made heavy contact with an estimated 40 to 60 enemy soldiers.



Sharp

Wherever the American soldier goes—in this case, “Rock Island East” cache—his sense of humor goes with him (above). Maj. Gen. E. V. Roberts, then the Cav’s commander, confers (below) with Lt. Col. James L. Anderson in Cambodia. Col. Anderson’s 1st Bn, 5th Cav exploited “The City.”



Conway

“We broke the ambush,” said Lt. Col. Ianni, “by forming the company into an assault line that scattered the enemy.” During the contact Blue Max Cobras blew one of the caches with rockets, revealing the cache sites.

The company renewed the sweep and found several of the individual caches before setting up an NDP. The enemy hit the NDP that night in groups of two or three, moving toward the perimeter from all sides.

“The company engaged them with artillery, ARA and air strikes,” related 1st Lt. Gary Huesseed, artillery forward observer, “then things quieted down for the night.”

Toward the end of the evening Charlie Company and recon platoons of Echo Company combat assaulted into the area, joining Delta Company the next morning, and explored the site.

Nicknamed “Rock Island East” after an arsenal in Illinois, the complex extended to 40 or 50 individual caches, stacked six feet high on 20’×15’ pallets hidden in the jungle and sometimes covered with brush. The pallets were 20 to 30 meters apart on alternating sides of the trail. The cache contained millions of .51 caliber rounds and thousands of mortar rounds, recoilless rifle rounds and rockets. Large quantities of rifles, grenades and other equipment were also found.

Attention remained focused on the region north of Phuoc Long and Binh Long through the rest of May, as most Cav units moved into the area and activity declined in the Fishhook. The units surrounded a large cache site and began putting the squeeze on the enemy. The Communists put up stiff resistance, though American forces managed to hold their losses to a minimum.

Elements of the 5th Bn, 7th Cav were the first to make significant munitions finds in the area when they encountered a well fortified NVA storage complex built into a hill 26 miles northeast of Song Be.

The fight for the hill began when Bravo Company watched from another hilltop as convoy headlights disappeared at night over the distant hills. As they moved through the valley toward the lights determined delaying tactics by the enemy slowed the advance to a crawl. They spent the night at the foot of the hill and started up the next morning.

“About halfway up at a five foot ledge we began getting AK-47, machinegun and B-40 fire,” said Sergeant Pat McConwell of the recon platoon. “They could have rolled grenades down on us from up there. I’m sure glad they didn’t.”

The company withdrew and thoroughly prepped the area with artillery and air strikes before trying again the next day. “I called in artillery all night,” recalled 2nd Lt. William Harrington, “and the next morning the Air Force came in again and pounded the hell out of the

top of that hill." As the company advanced again, they were preceded by artillery barrages and Blue Max rocket runs.

The company formed into a three platoon assault line about a quarter of the way up the embattled slope. A torrent of B-40 and machinegun fire greeted them as they slogged 300 meters to the crest through heavy rain. By nightfall four hours later the muddy Skytroopers owned the hill. The enemy had left three dead and numerous blood trails. One American was killed.

The next morning the Skytroopers found 12-foot-deep bunkers cut on all sides of the hill. At the bottom of each bunker a drainage system kept the pallets—stacked high with weapons and ammunition—dry.

That cache and others found by Cav

elements in the area yielded hundreds of tons of rice and salt; and thousands of weapons and rounds of ammo. Munitions and food were not the only items found. Alpha Company, 1st Bn, 8th Cav captured 380 hammocks, 1,000 pairs of socks, 900 leather belts, and 500,000 buttons.

By the end of the first four weeks of the Cambodian operation, 1st Air Cav troopers along with units under their operational control had achieved phenomenal success. Enemy dead in the Cambodian operations counted 2,346, with 40 NVA detainees.

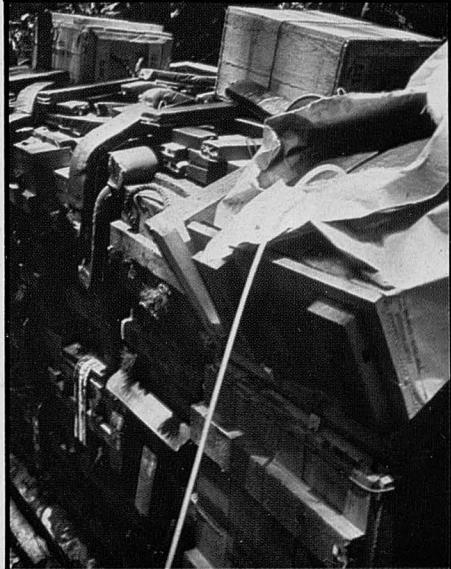
Captured or destroyed were 5,562 individual weapons, 906 crew served weapons, more than 1,636 tons of rice, more than 6 million rounds of small caliber ammo, and 40,875 large caliber rounds. 123 Americans had been killed and 366

wounded.

High ranking military officials estimated it would take the enemy months, perhaps more than a year to recover from these losses.

The time bought and paid for by Skytroopers would, according to President Nixon, "permit the Vietnamization Program to forge ahead, unimpeded. By the time the enemy forces are able to rebuild, if they do, the Vietnamese Army will be strong enough to handle the situation by itself, enabling us to continue withdrawing our soldiers from Vietnam."

Skytroopers have added another chapter, not only to the 1st Air Cav's history, but perhaps to the history of the world in the United States' continued quest for a just and honorable peace in the Republic of Vietnam. 



Sharp

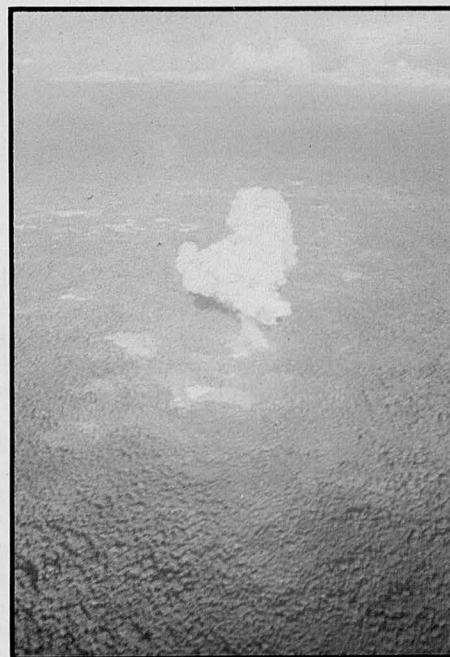


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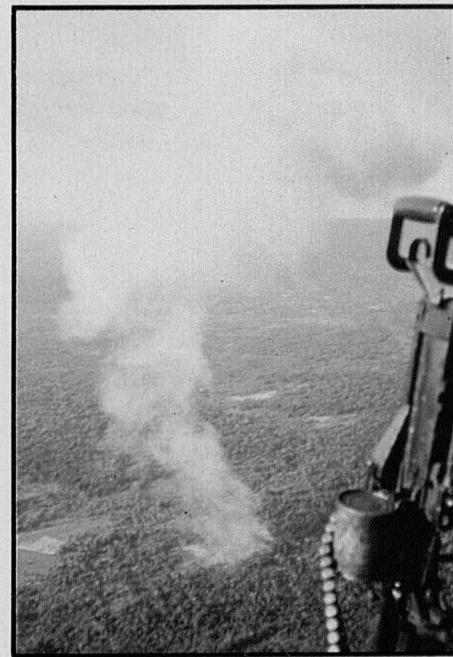
At "Rock Island East" C-4 (above) was scattered over tons of enemy munitions, then (below) explosions destroyed the cache that took the enemy months to build.



Sharp



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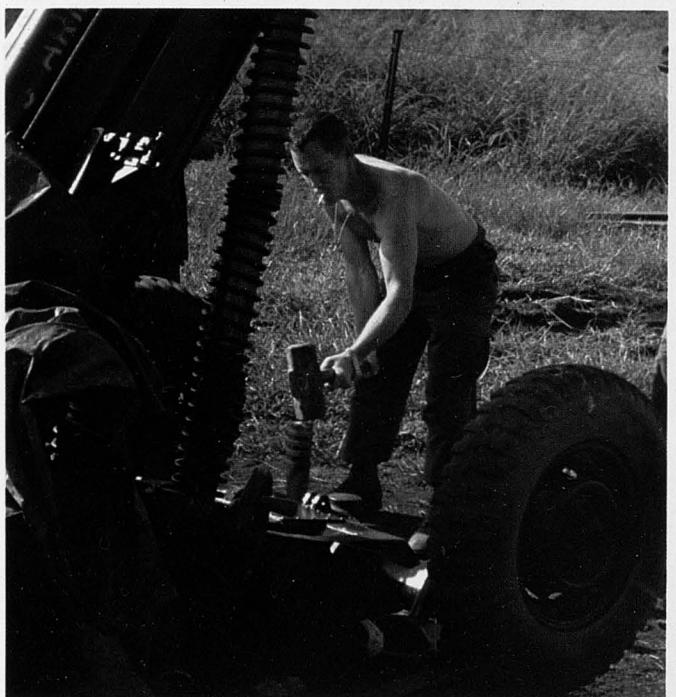


Sharp

# ARTILLERY: HITTING HARD HITTING FAST



Borchester



Redlegs at FSB Ready in Cambodia cui loose with a salvo (right). Men of the 2nd Bn, 19th Arty's Bravo Battery hump 105 ammo (above). The 105 has to be firmly emplaced (left) for accuracy.

by SP4 Dennis Thorton

From the Chinook flying at 3,000 feet, the tiny clearing in the middle of dense jungle terrain could barely be distinguished. Just enough room had been cleared out of the thick bamboo to set down the 105mm artillery pieces, build a few bunkers, and push up a wall of protective dirt. For more than half-a-hundred bare-chested, perspiring artillerymen the 200 square meters in the middle of nowhere was home—their 16th home in the last four months.

DEROS comes after 12 months of back-breaking work for an artilleryman and he takes home memories of an endless parade of firebases that he has helped build and stories of the times they "got hit." But he also carries a sense of pride in having done his job well and the unspoken



Christian

thanks of many infantrymen whose lives he has saved. He remembers the names of the firebases—proud names like Ike, Eagle, Jay, Vivian, Fort Compton, Jamie, Granite—and some that were named after his fallen friends.

Three battalions of 105mm howitzers—1st Bn, 21st Artillery; 1st Bn, 77th Artillery; and 2nd Bn, 19th Artillery—and one battalion of 155mm howitzers—the 1st Bn, 30th Artillery—are assigned to the 1st Air Cav. One battery of the smaller guns, the 105s, works with each infantry battalion. The 155mm batteries are split in half and deployed to several firebases and basecamps. Bigger guns, the 175mm and eight inch, are operationally controlled by the 1st Air Cav Division from II Field Force.

The firebase concept is the key to the airmobile 1st Cav and the batteries of 105mm and 155mm howitzers are the

cornerstone of any firebase—its very reason for existence.

Whenever infantry moves into an area, artillery follows a few minutes behind. While the artillery battery sets up its guns and an infantry company provides security, the other companies from the battalion combat assault into the surrounding territory to search for the enemy. If few Communists are found, the base is abandoned and the process starts all over again in another jungle clearing.

"We've moved 15 times in four months plus three artillery raids where half the battery moved. The days just keep going on and we keep on moving. I'm sure that pretty soon they'll run out of places to move us and we'll finally get to a permanent firebase," said 1st Lieutenant Meauman Coleman, acting commander of Bravo Battery, 2nd Bn, 19th Artillery.

Less than an hour later the artillerymen at Fire Support Base Wainwright heard the rumors, which soon became fact. "We're moving again tomorrow—back to Hannas." The wandering Redlegs had expected it. They'd been at Wainwright five days already.

Once the battery is told it's moving, usually only hours before the move is to take place, activity begins at a furious pace. The artillerymen get up before dawn and begin packing their extra ammunition into boxes. Duffle bags, flak jackets, rifles, special ammunition and water cans are neatly stored in huge bags to be slung out under a Chinook. A big three point sling is broken out of storage and hooked to the howitzer after the baseplate is pulled out of the ground. The furious activity increases as everyone from cooks to fire direction center specialists to the ammo haulers begins to tear their areas down and prepare to move. Last to go

are the radio and antenna that may still carry orders for a last minute fire mission.

With a rumble and a cloud of dust the first Chinook settles down, picks up the men, hovers to let a red hat hook up the howitzer, then takes off. The men lean against the vibrating sides and shut their eyes, enjoying their only moment of relaxation for the day.

Within 15 minutes of landing, the howitzers are emplaced and ready to fire. Strong arms have manhandled the bulky guns into position and driven the baseplate stakes into the red clay with 20 pound sledgehammers. As the gunners unpack their ammunition, the fire direction center is setting up nearby, looking strangely out of place with its charts, maps, generators and radios lying in the middle of the open field. Soon a bulldozer will begin gouging out a bunker for them.

Sandbags and ammo boxes become the basic building materials as hootches, ammunition pits and parapet walls rise out of nothing. Everyone in the battery, including the officers, NCOs, cooks and gunners, hurries to fill enough sandbags to get some overhead cover before night falls.

Their work has left them physically exhausted. They set aside some time now to sit around in the sunset coolness, read letters and talk about home, families, getting "short," and their girlfriends and wives, as the section chief tosses a few grains of excess powder on the fire perking the coffee. Two of the six gun crews will be up all night. The others will be on call.

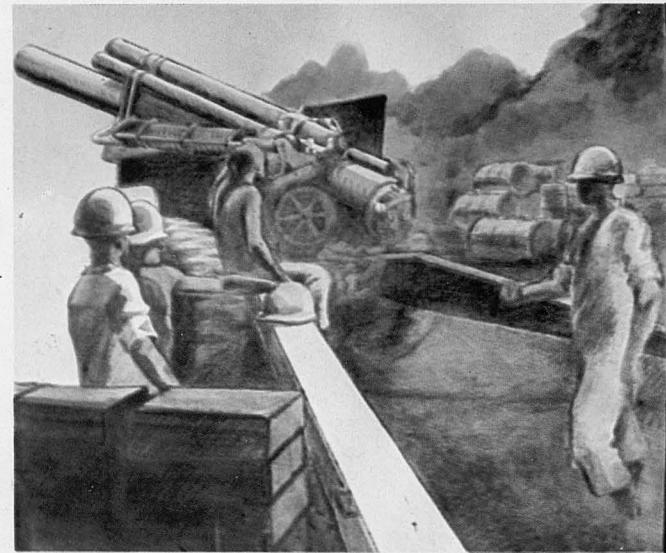
In the Fire Direction Center (FDC), half the crew will wake the other half when their 12 hour shift begins, with the men listening for the magic words "fire mission" on their radio. The battery commander is catching a few pre-

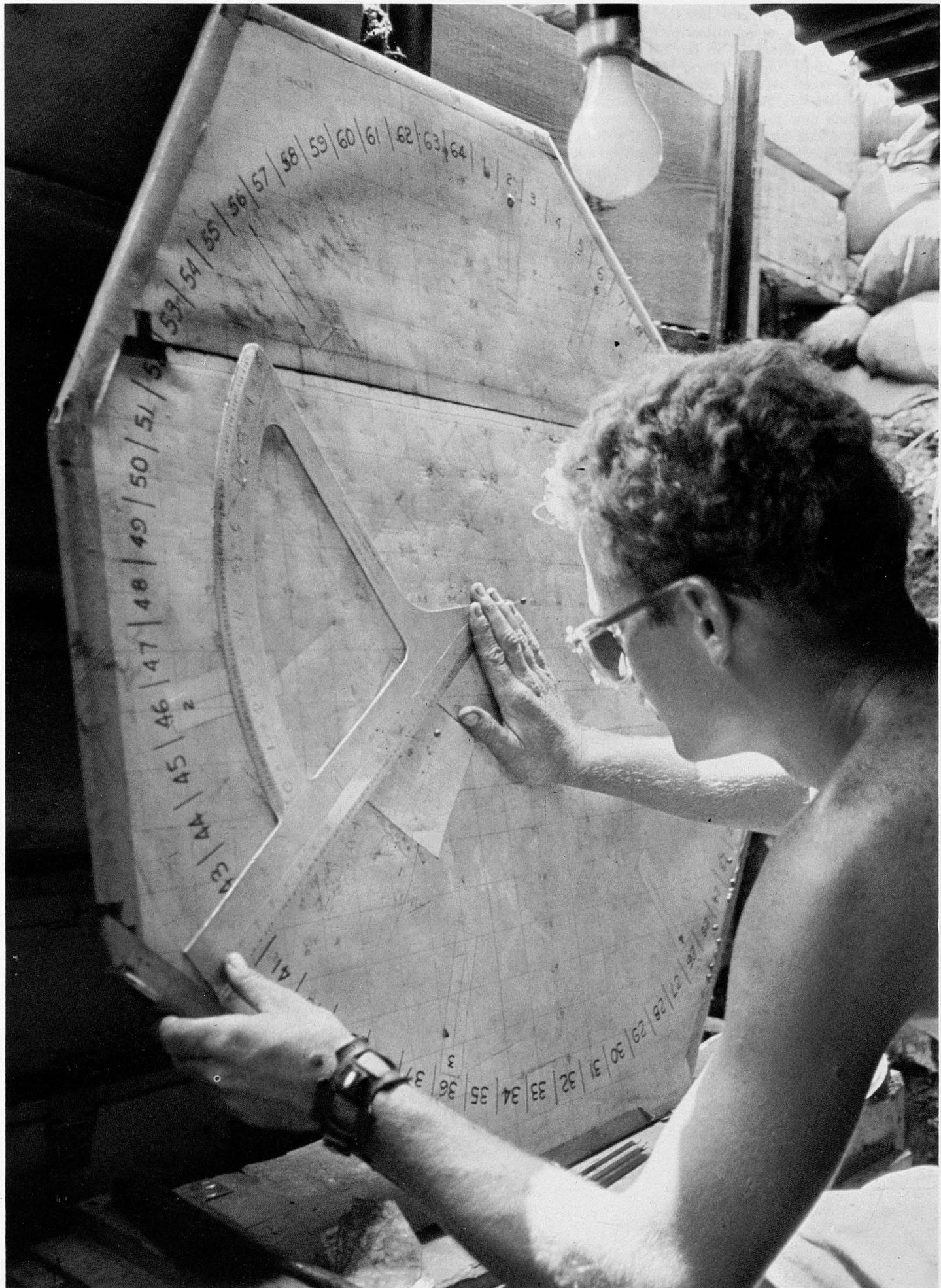
cious minutes of sleep somewhere, leaving instructions that he should be awakened whenever a mission comes in.

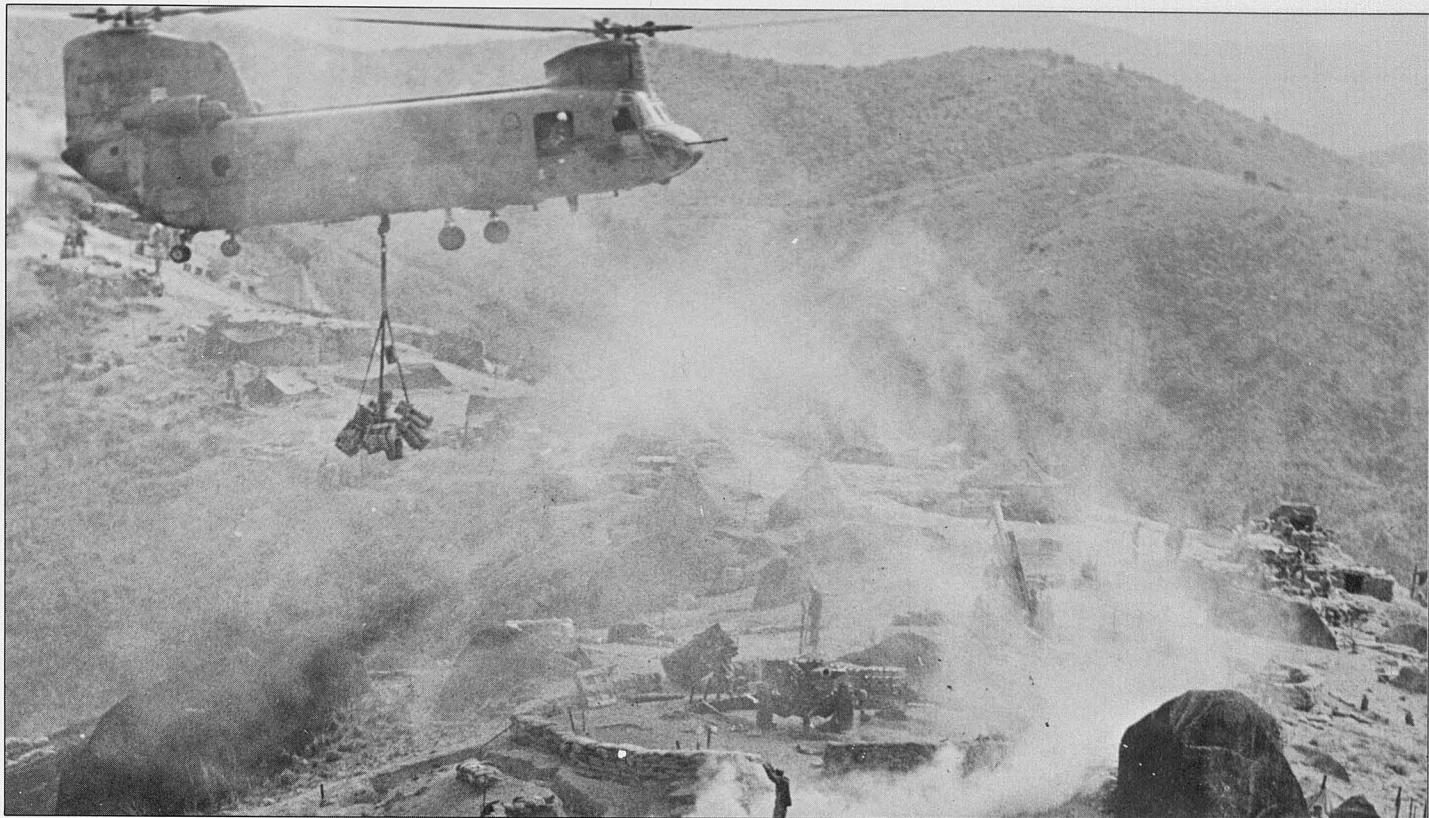
"We're supposed to pull 12 hour shifts," explains PFC Bill Walter, an FDC computer, "but we're up almost all the time." All night long the muzzles flash and waves of sound blast across the firebase, echoing back from the woodline. You get used to the noise. You have to if you want to sleep.

In the morning, the same work day starts again. Endless sandbags must be filled, PSP and culvert have to be carried from the helicopter pad and everyone is pitching in again, even those on the "hot guns" that were firing much of the night.

Then the words "fire mission" squawk over the radio. The sandbags are forgotten and the FDC rushes into action. Two men man the charts, hurriedly putting a pin in the coordinates of the fire mission and finding the range and







*Chinook helicopters (above) are the supply lifeline to Cav artillery units on isolated firebases. A chart operator in the Fire Direction Center of Bravo Battery, 2nd Bn, 19th Arty, figures the range and direction to a target (left).*

direction to the target. One computer works up the firing data as another feeds the data into the portable FADAC (Field Artillery Digital Automatic Computer). Lights on the tough little FADAC flash and the final data appears within seconds.

An RTO barks out the command "battery adjust" and everybody in the battery runs toward their howitzers. Two of the gunners furiously crank the gun into position—the proper elevation and deflection—while another copies the vital data through his phone and two more ready the projectiles and fuses.

**BOOM.** Less than two minutes from the initial radio call shells are on their way to support the company in contact several kilometers away. A sheet of hot steel is laid between the embattled infantrymen and the NVA.

During dry season the firebase often seems like a miniature dustbowl, but during the monsoon it becomes a quagmire of red or grey muck that permanently stains the Redlegs' boots, clothes and possessions, makes the dirt for filling sandbags heavy with water, and makes humping ammo a game of slipping and sliding.

Gunbunnies quickly learn that deep, deep bunkers are not nearly as effective at stopping water as they are at stopping shrapnel. Stories are told of Redlegs who woke up to find themselves and their airmattresses floating on three feet of monsoon tears.

The only advantage to the monsoon downpours is that the frequently watershort artillerymen can stand in the deluge and shower. Of course, if the rain stops too soon, a Redleg may find himself completely lathered with no way to rinse off.

The routine of mud, dust and fire missions against an unseen enemy is broken when the Communists launch ground and indirect fire attacks against the firebase.

"Our first reaction is to get in the bunker. But if the rounds are landing a little ways away and it doesn't look like they're walking towards us, we come out and get on the gun and start to pump out rounds," said Specialist 4 Francis Cook. "Our section's so fast they think they've got

a minigun firing over here." In fact, Cook claims his section is the fastest and best in Vietnam.

That claim would probably be disputed by many of the other coolly professional gun sections in the Cav, who delight in baiting each other to see who gets the most rounds out the fastest.

Direct fire high explosives and "beehive" rounds have saved many firebases during ground attacks. Bravo, 2nd Bn, 19th Arty recently received the coveted Presidential Unit Citation for withstanding a vicious attack on LZ Bird late in 1966. The battery mowed down the attackers with swarms of "beehive" fleshettes.

The same battery held off NVA in three ground attacks in the first four months of 1970, at Fire Support Bases Tina, Atkinson and Jay. Bravo Battery, 1st Bn, 77th Arty endured heavy attacks at FSB Flashner and Illingworth.

When an attack starts, the gunners lower their tubes and begin pouring out a steady stream of return direct fire shells.

"During the attack at Jay the men really worked together," said Bravo, 2nd of the 19th commander Lt. Coleman. "Once I looked up and there was a guy I'd never seen before passing ammo at the number five gun. I still don't know where he came from. He isn't in the battery."

During one attack, the battery fired 1,600 rounds in 12 hours. "These guys fight like crazy," said PFC Bill Walter, who is known as "Hillbilly." "We were running low on ammunition at Atkinson and began firing illumination rounds direct fire. We hit three NVA with a round just as they were approaching the berm."

"We really kicked them around. The NVA shouldn't be bothering us too much longer now that they've seen what we could do," said Specialist 6 Arthur Ferry, who won Silver Stars for Jay and Atkinson. He had a cook's MOS but volunteered to work on the guns.

His efforts were typical of the men who man the guns at Cav fire support bases, laboring day after day as the right hand men of the infantrymen.

As one infantryman said, "Those arty boys are alllll right."





# EYES OF THE ARTILLERY FRIEND OF THE INFANTRY

Seemann



By SP4 Ron Shirk

The men moved slowly through the triple canopy jungle, weapons at the ready, watching for the slightest hint of enemy movement. Suddenly the point-man spotted the glint of metal through the brush. He cut loose with a burst of M-16 fire and dove for the ground.

Now the jungle was alive with sound. A large NVA force was on three sides of the American company, and over the chatter of small arms fire could be heard the slow, steady rhythm of .51 caliber machineguns, punctuated by the burst of exploding rocket propelled grenades. The Cav men retaliated with M-60s and their grenade chunckers, but the advantages were with the NVA.

In the midst of the confusion of battle a young lieutenant fed information to his radio telephone operator. Moments later high explosive artillery rounds crashed through the jungle canopy and into the enemy positions. As the barrage continued the enemy fire decreased. In minutes Blue Max Cobras were overhead. Using the lieutenant's directions, the Cobras whipped rockets and minigun fire into the Communists. Bombs from tactical air strikes punched through enemy bunkers. Remnants of the shattered NVA force fled into the jungle. The fight was over. Fire support called in by an artillery forward observer had broken an enemy ambush and turned it into an American victory.

The forward observer (FO) and his RTO are an invaluable asset in the communication between an infantry company in the field and artillery support. Neither of the two could be effective without the FO team.

The FO is charged with the responsibility of directing all artillery fire support for the line company. This includes both ground and aerial artillery. The ground artillery includes everything from 105 mm howitzers to 175 mm cannons, while aerial includes Blue Max Cobras and air strikes by Air Force fighter jets.

The line company's commander and the FO work together in maneuvering the ground troops and calling in fire.



The coordination is necessary to insure that the rounds are placed where they do the most damage.

"The hardest part of my job is knowing where you are," said 1st Lieutenant John Kennon, a 1st Bn, 77th Artillery observer for Bravo Company, 1st of the 12th Cav. "The terrain changes with time as the jungle fills in the open spots, and the maps aren't always accurate to start with. Knowing where I am is over half the job of being an FO."

There's a standard procedure for calling in artillery to get the rounds to the target swiftly and accurately. "Fire Mission" alerts the artillery that support is wanted. "Grid....." (six place grid coordinates) tells where the rounds are wanted. "Type of round" indicates whether illumination, marking, high explosive or firecracker. "Sit Rep" lets the fire direction center know whether the mission is for contact, defensive targets, recon by fire or other purposes.

The procedure sounds simple, but when the unit is in a firefight with the snap of AKs and blast of B-40s ringing in the FO's ears, it takes a man who can keep his cool under pressure, the most nerve-wracking kind of pressure. Said Lt. Kennon, "I never forget how to call in a mission but whenever we're in contact, my voice jumps up three octaves."

The type of round selected varies according to circumstance. The firecracker round is a special and limited use round that drops small bomblets that

fall to the ground, bounce up and then explode. "It's only effective in open terrain as the bomblets have to be able to bounce to explode," said Lt. Kennon.

The high explosive (HE) round is used almost exclusively in contact in jungle terrain. The HE round can be fused to explode immediately on contact, such as in dense jungle, or delayed so that the round will penetrate and then explode, which is especially effective in blowing bunkers and tunnel complexes.

"Illumination rounds are the hardest to call in and adjust," said 1st Lt. Timothy McKenna, another 1st of the 77th FO, "because they explode in the air and judging the distance is real difficult, especially in the darkness."

Observers in Vietnam have other problems. Artillerymen are trained at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, where barren hills make calling in artillery by sight an easy matter. "In the Vietnamese jungles," said Lt. Kennon, "we can't see where the rounds hit and have to adjust by sound rather than sight like they teach at Ft. Sill for 13 weeks.

"I bring in rounds until shrapnel is whizzing around my ears. I try to have the first round about 800 meters away and adjust toward my position by 'right or left' and 'add or drop.' If the round is closer than 100 meters, I make sure the men of the company are all down on the ground with their steel pots on or in their foxholes if we're in a night defensive position."

When calling in artillery, the FO, as a safety precaution in case a round is inaccurate, has to avoid having the friendlies on the gun target line. The gun target line is the straight line that the round travels from the gun to the target.

The infantry company in the field is authorized one lieutenant, his radio telephone operator (RTO), and one reconnaissance (recon) sergeant. During the day the lieutenant stays with the command post (CP), which includes the commanding officer of the infantry company. The recon sergeant goes with the individual platoons and sometimes even a squad when they leave the "family," the whole company, for a recon or ambush patrol. At night the FO team may move to a forward observation post away from most of the company.

The line company FO when in contact frequently has the battalion commander in his helicopter flying overhead with an aerial FO, who can greatly aid the FO on the ground in directing artillery strikes.

"Since my recon sergeant and myself can't go on every patrol that leaves the company," said Lt. Kennon, "I give instruction to the platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, and squad leaders, so they can call in artillery support when they're by themselves. Whenever the company is on the forward firebase for green line perimeter guard, I hold a couple of instructional periods in directing artillery fire, target locations, and adjusting proce-



dure."

The FO, by being with an infantry company, is a ground pounder and therefore sees much ground action. Ground tactics are important to the FO as he may become a platoon leader of the infantry if the infantry platoon leader is wounded or killed in action.

The FO's RTO, even though he usually has an artillery MOS, also doubles as a rifleman. In addition to serving as the FO's righthand man, the RTO has to be able to assume his duties when the FO is wounded or absent. The RTO has the singular distinction of being authorized to wear the Combat Infantryman's Badge, despite his artillery MOS.

Many days are routine for the FO team, if "routine" can be used to describe long, sweaty marches through thick Southeast Asian jungles searching for an elusive enemy. Every so often, though, the search has results...the moments of bravery, fear and killing that war is all about.

First Lieutenant Bill Cosh of the 1st of the 77th described how he spent one such day recently with Alpha Company, 1st Bn, 12th Cav, "The company had set up a night ambush with two platoons am-

bushing a trail in one direction and the other two platoons of the company ambushing the same trail about 200 meters away. The North Vietnamese platoon came upon one of the ambushes and it was sprung.

"Immediately, I called in Cobra's (aerial rocket artillery) to blast the NVA, who were hitting us with small arms and B-40 rockets from less than 50 meters away. We called in and adjusted artillery rounds. It was rough because all the rocket and rifle fire made it hard to tell where the rounds were landing. Besides, calling in artillery less than 100 meters from your perimeter is very risky business. Things were made all the more tense as the other ambush patrol was nearby and I had to be careful that the rounds didn't land too close to them or us.

"As Blue Max arrived, our perimeters had to be marked with strobe lights but the dense jungle kept the pilots from seeing most of the strobes. Finally, we set off hand flares, but they were all expended in less than 15 minutes. We even used a candle to mark the perimeter.

"At last, while we exchanged fire with the enemy, the brush was cleared

enough so that most of the strobes could be seen and the Cobra whipped the rockets in on target. All the while 105 and 155 HE rounds were coming in." Within less than an hour the combination of infantry and artillery teamwork repulsed the enemy drive.

Fortunately, all fire missions aren't as tense, Specialist 4 Joe Daiutolo of Bravo Battery, 1st of the 77th, said, "One afternoon our FOs in the jungles northwest of Song Be heard heavy footsteps. After calling in marking rounds, 87 rounds of HE were aimed at the footsteps. Soon six elephants came out of the jungle. Besides driving the elephants out, one of the 105 mm rounds hit a cache of rice and set it on fire."

As Lt. Kennon said, "Contact can be anywhere at any time. An FO can never completely relax."

Without the skilled human precision of the FO team, the most sophisticated support weapon would be worthless, and the infantryman would have to rely on what firepower he could pack on his back. The forward observer team... justly called the eyes of the artillery.



*Man at work: 2nd Lt. William Harrington, of the 2nd Bn, 19th Artillery, calls in hot steel for Bravo Company, 5th Bn, 7th Cav in Cambodia.*

by SP4 Ron Shirk

Leader in combat, personal counselor, a man who looks out for his men, whether in a firefight or on a landing zone—that's the infantry squad leader.

Key to the successful operation of an infantry platoon is the squad leader, charged with the dual responsibility of making sure his squad carries out the missions and goals of the platoon, and looking out for the welfare of each man in the squad.

The platoon leader through his platoon sergeant assigns tasks and operations to the individual squads and the squad leader sees that the six to ten men of his squad get the job done, whether it's filling sandbags on a forward fire support base or running patrols looking for the enemy.

The squad leader has to insure that his men have a complete ammo load so when they meet the enemy, they're ready to fight. The real test of the squad leader is his ability to think quickly and react sensibly under great pressures. The lives of his squad members depend on him and the rest of the company expects his squad to pull its fair share.

"A squad leader has to check and double check on his men all the time. I have to insure that the details are assigned fairly, and decide who carries what weapons and how the required ammo load is going to be distributed to the squad, especially the M-60 machine-gun belts," said Sergeant William Metzenbauer of the 2nd Platoon of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry.

According to Sgt. Ronald Belarski of Delta Company, 5th Bn, 7th Cav, "A squad leader is responsible for squaring a new man away with infantry techniques in Vietnam. You know he's squared away when he makes it through his first firefight and has faced the hard facts of the infantry."

The squad leader also has to help his men solve any personal problems they have. If their minds are on difficulties at home, or if they think they're not getting a fair deal in promotions or duties, they're not going to function as well as they should in the squad.

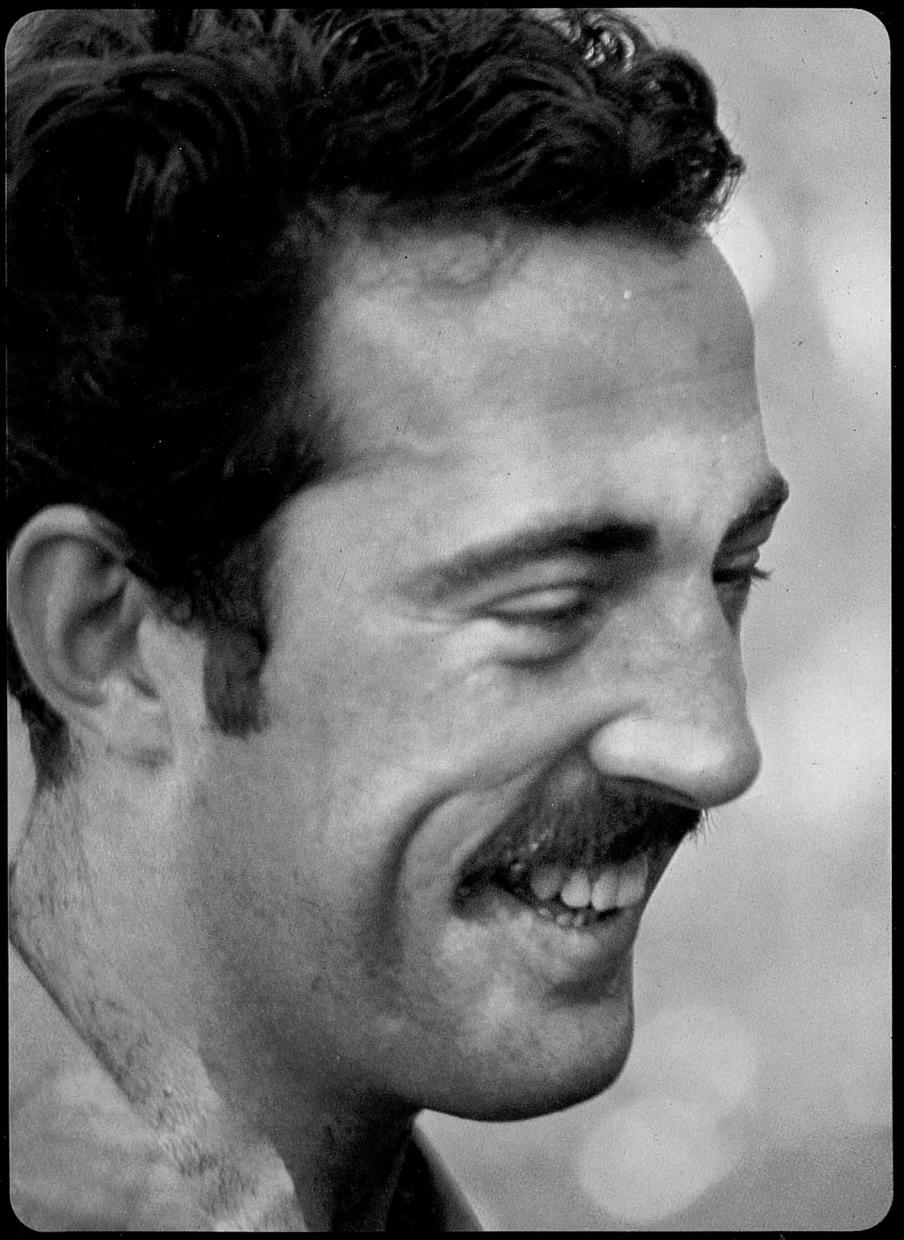
A smoothly functioning, tightly knit squad is essential when a unit is in contact. Sgt. Pat McConwell of the reconnaissance platoon of the 5th of the 7th described one of his squad's actions in Cambodia. "Echo Recon Platoon had been placed with Bravo Company to assist it in taking a hill where the enemy was strongly entrenched.

"After we got on the ground, three platoons got on line and we moved up a steep, rocky hillside. Around 2 p.m. a platoon-sized enemy force fired on us with .30 caliber machineguns, AK-47s, rocket propelled grenades and Chicoms. The enemy was everywhere. We were on the right flank with the NVA straight in front of us in bunkers and trees.

Wilson

McCabe

# SQUAD LEADER





*A squad leader for the Echo Recon Platoon of the 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, chunks an M-79 grenade into an enemy held bunker on Hill 434 in Cambodia, site of a large cache that the enemy fought hard to protect.*

"The fighting was very fierce as we maneuvered and climbed the hill. My squad did an outstanding job in keeping on line and laying down a base of fire as we moved up."

The effective squad tactical operations rousted the enemy from their positions. They left three dead and numerous blood trails, while the U.S. forces suffered one killed and three wounded. The hill contained one of the largest supply complexes found in the Cambodian operation. Among the supplies, weapons and ammunition were enemy pistols and holsters that the men could take as souvenirs. "I paid a lot of sweat to get this war trophy," said Sgt. McConwell.

Many times there are no trophies after a contact, just satisfaction that the job is over. Belarski remembered one instance. "We'd spent a couple of days on the same trail and the second day we met the enemy. Because of the tactical situation we didn't get resupplied so ended up going four days on a two day resupply. Man, was I every thirsty and running for the bird when it finally brought log."

When he isn't humping, an infantry squad leader often finds himself working on a fire support base. "We immediately become construction workers once we hit a landing zone. Besides building bunkers, we always have mountains of sandbags to fill," said Sgt. David Edrington, Delta Company, 5th of the 7th. "There are never enough sandbags

filled and a squad leader always is having to have his squad pull a sandbag detail."

"Once we get to an LZ fairly well built, the squad always has miscellaneous details such as barbed wire, police call, and nightly stand-to," said Staff Sgt. Wilburn McMillen. The stand-to consists of the officer of the day pulling an inspection of the men on the green line guard. "I have to make sure I have men for the details or the squad ready for the inspection. I also make sure my squad doesn't get more details than it should and that the men get the breaks they deserve."

Some of the other responsibilities of the squad leader are quite pleasant. "I'm in charge of the distribution of all resupply to my squad," said Metzenbauer. "As such, I distribute the sundries packs that the men are always anxious to receive, especially for the candy and cigarettes." The squad leader also gives each man his fair share of food and water. As the men's supervisor, advisor, supplier, and leader in crisis, the squad leader is like a father. As someone who has often come up through the ranks and is a friend of the men, the squad leader is like an older brother.

The infantry squad leader in Vietnam is often a draftee. He goes through basic and advanced infantry training the same as all infantry soldiers. Some join the service with

*A squad leader from Echo Recon Platoon of the 5th of the 7th zeroes in on enemy positions on Hill 434 in Cambodia (below, left), as a machinegunner in his squad puts out fire. The platoon sergeant (below, right) crawls toward an enemy bunker, which he destroyed with a grenade. A squad on line rakes the Communists' entrenchments (opposite page).*



the intention of going to Non-Commissioned Officer's School after basic and AIT. Others decide or are chosen during training to go to the NCO school at Fort Benning, Georgia.

After 12 weeks of applied class work at the school, the NCO candidates are promoted to the rank of E-5 and complete two months of on-the-job training, usually with an infantry training company.

Staff Sgt. Johnny Zimmerman from the 2nd Platoon of Delta Company, 5th of the 7th, was in the top five men of his NCO class and was thus able to obtain the rank of staff sergeant. "I wanted to become a squad leader so I could make decisions for myself and have more control over my fate in the field. Besides, the rank of sergeant within one year's time sounded good to me."

Other squad leaders are men interested in serving with the combat infantry. McMillen returned to Vietnam for a second tour. "I hated stateside duty. There I wasn't in my assigned MOS while here I am, and I dig on it, especially being a squad leader."

Many infantry squad leaders obtain their rank in Vietnam. They learn and get the job by sharing all the trials and experiences of the men, and proving themselves in combat. Metzenbauer came to Vietnam in October as Private E-2, moving up in rank by hard work in the squad. After

five months with his company he received an impact promotion to sergeant. He said, "I came here with no idea that I would become a squad leader and can hardly believe I've made sergeant so quickly."

Metzenbauer had just taken over his squad when it was assigned to walk point for the company. They were moving up an incline when his point man spotted telephone wire that led to a bunker. "We neared the top of the hill when suddenly all hell broke loose. There were B-40 rockets followed by .30 caliber machinegun and AK-47 fire.

"We fought for two hours. A company-sized enemy force tried to flank our column and separate our platoons which had made hasty perimeters. After we got the machineguns in our company spraying the area, we gained fire superiority and kept it. Blue Max Cobras came and pumped a lot of aerial rockets into the enemy bunkers.

"After the firefight, we called in Medevac for our wounded men and had no problem in evacuating them. Only by working together had my squad, the point element, resisted the NVA effort to overrun us."

Working together, the men of a squad working with a leader who's one of them and who has their respect, basic factors in the formula for infantry success.



# they keep the cav flying

by SP5 Jerry Norton

For want of a nail, a horseshoe, a horse, and ultimately a battle were lost.

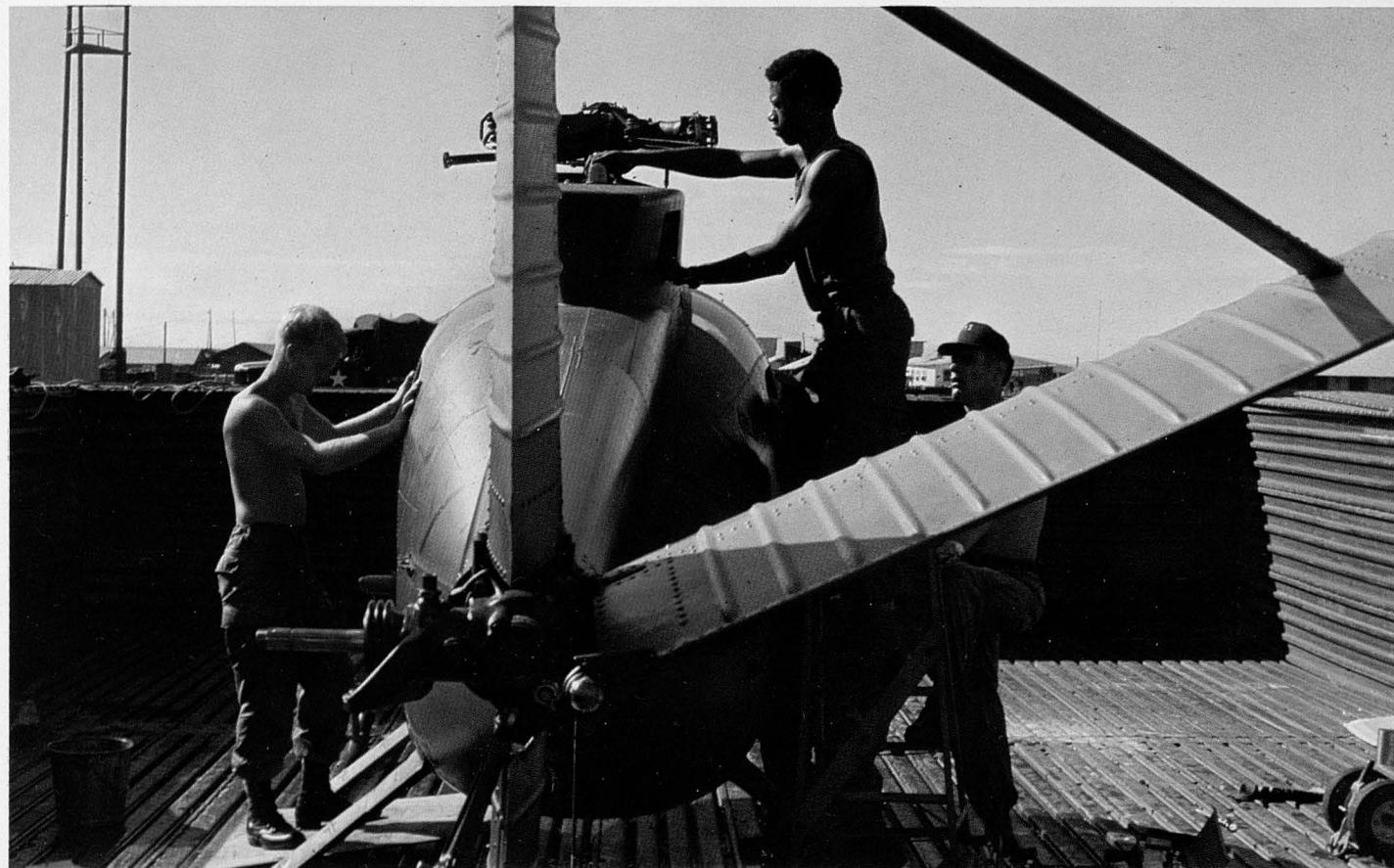
In the 1st Air Cavalry, the helicopter has replaced the horse, but the old adage still applies. The Cav relies on the helicopter for troop transport, supplies and close-in fire support. From smallest bolt to most complex engine part, the Cav's helicopters must be in top shape to guarantee the swift, successful completion of its mission. When a chopper does break down or is damaged by the enemy, quick repair is imperative.

The all important task of helicopter maintenance and repair in the 1st Cav falls to the 15th Transportation Corps Battalion—the 15th TC—headquartered at Phu Loi.

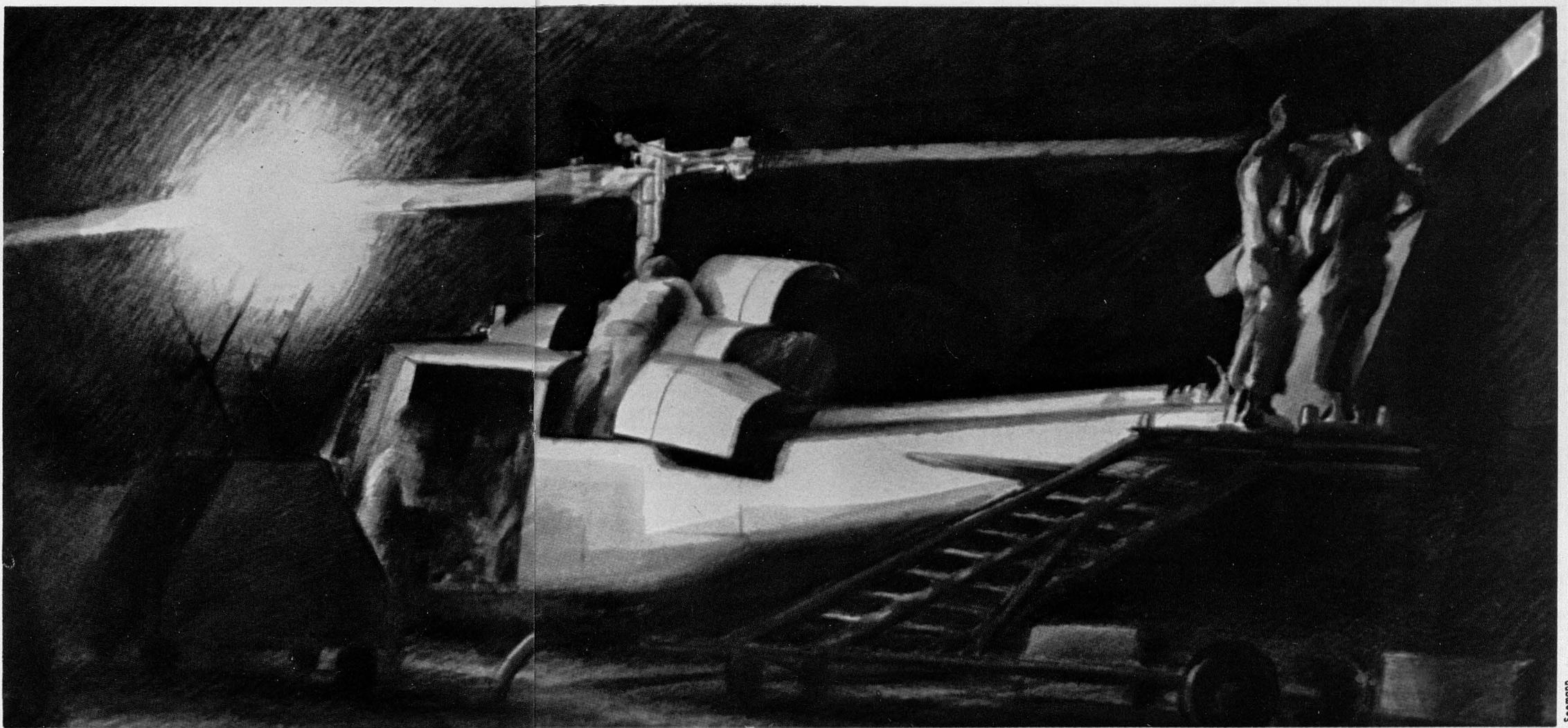
The 15th TC has been with the Cav a long time, beginning in Korea as the maintenance detachment of the old Cav's 15th Aviation Battalion. When the Cav colors were transferred to the 11th Air Assault Division at Ft. Benning in 1965, the 15th TC became part of the new airmobile unit.

Initially, the battalion had direct and total maintenance responsibility for all the division's helicopters. With four companies and numerous detachments in addition to the headquarters unit, the 15th TC was the Army's largest battalion, 1,500 men strong.

When a second airmobile division, the 101st, came to Vietnam, it came unit by unit over several months, and each individual unit had an organic repair detachment. That system seemed more efficient than the huge and somewhat unwieldy 15th TC, so in June 1969 the forward ele-



Ahrbeck

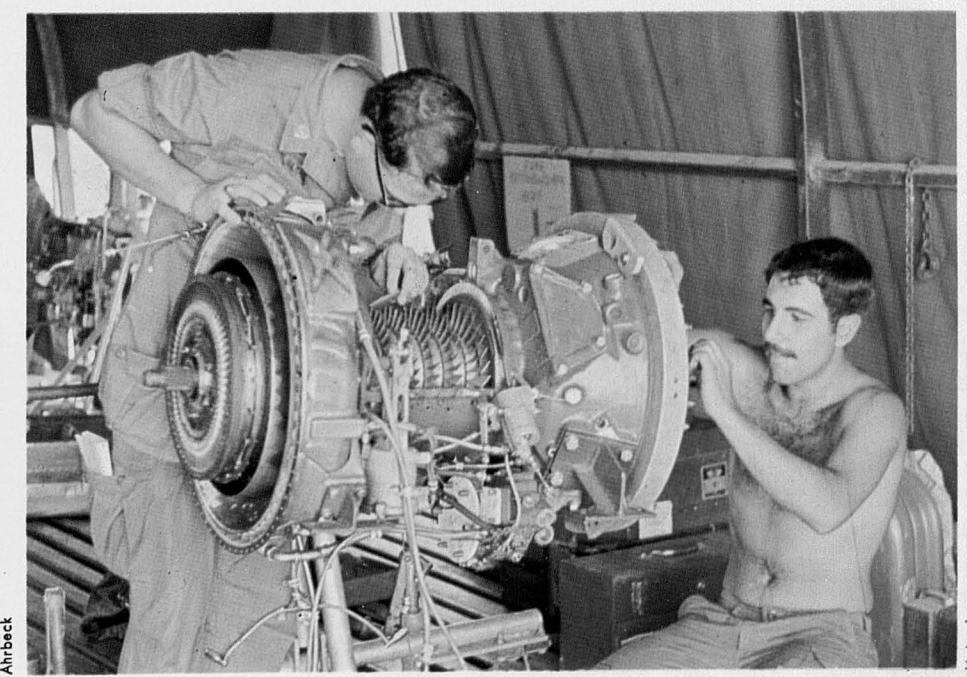


Seemann

*The men of 15th TC work however long it takes to keep the Cav in helicopters, and that's often far into the night. (above). The unit has responsibility for the LOH (left), Huey and Chinook. 15th TC mechanics (below, left) rely on a wide variety of precision tools and parts, to repair complex and expensive machinery (below). Lives depend on their competency.*



Ahrbeck



Ahrbeck

ments of the 15th TC began leaving the battalion and 19 detachments were made organic to individual aviation units.

The function of the forward independent detachments is to provide for immediate maintenance and make minor repairs. Supplying necessary parts and making major repairs—those involving 250 to 750 man-hours or more of labor—remain the function of the streamlined 15th TC, now reduced to Headquarters, Alpha and Bravo companies.

Alpha Company has responsibility for approximately 60% of the division's helicopters, including Chinooks. Bravo Company maintains the remaining 40%. Each of the companies has more than 50 mechanics and shopmen, who perform complex, technical repairs quickly and well despite heat, dust and long hours.

"The maintenance men usually work 10 to 12 hours a day," said Sergeant First Class James Burkhalter, flight line chief, "but if the repair load is heavy we'll work however much longer is necessary to keep the Cav in helicopters. During the Cambodian campaign we were averaging 3.1 birds a day."

"The best measure of our success are the aviation units' safety performances and total number of flying hours," concluded Burkhalter. "The Cav has set records in both."

Getting the parts for the Cav's huge chopper fleet is the other responsibility of 15th TC, and it's a staggering task. In a typical month recently the division's helicopters logged 42,000 hours. 15th TC processed 10,000 parts requests, generating a blizzard of paperwork, and moved 540,000 pounds of parts to keep the Cav flying.

"We've supplied five-million pounds of parts over the last 11 months," said Chief Warrant Officer Darius S. Slusher, the battalion's stock control officer. "Daily truck convoys feed us 20 to 30 thousand a day. We're running a big operation on a personnel shoestring."

The 15th TC can give one day service in supplying the smaller parts it has on hand. Alpha and Bravo company

supply elements have their own fly-in pads in Phu Loi to simplify the pick-up process.

The 15th TC has also taken steps to improve its efficiency in the never-ending battle with paperwork and redtape. Heavy use is made of office machines, and Alpha Company now has an NCR 500 computer to help in the task.

"Using the previous stock accounting system," said Officer Slusher, "all transactions were manually posted and involved a hell of a lot of paper. With the NCR 500 we decrease processing time. It saves us about seven steps."

The computer operation is housed in two six-ton air conditioned vans. Specialist 4 John K. Matteson is one of a nine-man team that runs the computer. He had experience with the old manual process.

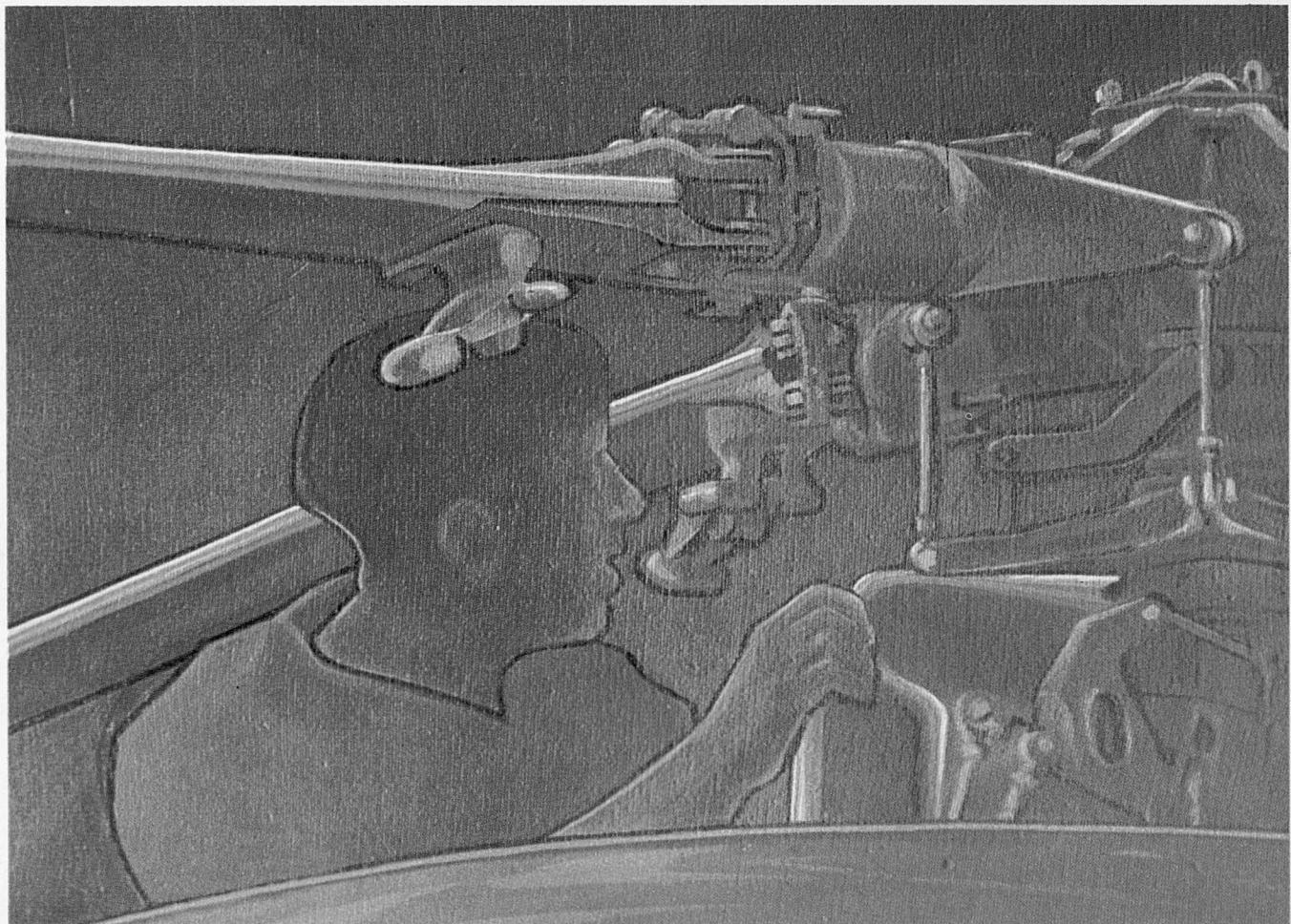
"This is really easier," he said. "The machine almost takes care of itself. It cuts time on everything. Besides filling requests for parts, it adjusts inventory figures, and prints out all the information we need on a ledger."

First Lieutenant Greg Fullam summed up another advantage of the machine, "It eliminates a large degree of human error as it simplifies the supply function."

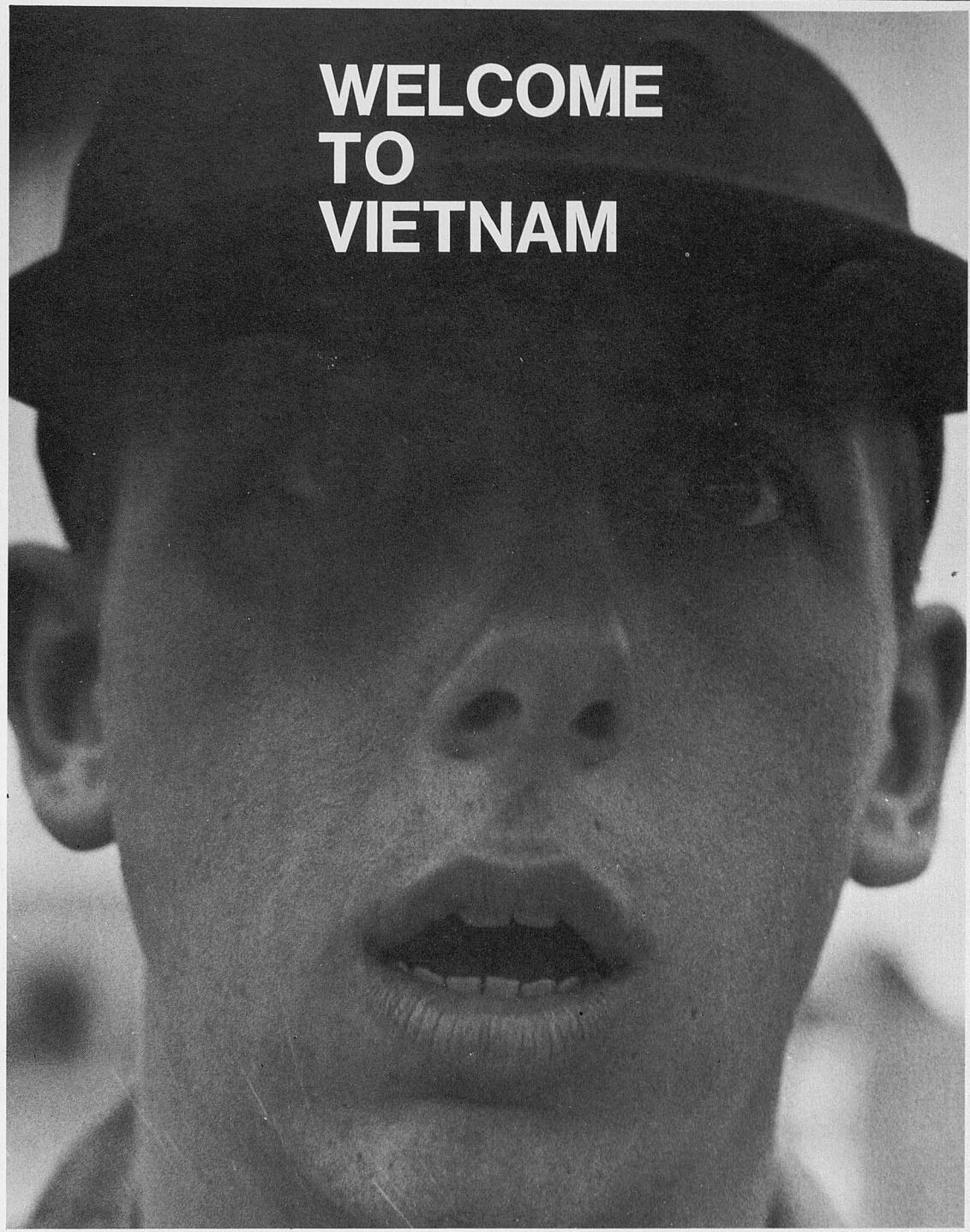
The battalion's Aircraft Maintenance Office also contributes to the 15th TC's efficiency. The office keeps track of parts distribution, numbers of helicopters repaired, man-hours involved, and other aspects of maintenance.

"We try to spot trends," said maintenance Warrant Officer Charles Perry. "We like to recognize a problem before it really becomes serious, and come up with the solution. When we heard there was going to be an inspection of tail rotor blades we cornered enough new blades to meet our needs before the inspection."

The 15th Transportation Corps Battalion—a unit of professionals dedicated to keeping the Cav's transportation life-line, its helicopter fleet, in top working order, and always striving to perform that mission more swiftly and efficiently.



# WELCOME TO VIETNAM



Ahrbeck

by SP4 Dave Roberts

"You are now entering the Republic of South Vietnam," comes the voice over the intercom of the Pan Am aircraft. You sink down another notch in your seat. You know any moment an enemy anti-aircraft weapon is going to open up. Boy, you'd at least think they'd give you a parachute. But you suddenly remember you bypassed airborne training. You just can't win in this Army.

"Touchdown in five minutes at Bien Hoa Airbase," comes the deep, gravely voice over

the intercom. God, that voice sounds familiar, just like that drill sergeant at Ft. Polk. Your brain churns as you review the past five months of training. What a way to go! Basic was bad but not half as bad as infantry AIT, and that could be no comparison to Vietnam. You'd think a guy would get one break in his life. But who knows, there's always the chance that at the last minute the Army will discover those hidden talents and assign you to Saigon. From what the guys back home



Ahrbeck

*Just off the plane, the new guy moves cautiously (above). Never can tell when the incoming may start. The FIRST TEAM Academy breaks the new guy in. With a hearty cry of "FIRST TEAM" he leaps off the FTA rappelling tower (below). If he doesn't do it right the first time, the cadre will be happy to give him a second chance.*



said Saigon is all right. Regardless though, at least there won't be any lousy KP or police calls in a war zone.

As the 707 touches down you suddenly realize the rumbling isn't coming from the jet turbines but from hoards of butterflies bumping against the prison walls of your stomach. You look out the window and wish it weren't so dark. You'd like to see the guy who's going to be shooting at you.

The door opens and immediately a blast of heat saturated with ill-smelling odors hits you. The odors and heat are expected but the real surprise is finding out you don't have to low crawl down the ramp. The clincher is the cheering reception committee swarming around the gate. There must be 400 of them, clad in new fatigues decorated with numerous patches and insignia. Then you realize your 707 is their Freedom Bird.

The bus ride to the 90th Replacement Center is on a four lane highway complete with traffic lights. The place sure doesn't look like John Wayne Country.

At 90th Replacement one line succeeds another as you hurry up and wait. The formations: what a hassle. Three times a day just like stateside duty. There are KP and police call with more pots, pans and cigarette butts than you've ever seen in your life.

After three days of stateside-type bull, the big day finally arrives. Orders are down and you'll finally be shipped to your new unit. You wait nervously to hear what it is. Maybe you'll be pulling security around Saigon or go to a unit about to be withdrawn.

All your hopes fade when they announce your unit is none other than the 1st Air Cavalry. You recall what Cav veterans in the states said: "The Cav goes where the action is." "Only the ARVN will be in Vietnam longer than the Cav." You expect a hard time in the bush. The Cav does a lot of humping and you look down at that big gut and know it has to go. The Cav will see to that. Suddenly that stateside rot doesn't look too bad and you have to admit to a certain amount of fear.

At the next stop, the FIRST TEAM Academy (FTA), you learn more about the Cav. Then you spot that huge tower and there's a queasy feeling in your stomach.

The day arrives, you're shackled, and you climb the wobbly ladder. Knees quivering, hands shaking, you walk to the tower edge and the assistant hooks the rope to the D-ring.

"FIRST TEAM" comes the cry as you slither off the tower's edge, only to discover that you're dangling in mid-air as the rig grabs at your groin. The pain, oh the pain!

The experiences and first impressions keep piling up.

Now luxury is a cold outdoor shower under a 55 gallon drum. The latrine is always an outhouse or outside urinal, and outdoor latrines mean a new dirty detail.

After six days of more formations, classes, training and details the day arrives. You're going to a line company; the jungle is your ultimate destination.

Bags packed and weapon in hand, you board the bus that drops you off at 8th Aerial Port, Bien Hoa Air Base, where you'll ride your first C-123 to Quan Loi.

It sure doesn't look like that 707 you flew in on two weeks ago. Your vibrating muscles and quivering stomach tell you fixed wing just isn't your bag.

Quan Loi comes as a shock when you step off the plane. No comparison between it and Long Binh or Bien Hoa. Cut out of the rubber trees, the basecamp looks like a splotch in the middle of 'no-man's land.' Red dirt is embedded in everything. Your olive drab fatigues stand out like a sore thumb next to the grimy, worn uniforms of hardened Skytroopers.

You report to your company rear and before you know it you're issued canteens, ammo, frags, smokes, C-rations, air mattress, poncho, and poncho liner. Even with all the equipment though, you think it couldn't be that tough. After all, you camped out and hiked a lot when you were in the Boy Scouts.



Ahrbeck



Ahrbeck

The next day you board your first Huey slick enroute to the company. The butterflies are back as you look down from 3,500 feet and see the pockmarks left from shellings. The bird sets down in a small landing zone carved out of thick jungle. You jump, trip and low crawl like never before.

To your surprise the welcome is friendly. Your fellow grunts are happy to see you...too happy! Carrying the radio doesn't seem too bad, but the 300 rounds of M-60 ammo, additional claymore, pick and extra radio batteries make it a real hassle. The rain doesn't add to the situation nor do the mud and heat.

Eventually comes that not-so-magic moment—a burst of AK-47 fire and the company hits the mud. You quickly set up in a hasty perimeter. Blue Max rolls in hot and heavy. Contact lasts for less than 15 minutes but it seems like hours.

Initiation is over. You are now a member of that proud fraternity of men, the infantry of the elite 1st Air Cav Division. Before you know it you'll be yelling that wonderful word, "Short!" 



Ahrbeck

*There's one nice thing about Vietnam—being away from all those stateside details. Of course, there are one or two unpleasant chores peculiar to in-country duty, with a friendly NCO to give instructions (above, left).*

*In the bush at last (left), the new guy is wary, alert, and ready for action.*

*Many months and experiences later, the day finally comes when the once new Skytrooper can think with a smile, "Short!" (above).*

He hasn't gone to a prestigious medical school for four years. He hasn't interned at a big city hospital. And chances are he came to his job through a personnel computer in the Pentagon. But he can save your life.

Not only that, but maternity cases are not beyond him. He knows how to put on a pair of sterile rubber gloves, make a hospital bed with or without a patient in it, give that helpless patient a bed bath, or give blood plasma intravenously.

He's the military's all purpose solution to the problem of medical treatment in the forward area. He's the medical corpsman, military occupational specialty 91A10. In the 1st Air Cav a doctor is only minutes away by medevac helicopter, but it's those minutes that make the difference and which the medic is trained to fill.

At the reception station, when the 'career counselor' said, "Son, you're going to be a medical corpsman," it was like an old John Wayne war movie suddenly being run through at high speed. The man with the red cross on his helmet was slithering up through the mud, under heavy machinegun fire and cascades of mortars, to treat a wounded trooper up in 'no man's land.'

For boys who winced and looked the other way when their father took a splinter out of their finger, the blood, the blistering, running burns, the shrapnel holes and the ugly, persistent skin rashes suddenly become their world.

The Medical Training Center (MTC) in Fort Sam Houston, Texas, is where all medical personnel for the Army are trained.

"I guess very few of the men are really happy when they're told they're going to be Ft. Sam alumni," wryly observed Specialist 5 Bill Manning, a 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry medic.

Stroking his heavy, black, Zapata-style moustache, he continued, "Medicine, the idea of pain, suffering, that someone may be actually depending on you, even the smell of medicine, scares people off.

"Some people come into the Army hoping for a job at least a little bit away from the fighting. I know I did. I wanted social work. I had a college degree in it and felt I could help someone working in the job.

"They put me in the 91 MOS classification and before I left basic I knew I was going to be a medical corpsman. I suppose most of the people going into medicine back in the world had the same idea I did when I decided I'd like the job. I wanted to help people. As a child I once witnessed an automobile accident and felt completely helpless in the face of the victim. Ever since I've wanted to help anyone who needed it."

Being a medic still took Manning some getting accustomed to.

"The 10 weeks at MTC cover a panoply of subjects, with the curriculum rang-

ing from basic physiology to how to sweep a hospital ward. Included were the sterile technique for handling necessary equipment, and how to administer the whole array of injections," said Manning, pantomiming each one.

The largest single area of instruction is in the administration of bandages and dressings and the consequent treatment of wounds. The use of splints, burn treatment, and different forms of artificial respiration are also part of the course. Treatment of shock and the heavily circumscribed use of morphine are two other areas of importance.

"The program seems to be designed with an eye toward the field medic rather than the hospital orderly. With classes running from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., it seemed more like a high school than the Army, even if the men were going to war."

At the end of the course the medic is prepared for what the Army thought he would be running into.

According to Manning, the first few days on the job are the hardest. "It seems like when you graduate from MTC you really know something. But when you get out to the battalion aid station, get your aid bag and then go out to the firebase and look around, a strong feeling of inadequacy sets in. But experience fills in the educational holes quickly.

"The men are waiting to see if you live up to their last medic, what your attitude is, just how much they think you know about the job. Then, all of a sudden, you're 'doc' and someone who can help the men.

"To them you become a 'grunt,' a special 'grunt,' but still one of them. Everyone works as a team. Each carries his share of the load, but if someone needs a hand, he'll get it. It's just like being kin to all the men in the company. You help them and they help you.

"Sick call is any time someone needs something. All they have to do is ask. You might say my schedule is pretty flexible, but one thing I almost always do in the morning after giving out the malaria pills is to just talk with anyone who wants to rap."

The medic can handle physical problems one way or another—salve for jungle rot, disinfectant for a scratch or blister, a clean dressing for an injury—but many times there's more than that.

"It may sound corny, but it always helps to be a good listener. Maybe I can give him a little help, or if I can't, maybe I can tell him where he can get it."

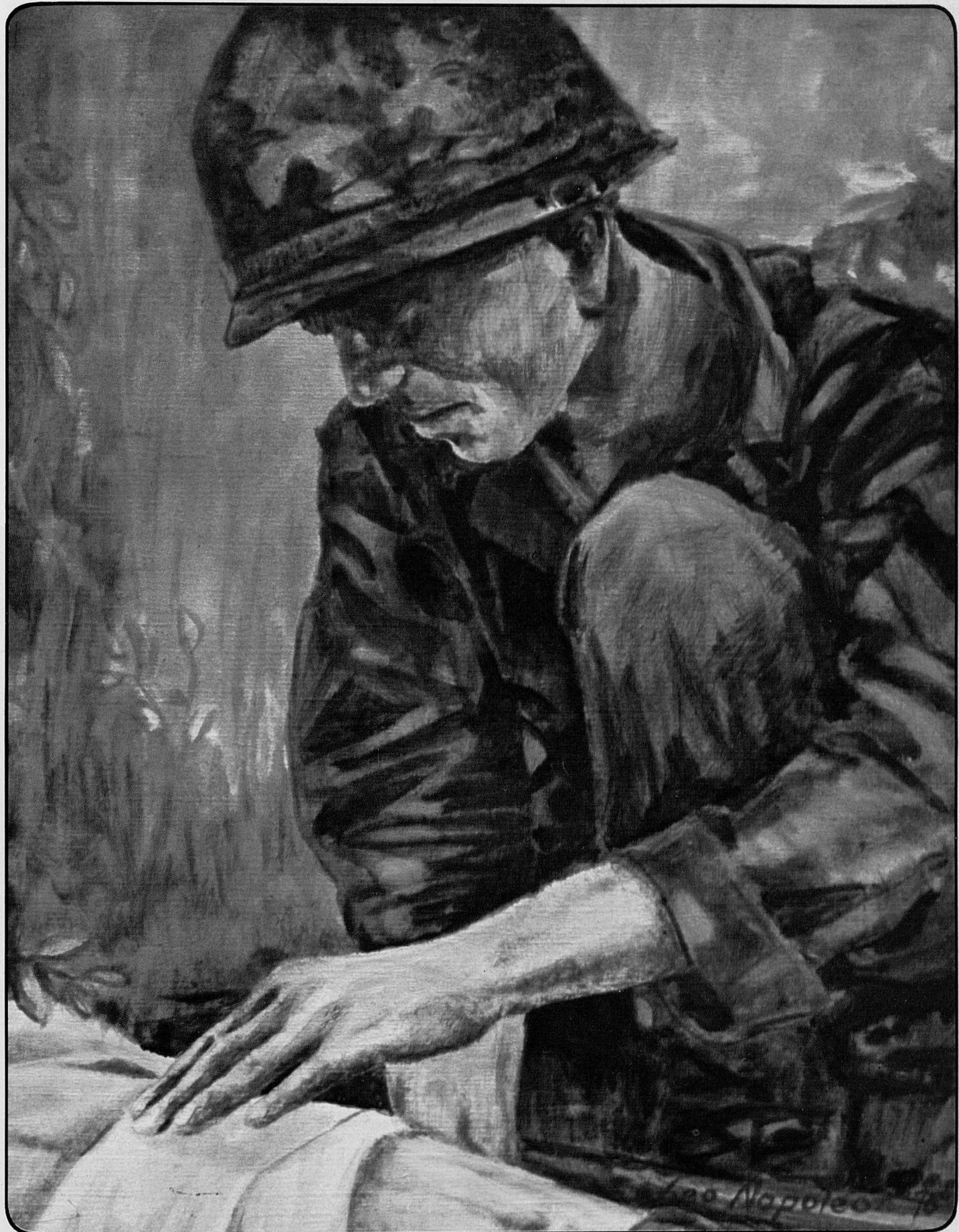
But the 10 weeks at Ft. Sam Houston prepare him for more than that. Treatment of battle injuries is also part of the curriculum.

"That's what most of the men had in mind when they were going through Ft. Sam. The first sight of real blood seems to confirm their suspicions that they weren't cut out for the job. You

# soldier who saves lives

**The medic's  
responsibilities  
range from passing  
out malaria pills to  
saving wounded men  
in a firefight.**

by PFC David Charlton



never really get used to it, that is, seeing that kind of pain and suffering, but you just have to work with it or become useless."

Most of the time medics stay back from the contact and treat the casualties brought to them, but sometimes they need a medic right up front.

"Then you don't crawl, you run."

Manning, who received the Silver Star for an action on October 6, speaks from experience. The citation credited him with moving out under fire to patch up four men, helping them back and providing help elsewhere.

"For a few seconds you forget yourself and don't really think about the thing you're doing. My hands shook and I felt sick to my stomach but I had the men there and they needed the help and I knew how to give it, so I did. Even though it's really natural to think of yourself first, for a little while you don't. Your friends are out there dying, taking fantastic chances for you. I just wanted to be sure they came back. You worry about what you did later."

Manning was reluctant to leave the field.

"The usual tour of duty is 6-8 months in the field and the rest of the time at a firebase or in the rear. But after contact, when you've really helped someone, maybe for the first time in your life, it's difficult to leave. When the time came to rotate I hated to leave. I thought I should stay to get the new medic squared away, to make sure he knew what was going on. You just want all the guys you know to get through."

Next to helping wounded Skytroopers, bringing 20th century medicine to the Vietnamese villagers is Manning's favorite job. "One time, when we went on a MEDCAP, we came on a boy with what we suspected was tetanus. His back was bowed and his jaw contorted. We treated him as best we could and sent him to the district dispensary. We came a week later and he came bounding into the room, one of the first ones in, all well. I couldn't have been happier."

For Spec. 5 John Bauer, a co-worker of Manning's, to become a medic was a more deliberate action.

Vietnam became both a testing ground and a reaffirmation of Bauer's 'philosophy of life.' According to Bauer, "Men are basically good and can and do help their fellow men. Here, as in many other places I've seen, it's just a case of people caring for and helping other people."

Feeling he did have a commitment to his government, Bauer decided the way to deal with the problem of military service was to volunteer as a medic, though his complete medical experience consisted of a Red Cross first aid course and three days in the hospital to have his tonsils out.

Classified as a 'conscientious objector' by the Army, Bauer does not carry a weapon and refuses to kill. Raised in a religious family, he developed a strong moral code and a profound antipathy to war and violence at an early age.

"I subscribe to the ancient belief that God created man in his own image, and to defame is to profane them both," Bauer said, adjusting his wire framed glasses and smiling a

little self-consciously at his perhaps too abstract phrase-making.

Though raised in a certain set of beliefs, a free examination of ideas was also part of the family tradition. "At first I accepted the teaching without question. As I grew up I began to ask why. I still don't think I've found all the answers, but I think I'm getting there."

The University of Indiana failed to provide the answers to support his earlier teaching. In the highly individualistic morality of Henry David Thoreau, the humanitarianism and 'reverence for life' of missionary Albert Schweitzer and on a hiking trip around the Midwest, Bauer began to see the basis of his parents' philosophy.

After six weeks of basic training and 10 weeks at MTC Bauer approached Vietnam with his still inchoate beliefs.

"Being a CO and medic over here puts you in a difficult position. You've already stated how you intend to react to a specific situation in the field long before you've ever experienced it. That's always the most difficult question for a CO to answer—'How do you know what you'll do when ...?' You may believe that all living things must be respected, that each has the right to the one eternal moment in the universe, but contact out in the jungle and the safety or lack of it of your friends may appear to prove you wrong. It's something you have to judge, but first experience."

How do the men treat a medic when they find out he

does not and will not carry a weapon, even to protect himself?

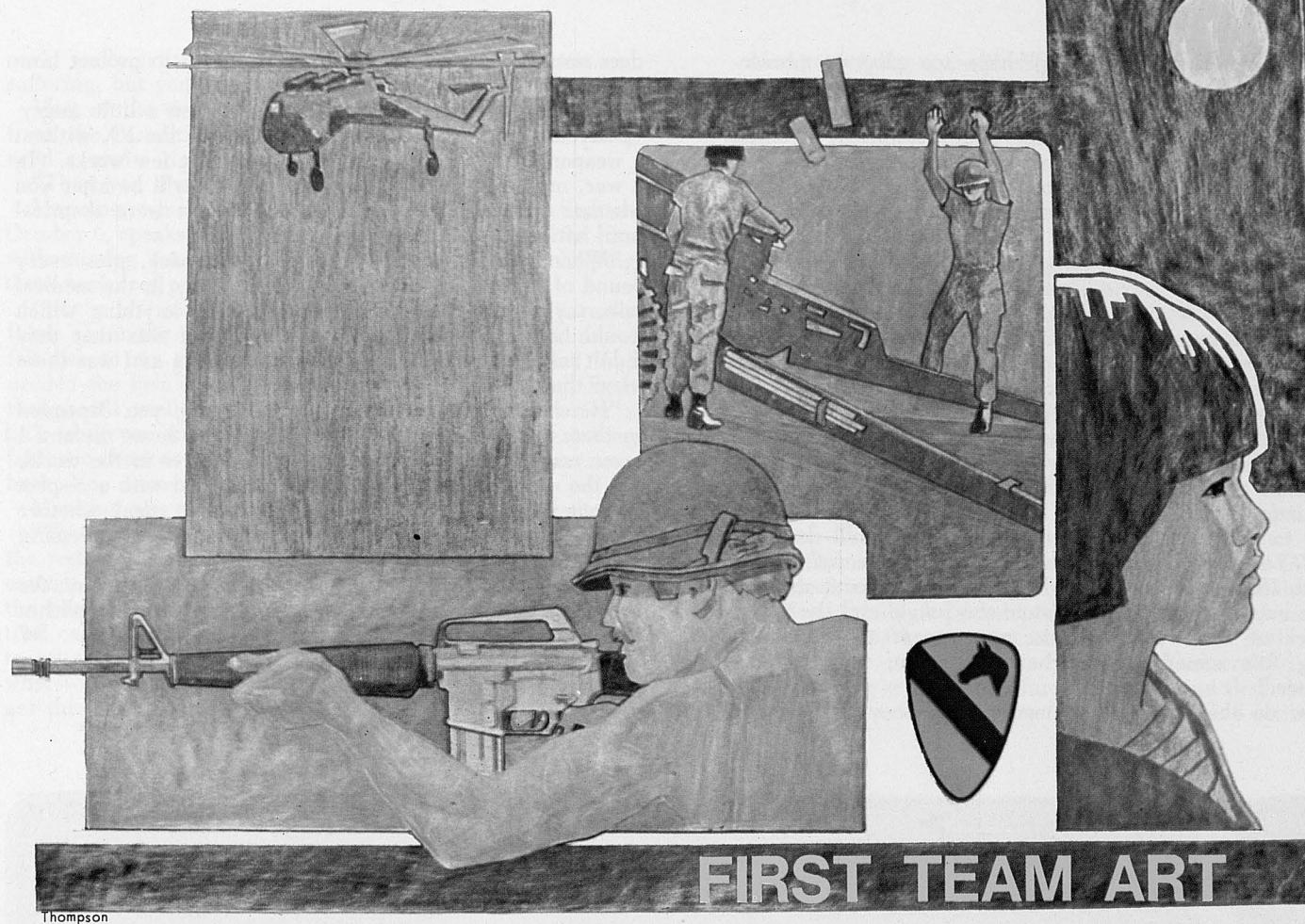
"The men were curious at first, some even a little angry (Okay man, but they won't even let you in the PX without a weapon.). I did a lot of rapping those first few weeks. (In a war, man, you kill or they'll get you. They'll be after you whether you have a weapon or not.) Most were skeptical until after the first few firefights.

"Whenever we humped I carried my pack, plus every pound of medical supplies I could pack away in the medical case, my pockets, the claymore mine bag, anything which would hold supplies. The impression I got was that they didn't mind my not having a weapon, as long as I was there when they needed help.

"Here's what I was looking for all along, you depended on them and they on you, completely. (You cover me and I cover you.) What almost no one could achieve in the world, was the everyday reality here. The individual with a respect for other people could accomplish a great deal whether it's covering a sucking chest wound with a pressure dressing or curing a Montagnard child's tonsilitis."

Whether a CO or just picked arbitrarily by the Army, the medic is a soldier that other G.I.s would agree accomplishes a great deal, a great deal indeed.





## FIRST TEAM ART

Thompson

Wilson

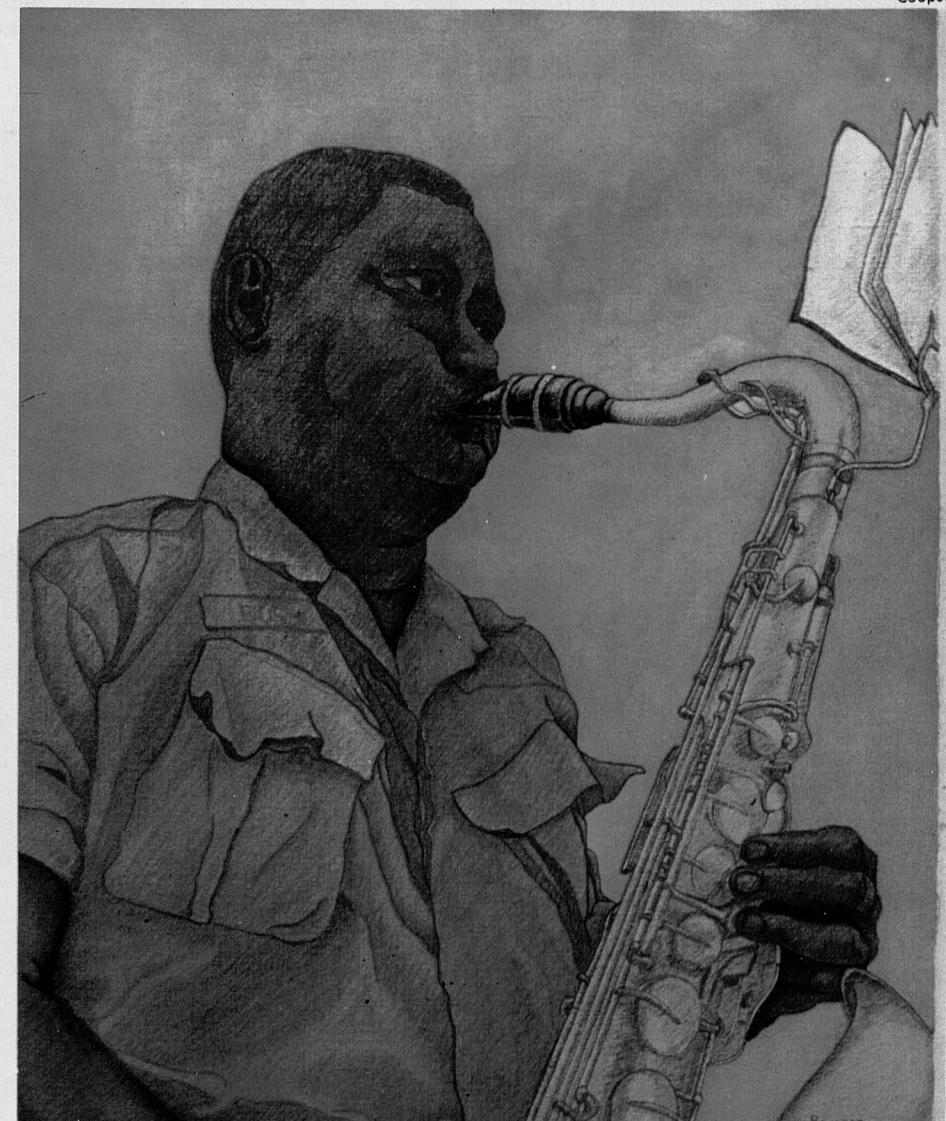
A combat photographer can catch a moment exactly as it is, if he's there at that moment with the right equipment. The combat artist, however, has advantages of his own. He can recreate the moment from memory. He can choose his colors and images to emphasize a particular idea. From recollections of many moments he can create a work that may not be completely representative of any single action, that may be abstract, yet evokes better than any photo the mood prevalent in that kind of event: the tension of a firefight, the wariness of a pointman, the exhaustion after a hard day of humping, the enjoyment of infrequent moments of relaxation.

The Cav's artists all came to Vietnam with combat MOS assignments, and most became full-time artists only after months in the infantry, artillery or combat engineers. On these pages they combine the artistic skill they learned as civilians with the experience they gained in Vietnam to produce images of life in the Cav.

Whether they use the traditional oil paints or the newly developed plastic polymers, these artists, some with backgrounds in fine art, others in commercial illustration, strive to produce the mood of the FIRST TEAM in their work.



Cooper





## cav country

### JOURNEY THROUGH WAR ZONE C

by PFC Cecil Cotton

Traveling on the primitive roads that slice through War Zone C is no Sunday outing. It's a trip where one is more concerned about mines than scenery, and drivers keep their eyes on the triple canopy jungle, not just the road, alert for signs of an ambush. To the men who run convoys through the 1st Brigade's area of operations, it's also a regular assignment.

The 48th Transportation Company is one of the units running convoys through Cav Country. The 48th TC is not organic to the Cav, but it still plays an important role for the division. The convoy, a train of vehicles transporting goods under armed escort, is essential in getting supplies to the men in the field. The men of the 48th TC, who have adopted the name of "Orient Express" and the motto "Ready to Roll," get such missions daily.

Their latest assignment was to carry several tons of ammunition and 30,000 gallons of helicopter fuel to Katum, an isolated base five miles from the Cambodian border.

MPs who rode dispersed throughout the convoy comprised the security element. They carried M-60 machineguns and M-16 rifles. Field telephones enabled the members of the security element to know exactly what was happening at all times on all parts of the convoy, which extends up to two miles during the trip.

Each individual driver of the "Orient Express" is prepared to help the security element in the event of ambush. The men carry M-16s, steel pots, flak jackets and ammo. Each man expects the unexpected.

The starting point for the vehicles was Long Binh, headquarters of the 48th TC. The men pulled out and the trip to Katum had begun. The roads are



Cormany

*After a hard morning's driving, the convoy crews utilize their trucks' shade for a well-earned break (above). Old meets new (below) as the trucks pass a line of oxcarts.*



Cormany

*In the wet season convoy drivers face mud; in the dry season it's dust (above).*



Cormany

hardtop all the way to Tay Ninh and the driving time is three-and-a-half to four hours depending on the weather and the durability of the vehicles.

The trip to Tay Ninh was another chapter in the men's daily lesson on the lives and customs of the Vietnamese people. Vietnam's agrarian society was evident all along the road. Farms covered every inch of available land. Rice, tobacco, bananas and many other crops were common sights along the road. There wasn't a car in every garage, but every home appeared to have at least one water buffalo.

The paradoxes of Vietnam repeated themselves on the road. Mud huts were next to modern brick homes. Motorcycles and cars passed an old man in his cart drawn by water buffaloes. Little children competed with old women for the patronage of a truck driver. Their goods ranged from loaves of bread to cokes.

The convoy arrived in Tay Ninh and the worst part of the trip was ahead. From Tay Ninh to Katum the roads are unpaved. The men ate lunch, took a break, then headed for Katum.

Leaving Tay Ninh, the convoy drove around the Black Virgin Mountain, Nui Ba Den. The mountain loomed above the jungle plain, its beauty making one momentarily forget the men who fought

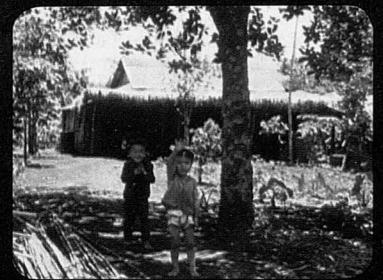
and died on those slopes.

"The bad part is still ahead," said SP4 John Wellington. "You haven't seen anything yet." Thirty minutes later his point was clear. One bounced and jounced as the truck rolled through ruts and over potholes.

The convoy passed through only one small village after leaving Tay Ninh. The road to Katum was heavily wooded with an occasional ARVN or American firebase on the road. The thick jungle had been cut away about 300 meters into the woodline all the way along the road, making it easy for patrolling helicopters to spot enemy movement.

An earlier rain had made road conditions worse than they ordinarily were. Several shell craters were in the road, which did little to smooth the ride. One spot in the road was so bad that the convoy was held up for an hour-and-a-half. The terrain was flat, the jungle stretching endlessly on both sides of the road, scenery for us, concealment for the enemy, an obstacle for the infantry.

The convoy arrived in Katum five hours and 40 miles after it left Tay Ninh. The trip had been long and tiring and the men of the "Orient Express" had successfully completed their mission. Now, as they rested in the shade of their trucks, all they had to think about was the trip back.



## cav country

FROM SONG BE TO PHUOC VINH

by SP4 Bob Mantell

Cav Country. It can be seen from a lift ship going in for a combat assault, spinning around at treetop level in a Scout bird, hacking through endless jungle or staring into the thickets at the end of a firebase's field of fire. But the Skytrooper fighting a war seldom sees how Vietnamese civilians live.

The towns and villages are strung out on the roads carrying commerce and people to and fro. Riding the convoys can give you the feeling for the country you get tooling up the highways at home.

Song Be is Phuoc Long Province's capital and home of the Cav's 2nd Brigade. Phuoc Long is the remotest province in III Corps Tactical Zone and one of Vietnam's wildest. The French hunted tigers here in the triple canopy jungle. Stark silver-white trees reach more than 100 feet in the air. The hills roll gently as they approach the Central Highlands. Rivers wind through the lush greenery. The fingers of the Song Be River surround the capital like a medieval castle's moat. In the early mornings the mist rises from these valleys, and Nui Ba Ra stands serene above all, its peak shrouded in fog.

The men of the 1st Log Command's 7th Transportation Battalion climb into their cabs and await word that the road is clear and secure. The bright sun begins to dry the mist and the shiny coat of dew covering the trucks.

The road snakes through iron rich red earth across foothills and past little glens carved out of the encroaching jungle. Small houses with big porches and thatched roofs stand in the shade of overarching trees. Each village has a center with a bulletin board covered by government posters. Many villagers are Montagnard tribesmen.

The school is always immaculately clean and the nicest building. The children play a game like baseball, flinging



*At the foot of Nui Ba Ra, fertile and cultivated lands from a pattern of lush beauty along the Song Be River as it winds through Phuoc Long Province (above). Each village has its open-fronted shops (below), department stores on a small scale.*

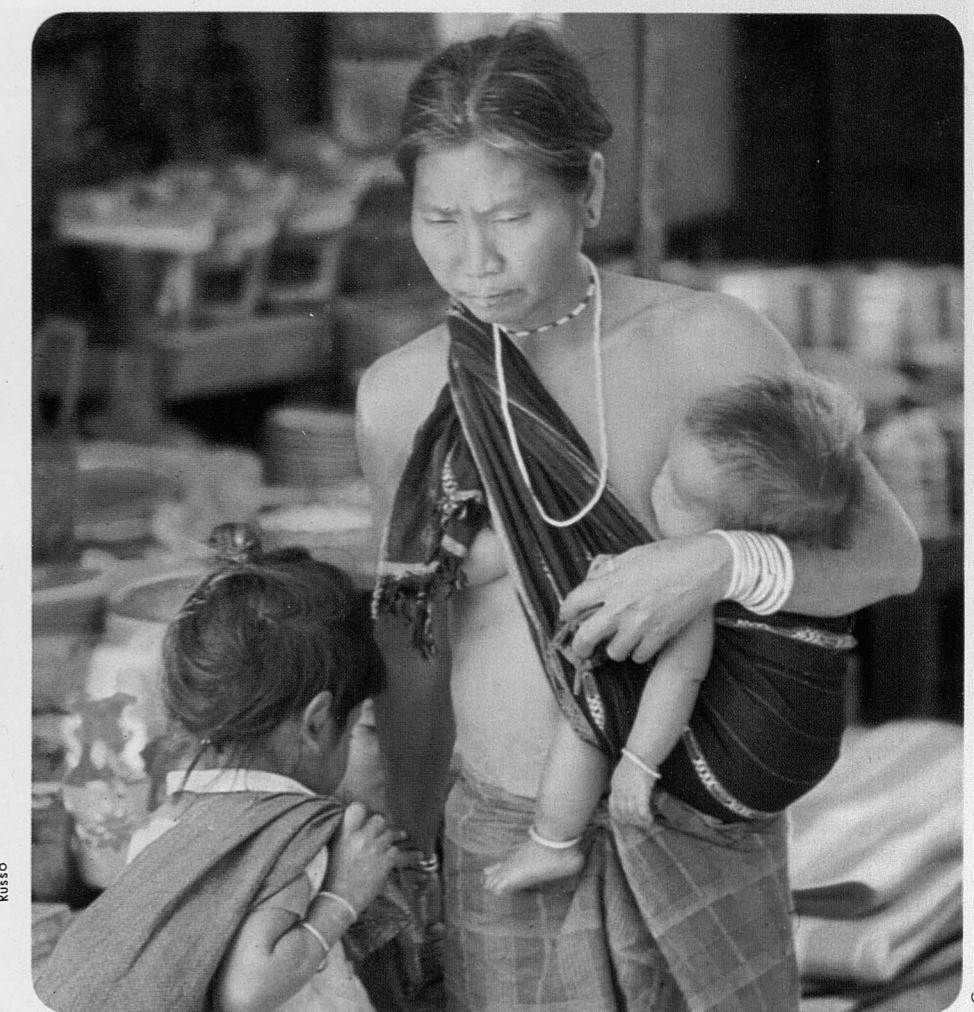


Russo



Russo

*Despite occasional flats, colorful trucks (below) move goods on the highway. Many Phuoc Long Province residents are Montagnards (above, right).*



Conway

a stick up and hitting it in mid-air. Little kids holding smaller brothers and sisters stand in the front yards that bound the road.

Swastikas have no sinister meaning in Vietnam, but mark the entrances to Buddhist shrines. Alongside are often Catholic churches that look distinctly French.

The Regional and Popular Forces camps guarding each village are haphazard affairs, constructed with whatever material is at hand—perforated steel plating, sandbags, logs, sheet metal and bamboo. The camps are home to many soldiers and their families, and the yellow and red flag of the Republic flutters high over each one. The soldiers wave as they look out from over the berms, peek out of bunker windows and gaze through strands of barbed wire.

The convoy stops traffic. Honda drivers stare at the long lines of dust. Before the Cav came to Song Be the roads were closed. Now Lambretta taxi cabs are everywhere. A bus runs several times a day to Saigon, packed with soldiers, farmers and animals. The road is still dirt, full of pot holes and rippled by constant use from the heavy trucks.

A Light Observation Helicopter from Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cav pirouettes over the treetops, part of the convoy's security. Rome plows have torn back the jungle, but there are still dan-

gerous spots where RF/PF soldiers stand every few yards with M-16s poised. The rusting remains of ambushed trucks are reminders of the past. The drivers remember the story of each one.

At Dong Xoai, a center for the lumber industry, felled trees line the road. Bright yellow duece-and-a-halves swarm around the huge trunks and drag them off. The town is one of the region's largest and was the scene of a decisive defeat of the French in the early '50s. Mobile Group 100, an elite armored force, was almost totally destroyed in an ambush here.

Now it is a busy place, swarming with soldiers and civilians. The storefronts open up on the street. Mamasans arrange their wares while papasan cranks a barrel full of wood to make charcoal for sale. A policeman directs traffic.

Dong Xoai is the end of Phuoc Long province. The dirt is now brownish, the land flat. A few miles later the convoy pulls into Phuoc Vinh and Camp Gorrav for a break. A team goes down the line repairing tires torn up in the journey. The truckers shake off the dust covering their eyebrows and noses. They eat C-rations and lie down under their trailers for a nap in the shade, waiting for the convoy to move out to Long Binh.

W



## cav country

### ON THE EDGE OF THE FISHHOOK

by PFC David Moore

The day starts with the rumble of more than a hundred trucks as the convoy rolls out of Long Binh north for Quan Loi and the 1st Cav's 3rd Brigade area of operations. The early morning light shows red against the clouds as the three-mile long caravan stretches out onto Highway 13.

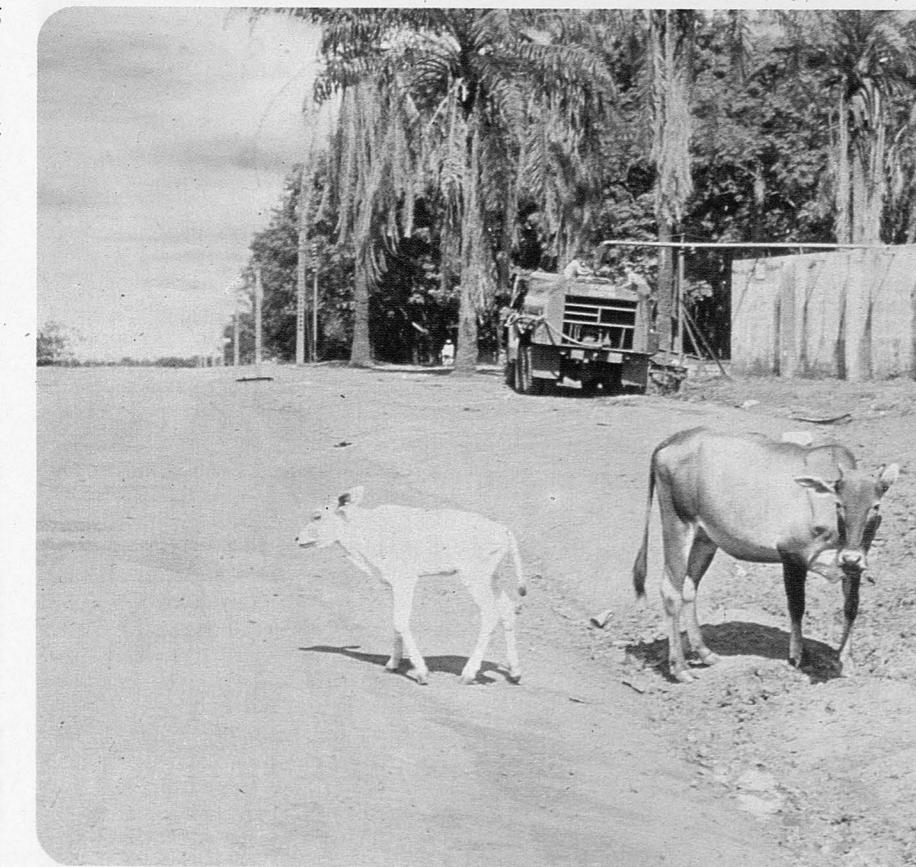
Between villages the land is cultivated for rice and vegetables. Black-garbed peasants guide ox-drawn plows or turn the soil with hoes. Where the land lies fallow, cattle graze the short, green grass. In low areas, water buffalo slosh across the paddies or lay on the ground, their round, gray backs resembling boulders.

Leaving the Thi Tinh River low country, the convoy passes through the US-ARVN Lai Khe basecamp. Except for a small rubber plantation just north of Lai Khe, the higher ground has few cultivated areas. With long stretches between villages, the convoy maintains a steady rate of march, travelling from Lai Khe to Chon Than Village in just over an hour.

To the men who daily make the 190-mile round trip to Quan Loi—the men of Charlie Company, 720th MP Battalion and the 48th Group, 7th Transportation Battalion—the run is known as "Thunder Road."

"Originally, I guess the name came from Thunder I, II and III, Highway 13 firebases," observed Staff Sergeant Robert Darlington, MP squad leader. "Of course, that movie *Thunder Road* might have had something to do with it."

Another name, "Ambush Alley," refers to a five-mile stretch north of Chon Than. Through this area the woodline is cleared 100 to 200 meters from the edge of the road. Even so, the enemy occasionally tries to ambush the convoy with automatic weapons and B-40s from bunkers concealed at the edge of the



Russo

The convoy begins its trip on paved highway (above left), pulling out of Long Binh as dawn breaks. Hours later, the convoy is on a dirt road near Quan Loi (left) where cows share the highway. North of Quan Loi, the road winds through rubber trees (below) on its way to Loc Ninh.



clearing.

The MP security element commander, Captain Leeland Smith, explains: "Through Ambush Alley we boost our rate of march by 10 miles per hour and the vehicles are spaced so if a section of the convoy is hit, the drivers can step it down and move out of the kill zone without causing a bottleneck by running up on the vehicles in front of them."

When the convoy does get hit, the MPs' job is to stand and fight until the trucks are safely through. "Because of the enemy bunkers along Ambush Alley," Capt. Smith explains, "we've mounted .50 caliber machineguns on our armored vehicles. The .50s give us penetrating power to knock out almost any position."

After passing Ambush Alley, the convoy travels over the rolling road leading into the Terre Rouge rubber plantation. Five miles south of An Loc the plantation begins. Rubber trees line the road. The long, straight, evenly spaced rows of trees lead the eye down shaded tunnels of converging perspective. Here and there the regularity is interrupted by groups of workers who squat around charcoal cooking-fires, their hammocks strung between trees for rest during the early afternoon heat.

The convoy passes through An Loc, Binh Long Province capital, through more rubber and into Quan Loi Village. The village is in a quiet valley. Approaching from above, a canopy of flamboyant flowering trees partially hides the red-roofed houses and whitewashed shop fronts. Along town streets

women peer from the dark of doorways, and from shaded front yards children wave peace signs that the drivers obligingly return.

Climbing the incline, the convoy arrives, usually about 11 a.m., on Quan Loi basecamp's red earth plateau. The trucks unload their cargoes of fuel and ammunition and reassemble near the basecamp's main gate to await their early afternoon departure for Long Binh.

Besides the daily Long Binh convoy, a column of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment occasionally runs from Quan Loi to Loc Ninh in the northern part of the 3rd Bde AO. Along this stretch of Highway 13 the fields and garden plots are cleared and claimed from the jungle. The bamboo and brush come right to the borders of the cultivated areas. Big jungle trees darken the edges of the fields in shade.

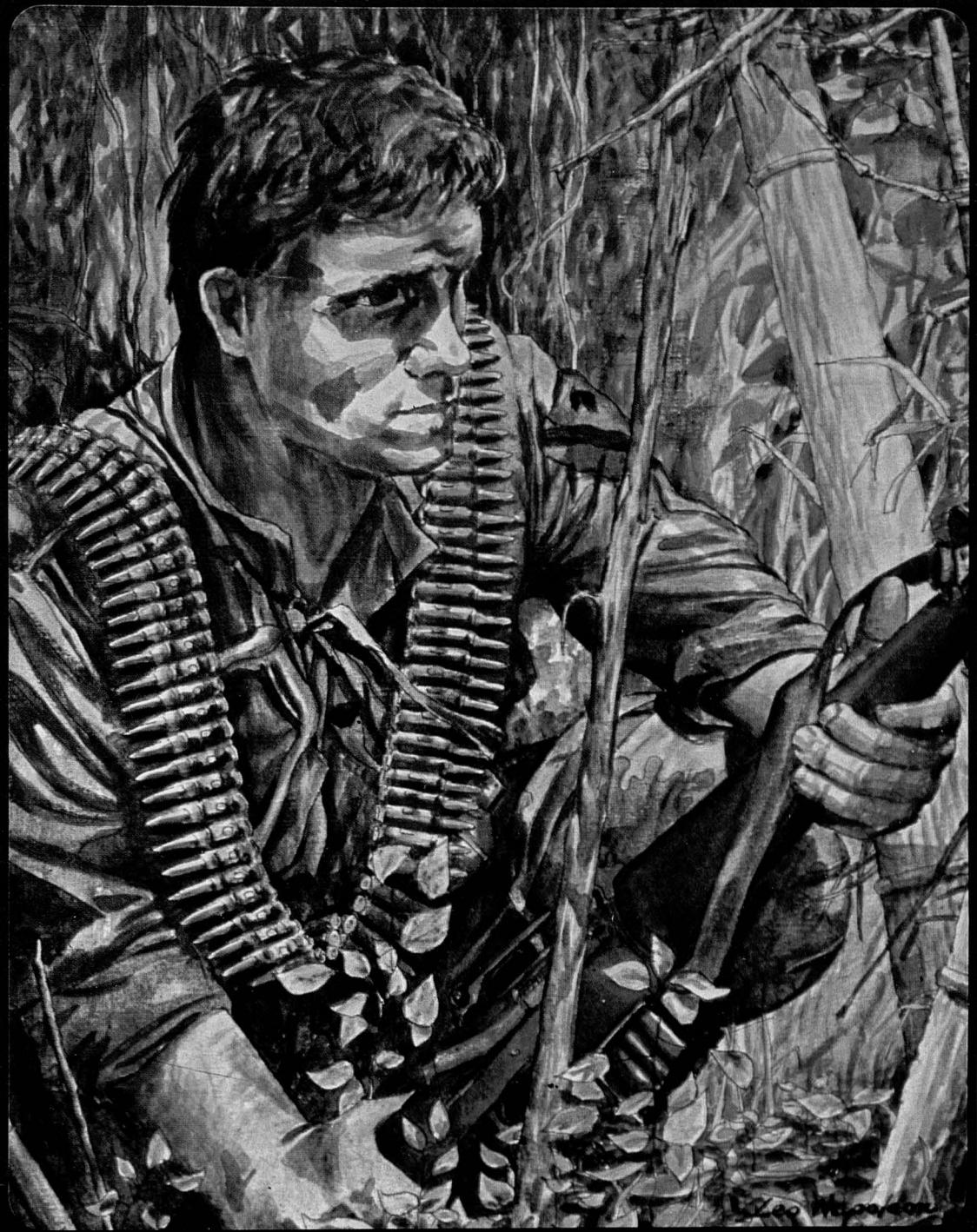
The road carries little traffic. The armored column passes a few people walking along the road and sometimes a logging truck. The loggers ride in the cab, hang on the running boards or walk along beside as the truck, loaded with a single, great log, growls along in low gear.

As the column approaches Loc Ninh it passes many shaded ravines with groves of wide-leaved banana trees. In areas more exposed to the sun, rows of mango trees border the road. Just outside Loc Ninh the road winds along the edge of a rubber plantation uphill to the military camp. Beyond is Cambodia.

Would any of you  
Skytroopers like to  
exercise with me?



THOMPSON



## THE **FIRST TEAM**

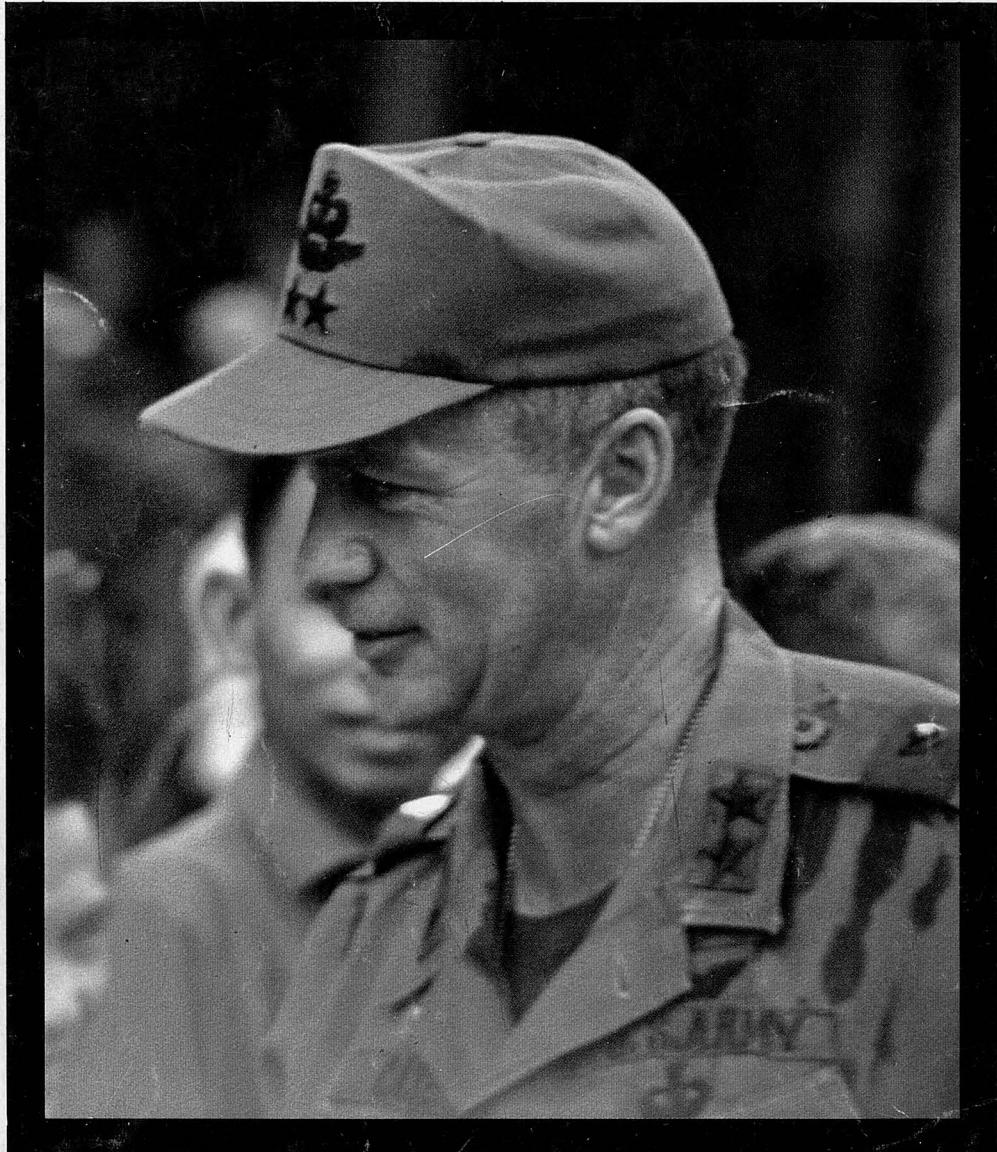
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**MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE W. CASEY**  
**1922-1970**

**Commanding General, 1st Air Cavalry Division**  
**May 12, 1970-July 7, 1970**