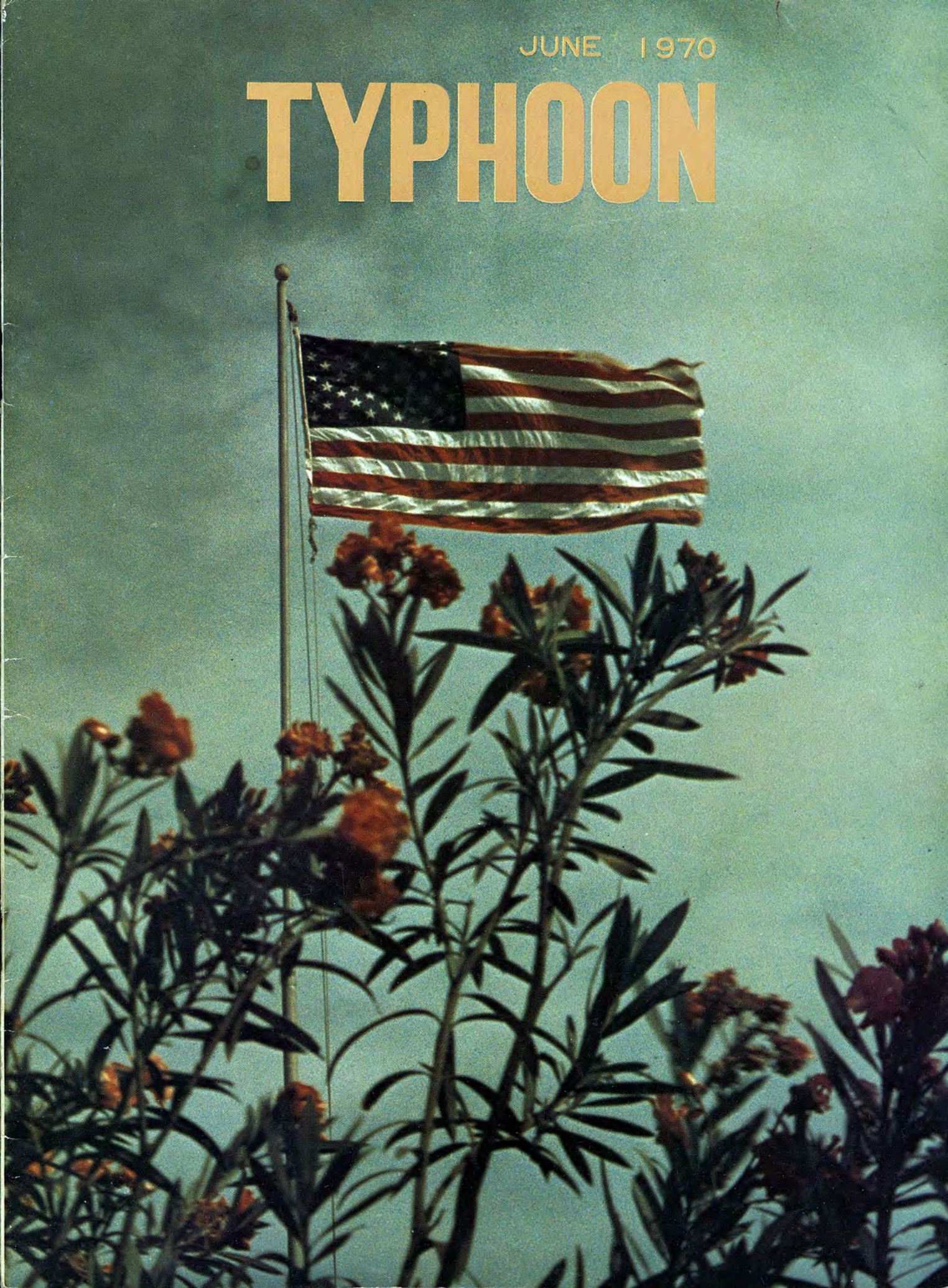
JUNE 1970

TYPHOON



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TYPHOON

Vol IV, No. 6 June, 1970

OPPOSITE: The defense of CIDG camps throughout II Corps has become a family affair. Montagnard children help their fathers fill sand bags used to protect their homes at a Bu Prang camp. Photo by SGT Jerry R. Burchfield.

BACK COVER: The Miami Railroad, a kiddie train built by CW4 George Railey, brings many happy moments to orphans in Pleiku. The late green beret warrant officer also helped disabled veterans and the elderly find new meaning in life (story on page 16). Photo by SP5 Lonnie Voyles.

Cover by SP4 Joe Bradley

I FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

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Kickoff For A Long Haul

By SP5 Iarry Maloney

In Vietnam where a soldier very often spends the better part of his tour fighting for a few yards of jungle or a tiny hill, freedom and mobility appear as a fanciful dream. If he could just escape the confinement, the prison of a wired perimeter or the natural barrier of a rice paddy quagmire. If he could just get in a jeep or truck and go—follow a road to a place or atmosphere far away from this confinement.

During the past three months, a whole group of soldiers was able to beat the confinement—and they didn't beat it through DEROS. In a matter of weeks, because of the movement of their headquarters, the men of Company D, 815th Engineer Battalion, and the 102d Construction Support Company fled the choking heat and dust of Kontum. They gunned their vehicles over nearly 450 miles of Vietnam roads toward their destination—Di Linh, a town in the refreshing mountain coolness southwest of Dalat. Their exodus marked one of the longest journeys ever made by a convoy in Vietnam.

This movement of men and cumbersome heavy equipment over such an extended distance proved a gigantic task. The operation involved seven separate convoys plus an air movement of 45 people. The first advance convoy of 24 vehicles departed in late March. Three more convoys, each with 30-odd vehicles, followed at seven to ten-day intervals.

Prior to the departure of each of these three convoys that made the entire trek from Kontum to Di Linh by land, a shuttle convoy of extremely massive equipment would travel by road only as far as Qui Nhon. Each time the trip to the coastal city was agonizingly slow. Loaded down with huge rock crushers, bulldozers, scrapers, and soil and asphalt plant machinery, the trucks crept along—inching over makeshift bridges, buckling up on nearly impossible turns, plodding up hills, sweating over the brakes on the descent. Finally at Qui Nhon, the heavy cargo was loaded onto barges and LSTs and floated down to Phan Rang. On arrival there, the sea convoy would marry up with an 815th land convoy and begin the 4000-foot climb to Di Linh.

At Di Linh the men of the 815th and 102d would unload the equipment. After a day's rest, some would head back again to Kontum. Those who remained behind in Di Linh would help construct the new base camp. Living at first in tents and later in prefabricated huts, the men had to build a whole industrial complex which would include a stone quarry, asphalt plant, and two 250-lb rock crushers. The target date for the completion of the camp and beginning of stone crushing operations was set at June 15th. The 815th would then begin supporting the 19th Engineer Battalion in the construction of roads and air strips in the Dalat area.

But the establishment of the new base camp, though a formidable challenge, was overshadowed by the move itself, a 450-mile, one-way trip made no less than seven times. Kicking off from the 815th's old base camp at Wooly Bully just south of Kontum, the convoys rumbled over

dangerous QL 19, through the Miang Giang and An Khe passes with their steep grades, hairpin curves, and ample clusters of rock and vegetation—choice ambush sites.

From QL 19, the convoys moved on to QL 1 in Qui Nhon. This highway, paved for a few miles south of Qui Nhon, gives way to dusty, dirty, rocky road bed dotted with bulldozers and graders struggling to complete the road. The old trucks would then crawl on to Tuy Hoa. Some, unable to stand the punishing conditions, would break down. From Tuy Hoa to Phan Rang, the ride was smoother and more comfortable, a respite before the tough climb on QL 11, 21A, and 20 to Di Linh.

The long haul covered five days with nights spent at Phu Tai, Tuy Hoa, Dong Ba Thien, and Phan Rang. Nights spent in motor stables and in sleeping bags on a truck, nights wondering what the next day would bring. But despite the potential hazards, the long haul was exciting. The men finally were beating the confinement. "My men have always been wanting to see new territory, to make a long haul instead of the short, boring jaunts around Kontum," said First Sergeant James Batchler of the 815th. "Well, now they've got their wish."

The job of insuring that the 815th's convoys made their long haul safely fell to the 16th MP Group, headquartered in Nha Trang. Its escort operation, which involved men from two battalions and three companies, was easily the longest and most involved convoy venture ever executed by the 16th.

Security vehicles from the 560th MP Company met the convoys at checkpoint 88 near Pleiku and accompanied them as far as An Khe, where the 66th MP Company took over to Tuy Hoa. At Tuy Hoa, the boundary between the 93d MP Battalion to the north and the 97th MP Battalion to the south, the 630th MP Company continued the escort all the way to Di Linh.

These MP "roadrunners" are no strangers to the perils of the highway. Nearly 70 percent of the 93d MP Battalion's duties involves escorts on QL 19, 14, and 1. For these MPs, convoy duty presents the most dangerous challenge of their MOS with the possible exception of PBR work. "Any time you drive Vietnam highways you are taking a risk," said Major C.A. Tousant, S-3 of the 93d. "The danger of mines and ambushes is ever present. But our men constantly drive these roads—and they love it."

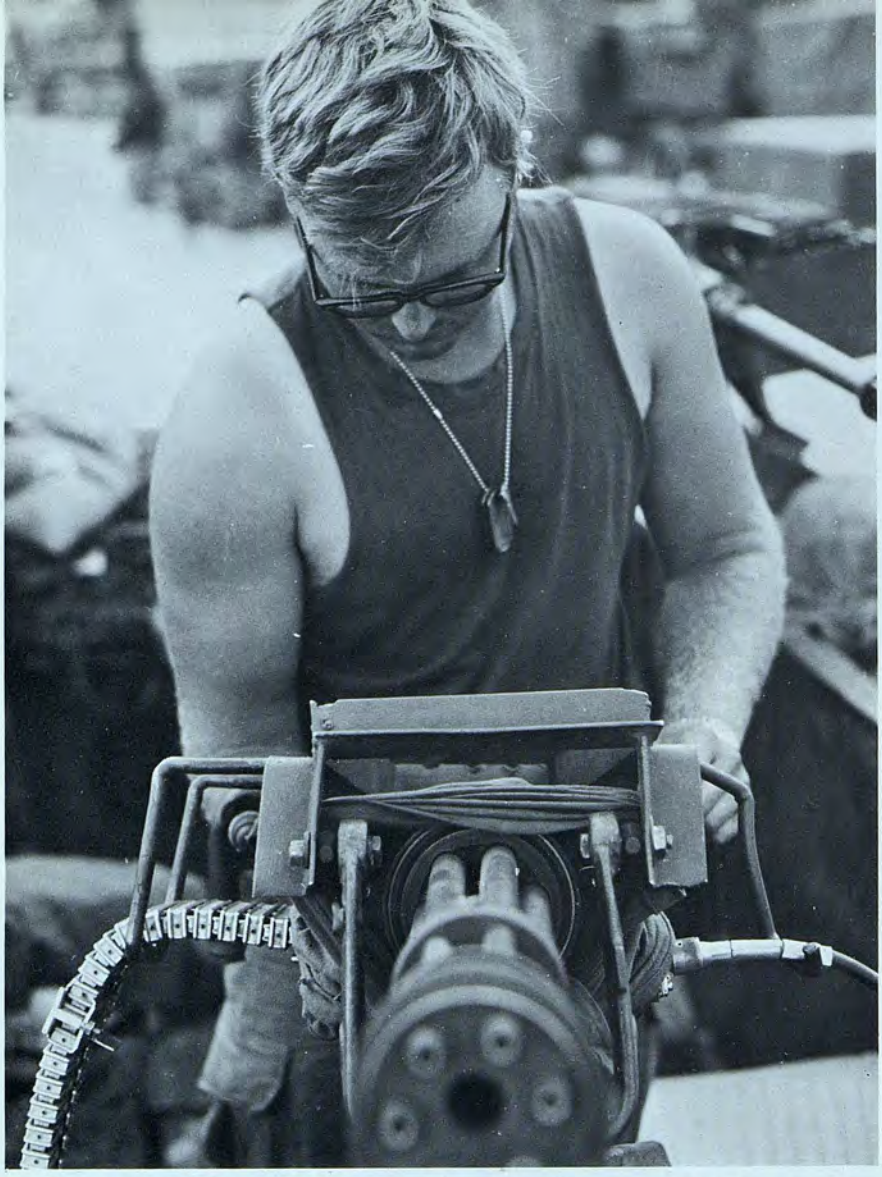
Like the men on the convoys they escort, the MP roadrunners enjoy the freedom of travel and being on their own. "Sure you get tired of living out of a duffle bag and going without showers," said the 560th MP Company's Sergeant William Fiveash, crew chief of a V-100 escort vehicle. "It's exciting work, though, and we're pround of our jobs and our 100s."

Morale in roadrunner platoons far surpasses that of other MP units. MPs often extend for escort work. On off-duty hours, the men will boast about their 100s or rehash old missions. They are most at ease on the road and they know most of the people who travel or live on the highways. The MPs rap with the convoy drivers and the men on the gun trucks. The coke girls at their little stands along the highway give them free sodas. And they spread a little good will by helping Vietnamese drivers who suffer breakdowns on the road.

The roadrunners begin their day at a highway checkpoint. There they wait for a convoy to come along—they usually don't know what

Above left: When a convoy stops to rest the scene resembles a traveling street fair. Drivers exchange food and sodas, and small children quickly gather about about during this halt on QL 1 near Tuy Hoa. Right: The 815th's vehicles cautiously make their way down the steep grades of the dangerous An Khe Pass.

Photos by SP4 Paul LeMay



Above: SP4 Richard Cornell checks his minigun on the 64th Transportation Company's "Roadmaster." Gun truck crews provide key security for convoys. Below: On the long haul all life centers about the vehicles. An 815th driver brushes his teeth prior to the convoy's morning departure from Camp Humper, Phu Tai.

convoy they'll escort until they arrive at the checkpoint. They wait and wonder what the convoy will be like. In the case of the 815th's convoys, the MPs had been forewarned. Since the move to Di Linh involved several separate convoys, the roadrunners could draw from the experience of previous runs.

SP5 Michael Herzog, Minneapolis, Minn., commander of a 560th MP Company V-100, waited with his crew at checkpoint 88 near Pleiku for the second 815th convoy to make the entire trip to Di Linh. He was a little apprehensive. Two days earlier, an 815th shuttle convoy, burdened with huge, oversized equipment, took four and a half hours to make the normal two-and-a-half-hour journey from Pleiku to An Khe.

But Herzog and his crew were anxious to take the convoy. The "Salvaged Saint," their V-100, was equipped with twin M73 machineguns mounted on a turret plus an M60 in the rear of the vehicle. And with their own personal weapons, the MPs certainly had enough firepower to quiet their fears. Their V-100, an experimental armored commando car, wouldn't stop automatic weapons fire, but with tires that can carry the vehicle some 15 miles after being hit, the "Salvaged Saint" was well-prepared to run if necessary. The eight-ton car can reach a speed of 70 miles an hour. Along with the standard quarter-ton gun jeep equipped with M60 machinegun, the V-100 is the basic MP escort vehicle.

The 815th convoy, with some 30 vehicles, arrived at checkpoint 88 about 1100 hours. It was late. Herzog and his crew, like all drivers who must wait at the checkpoint, spent much of their time ducking mama sans who had all kinds of goods to sell—despite a sign that prohibits Vietnamese personnel from gathering there.

When the convoy arrived, Herzog immediately met with the 815th's convoy commander, Captain David P. Ernst, also the CO of D Company. The two discussed the convoy size, destination, and radio frequencies to be used during the trip. Before moving the convoy onto the highway, the convoy commander must also have a clearance number for the convoy. This number includes information on the type of convoy, its size and destination. This information, relayed to highway traffic coordinators, gives a good indication of the nature and extent of traffic on Vietnam's highways.

Before the convoy kicked off, Cap-

tain Ernst and Specialist Herzog radioed all this information to the logistics coordinator, the man they would call if fire support or medical aid were needed. There are logistics coordinators at three points along QL 19 between Pleiku and Qui Nhon. Each coordinator oversees a particular security network along the highway.

The logistics coordinator in turn assigned a "convoy number" to the 815th convoy. The number helps the logistics coordinator locate the various convoys as they progress down the highway. As convoys move into successive security networks, they receive a new number because the convoys originating in these areas have changed the original sequence of numbers.

The preliminaries over, the convoy is ready to kick off. On their long hauls, the 815th's convoys followed typical convoy procedures. In his jeep equipped with radio and M60, the charlie charlie (convoy commander) led the convoy. In some instances, an MP gun jeep or V-100 might precede him. Behind the convoy commander followed a steel plated gun truck, a deuce and a half complete with twin 50 caliber machineguns and a M60. These gun trucks usually belong to the company involved in the move. Sometimes, however, a unit short on gun trucks will call for help from various transportation outfits. For the 815th's convoys, gun truck crews from the 64th Transportation Company volunteered to bolster security for the trips.

At 50 to 100-meter intervals, the 815th's vehicles moved out onto the road from checkpoint 88. MPs controlling traffic there made sure everyone was wearing his steel pot and flak jacket. At the rear of the convoy was more security with another gun truck and Herzog's V-100, the last vehicle in the convoy. The gun truck, the 64th Transportation Company's "Roadmaster," had a radio with a frequency number corresponding to the convoy commander's. The two would be communicating closely throughout the trip.

Di Linh was a long way off, but the 815th's convoy was on its way. The vehicles tried to maintain a 30-mile-an-hour speed on the road, dropping down to 15 miles an hour in the villages. But keeping the convoy moving in a constant flow was not an easy task. Charlie has blown many of the bridges along QL 19, and others are too frail to support the weight of five-ton trucks carrying

A 560th MP Company V-100 prepares to leave checkpoint 88 near Pleiku on a convoy run to An Khe. The experimental armored commando car, equipped with twin M73 and M60 machineguns, can reach a speed of 70 miles an hour.

still more tons of equipment. So the convoys must take short detours on dirt bypasses and cross steel planks serving as makeshift bridges. The mammoth vehicles struggled slowly through the rock and dirt—and they bunched up. "Charlie charlie" got them moving properly again.

The important thing is to keep moving. If a convoy is ambushed, the vehicles speed out of the kill zone. Once the MP V-100 has moved the convoy to safety, it will return to fight off the enemy. If further help is needed, the V-100 crew chief can call the logistics coordinator who will send gunships, tanks, APCs, or even leg units.

Enemy attack always threatens travelers on QL 19. In Herzog's "Salvaged Saint," the crew knew all about the dangers involved. "QL 19 was quiet for a good while," said crew chief Herzog, "but now things are starting up again. Because of the mines, you don't dare go off the road, and we are always liable to receive small arms fire aimed at any vehicle in the convoy—mostly just harassment. If Charlie really wanted to cause trouble, he'd hit the very front of the convoy in order to bottle up all the vehicles."

If the MPs were not expecting trouble on this second 815th convoy, it was not apparent as their V-100 approached the infamous Miang Giang Pass between Pleiku and An Khe. The pass also bears another name, "the Street Without Joy," a gloomy reminder of the slaughter of scores of French soldiers by a Viet Minh ambush. At one point in the pass, travelers can see the white crosses marking the graves of the Frenchmen.

Now well into the pass, Herzog had one hand on his radio receiver and one on the M60 which jutted out the rear hatch of the V-100. His turret gunner in the middle of the vehicle peered out at the high, rocky hills above. In the front of the "Salvaged Saint," SP4 Mike Murphy, Sayre, Ala., still in his first week as a V-100 driver, could see the rest of the convoy snaking cautiously down the narrow ravine. His M79 was on the seat next to him.

But nothing would happen this time. The Miang Giang Pass, now a smouldering, smoking rock mam-

moth due to constant air and artillery strikes, had lost much of its threat. But though largely defoliated, the boulders and caves of the blackened hills can still scare a convoy, and it was a relief to be down out of the pass. It was a relief to see the tanks and APCs that spotted the road afterwards. Mike Herzog threw open one of the side hatches of his V-100. "It's all right, we're safe now," he said.

The convoy moved steadily toward An Khe, making good time—past Montagnard children, past dusty LZs like Black Hawk and Action, past lonely tanks and APCs pointing boldly at possible enemy approaches. A steady stream of soda and beer cans marked every mile of the way.

At An Khe, the "Salvaged Saint" gave way to the 66th MP Company's "Captain America." Herzog and his crew would wait at an An Khe checkpoint for a convoy heading back west. He'd have another crack at the Miang Giang Pass.

Just outside of An Khe, the convoy faced the second challenge of the day, the An Khe Pass. In the "Roadmaster," the gun truck crew was especially wary. A week earlier, an enemy grenade, lofted out of the lush greenery of the hills near the road, fell into the bed of a deuce and a half and killed all seven Koreans inside. The grenade throw took no great accuracy. The frightfully winding road seems to be hacked from the hills.

As they approached the first hairpin turn, the excitement was readily apparent in the gunners' eyes. Sergeant Bert Girouard, Dickenson, Texas, manned two 50 caliber machineguns, one on either side of the gun truck. He planted himself behind one and stared out defiantly at the thick foliage that seemed close enough to touch the gun barrel. In the rear of the truck, SP4 Richard Cornell, Ringwood, Okla., stood confidently behind a minigun —gun truck crews will scrounge as much firepower as they can handle.

But, as on the Miang Giang Pass, no incident occurred. Nothing but a slow, guarded descent, with the vehicles at times coming to a halt. The "Roadmaster" gunners seemed disappointed. "Damn it, I've got to get in one more ambush before I leave here," Girouard mumbled.

The convoy no sooner cleared the pass and was moving on level pavement when an ancient deuce and a half just ahead of "Roadmaster" broke down. Girouard got on the radio and reported the trouble to charlie charlie at the head of the convoy. The "Roadmaster" remained behind with the truck while the convoy's maintenance vehicle repaired it. Soon the delayed vehicles caught up with the rest of the convoy. Had the breakdown been more serious, the disabled vehicle would have been towed to a secure area for repair.

The convoy reached Phu Tai's Camp Humper, just south of Qui Nhon, about 1700 hours. The night's stay there was typical of all the nights on the road to Di Linh. The men ate a hot supper, pulled vehicle maintenance, showered, then returned to sleep in their trucks.

In the morning, the long line of vehicles parked near the camp's gates came alive again. Breakfast, then more maintenance checks. Captain Ernst and First Sergeant Batchler moved from vehicle to vehicle talking and joking with the men—checking for problems. The first sergeant had made a mental note of the potential trouble vehicles. He knew exactly what vehicles had already broken down along the way and which men had to stay behind. These men would join a later convoy or be escorted separately to Di Linh by a gun truck.

After Sergeant Batchler passed out C rations, the convoy commander gave a brief talk to all the men in the convoy, reminding them of convoy procedures and pointing out possible trouble spots on QL 1. Another conference with the V-100 crew chief, and Captain Ernst lined up his convoy and moved them out on the road.

On the highway now, the convoy drivers fought the heat and dirt of torn-up QL 1. Goggles protected the eyes from the dust, but nothing could stop the burning of the sun and the wind. But the convoy moved on, past little hamlets that seem to grow out of clusters of towering coconut trees. The vehicles rumbled past schools, past hamlet government huts with their Vietnamese flags and Rural Development cadre. The men waved to smiling children or to other drivers going in the other direction—many flashed peace and black power signs, even the smallest children.

After five hours of battling the jarring roads, the convoy halted for a short break. There had been only one other delay, when an old truck, "the Ratfink," broke down on a bridge situated on a rice paddy dike. The breakdown blocked the progress of the whole convoy until the vehicle was finally repaired. The "Ratfink's" driver was embarrassed. No matter how old or used a vehicle is, a driver views a breakdown as a personal insult to his skills as a mechanic. He has somehow let the convoy down.

But his second break was a rest stop and it brought a horde of Vietnamese children begging for food. All the way the men in the convoy had thrown cookies and parts of C rations at the outstrected hands of tattered urchins. Now the children gathered about the truck cabs and chanted "You, You," to the drivers who towered above them. The bigger children would push cute toddlers toward the cabs—presenting the best bait for the drivers' sympathies. A black hand stretched out a cab window, and a tiny girl reached up to grab a can of cheese crackers. She turned away, and the bigger children jerked the can away from her. She began to cry, and the driver stuck his sweating head out of the truck and yelled, "Damn it, you better give some to your little sister."

Further down the line drivers were swapping cigarettes with papa sans for coconuts and bananas. One man walked his dog up and down the string of vehicles. Others snapped pictures. The scene was like a traveling street fair. The drivers exchanged sodas and C rations. Everyone knew one another.

After about a half hour, the first sergeant drove his jeep down along the convoy—"We move in five minutes." The laughter and bantering died down now, and the men once more were caught up in the excitement of the long haul.

Barrelling down the highway again—this time on a paved smooth road near Tuy Hoa, thinking of the paradise that is the Dalat region. Cool mountains, the scent of pines, fertile fields of tea, tobacco, and vegetables. Di Linh was still more than 200 miles away, but in the cargo-jammed bed of a deuce and a half, SP4 Dennis Benton, Philadelphia, could care less about the distance now. Watching him perched on his laundry bag and plucking a guitar, it was hard to believe a war was going on.

After being bottled up for so long, the 815th was moving toward freedom. The men were finally making a long haul. And the way they felt, their rattling trucks might just as well have been Cadillacs and QL 1 a superhighway. ■

It helps to feel a reassuring hand
At an age when you're too old
to hide your face,
But too young to go it alone.
It helps to know someone's there
just in case.

Living and fighting from 15-ton APCs, 1/50th Scouts are II Corps'...

ROVING TRACK PACK

Story and Photos
By SP4 Mike Maattala

In jerky, stop-and-go style, the armored personnel carriers (APCs) rumbled across the dry rice paddies north of the village of Thien Giao in southeastern II Corps. They sped across the flat surface until they reached the foot-high dirt wall surrounding a paddy, where each APC had to slow to a halt and inch over the wall until the front end dropped to the ground. Then the driver gunned the Chrysler engine and sped on for 50 meters before repeating the whole process.

Manning the APCs were Scouts from the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 50th Infantry in Phan Thiet and a platoon of 15 ARVN regional force soldiers from F Troop, Company 235. The two sections of the 50-man Scout platoon had met in Thien Giao early in the afternoon after working from LZs Sandy and Sherry for the past few days. Now five APCs from the second section, accompanied by two "four-deuce" mortar tracks, were beginning another operation while the first section remained in Thien Giao as a reaction force.

Just before dusk, Staff Sergeant Willy Reichelt, Scout platoon sergeant from Koengen, Germany, selected a spot for a forward observation base (FOB) about three clicks from Thien Giao. The tracks broke from their single column and set up in a circle, with the mortar tracks in the center. Immediately the men began unpacking and setting up their night defense. Claymores and trip flares were put out and a nearby hootch was checked. A slight drizzle caused the Scouts to stretch ponchos from the rear of their APCs to provide shelter before they settled down for a quick meal.

After supper, an ambush patrol of five Scouts and four ARVNs set out for a nearby woodline where they would spend the night. Moments later, a Scout climbed on top of each track and perched behind the 50 caliber machinegun, the first in a series of men who would take part in the night-long guard.

As darkness slowly set in, bits of conversation drifted across the area, breaking the night stillness. The glow of an occasional cigarette showed that the guards were not the only men still awake. The early evening is a pleasant time for small talk and quiet thoughts, even if you are sitting in the middle of a rice paddy.

The Scouts of the 1/50th are accustomed to this routine, for they usually stay in the field for 30 or 40 days at a time. The platoon of 49 enlisted men and one officer is attached to Headquarters Company and divided into two equal sections. Smaller than the companies of the 1/50th, the Scouts are able to stay out longer because they are subject to fewer maintenance and supply problems.

The work of the Scouts is similar to that of the companies, though on a smaller scale. Usually working as a whole platoon, they conduct search and clear missions during the day and send out ambush patrols at night. They are ready to react to any intelligence in their area of operation.

"When near a village such as Thien Giao, they can also serve the pacification program," said Captain John Walsh, CO of Headquarters Company from Moses Lake, Wash. "By running operations between the mountains and rice paddies, they help keep the VC from taking the rice. And when a VC rice cache is discovered, the Scouts give it to the villagers. Thus, the Scouts provide more than just security for the people."

Because the unit is small and mobile, the Scouts can be deployed quickly when their services are needed in a nearby area. In early April, when VC were detected in Binh Lam hamlet northwest of Phan Thiet, the Scouts came from Sandy and Sherry to serve as blocking forces west of the hamlet, while ARVNs worked on the three remaining sides.

While operating in the field, the Scouts occasionally return to an LZ at night. When they do, they set up along the perimeter and send a couple of tracks out on ambush. Moving three or four times a night to prevent the enemy from setting up on them, they frequently are in position to engage him immediately after spotting the tube flash from a mortar.

Not all the Scouts' operations are conducted with APCs on the flatlands around Phan Thiet. At times they go on combat assaults (CAs) in the mountains. They are flown into the area from the rear, perform their mission, and then are pulled back to help secure a firebase at night. Once again, size plays an important role in their being selected for more CAs than the companies of the 1/50th.

After spending roughly one month in the field, the Scouts usually return to Phan Thiet for a four-day standdown. There the first two days are spent cleaning personal gear and pulling maintenance on the tracks. The next day they are free to relax on their own, and then on the last day they pull more maintenance on the tracks in preparation for a return to the field.

Each APC normally has a five-man crew. Two M-60 gunners flank the 50 caliber man perched high in the center of the vehicle, who is in constant communication by radio headset with the driver and track commander (TC). Upon assignment to the Scouts, a man will immediately become a crew member on one of the tracks. The only in-country training he gets is within the platoon, so he must learn the way the Scouts operate as he goes along.

The men have ample time to become accustomed to life on an APC. "Since we spend so much time in the field, we come to view the tracks as our homes," said Specialist Four Martin Reynolds, Marysville, Michigan. "The men bring most of their gear with them. Last fall we left LZ Betty in Phan Thiet right after Thanksgiving and didn't get back there until after New Year's Day."

Some attempts are made by the Scouts to add personal touches to their tracks, but it is hard to make 15 tons of armored plating really "homey." It is also impractical, for after a jarring ride through the field, any objects not securely fastened inside will be found strewn all over when the rear ramp is dropped at a stopping point.

Centered around the track, life in the field is a dull routine of packing up, moving out, and stopping to unpack again. The APC serves as the Scouts' transportation, sleeping quarters, shelter from rain or heat, a gathering place during stops. With its tremendous firepower, it is also their main protection during enemy contact.

Traveling on an APC for weeks at a time requires strict budgeting of

supplies. The men must constantly be resupplied with food, water, and ammunition. Water, especially, becomes a precious commodity. Each track carries two five gallon cans, and sometimes the Scouts are supplied with a 500 gallon water tank which can be hauled behind a track.

The water is saved primarily for drinking; in the field it is better to go dirty than to be thirsty. With water so valuable, the Scouts must be content to stop near a stream, set up the necessary security, and bathe right there. Luxuries such as showers are unknown unless they stop off in a village where facilities exist.

Like most soldiers who spend a lot of time in the field, the Scouts are adept at concocting different combinations of C and LRP rations, their primary forms of sustenance. If they are in a secure FOB, a chopper will usually bring in one hot meal every third day.

Both the wet and dry seasons of Vietnam create certain problems for the Scouts. During the monsoons, the vehicles must struggle in the omnipresent mud. And when the rain ceases and the ground becomes parched, the men direct their curses at the dust which envelops the moving tracks. For the men on an APC near the rear of a column, it is like riding through a monstrous dust storm. When it rains, they at least have a chance to let some of the grime rinse off. But on operations during the dry season, the dirt cakes the skin, layer upon layer, to be streaked by streams of sweat.

The Scouts usually operate out of an FOB for two or three days before switching sites. But if they get hit, they will move the next day. When they are together as a full platoon, they have ten tracks at their disposal. If not accompanied by mortar tracks, the two APCs which carry the platoon leader and platoon sergeant occupy the center of their defensive perimeter. These two tracks have command radios to communicate with the rear as well as their regular radios for inter-platoon commo.

Though the APCs can easily move over flat ground at a speed of 20 m.p.h., rough ground can hamper the tracks considerably. The Scouts found this out on a mission north of Thien Giao in early April.

About 15 minutes from their FOB, on the way to setting up as a blocking force, Scouts on the lead track spotted a lone VC running across a clearing about 300 meters directly in front of them. With a shout of "Let's go" from Sergeant Reichelt, the APCs quickly spread out and gave chase. Slowed by the countless paddy walls, the Scouts pursued the enemy for 15 minutes but could not locate him.

The armored personnel carrier serves as the Scouts' transportation, sleeping quarters, shelter from rain or heat, and gathering place during stops.

Turning around to sweep the area, the Scouts discovered a hootch with some warm rice in pots. Apparently the enemy was interrupted in the middle of a meal by the sound of the tracks and decided not to stick around. Upon closer inspection, the Scouts spotted a spider hole, which they blew with a fragmentation grenade. In another nearby hole, they found two ammo cans containing medicine and clothes.

Continuing their search along a nearby stream, the men found two more VC hootches, the last with more warm food, fish baskets, AK-47 and SKS rounds, and over 300 pounds of rice. Though the whole effort failed to net any Charlies, the Scouts made sure the enemy would not get any more use out of the items discovered.

After spending a day in the field chasing Charlie, there is not much for the Scouts to do upon returning to their FOB. Some, of course, will be going out on the night ambush. Most of the tracks draw cards to see who will be selected for this mission. For those staying behind, the choices are simple. It is dark by the time they finish eating, and noise and light discipline must be maintained. They can either stay up and talk softly or go to sleep.

Those deciding to crash make the best of what they have. Some sleep inside their APC on hammocks; others throw air mattresses on top of the track or on the rear ramp. Some even bring along cots and set them up next to the APC, while a few are content to throw a poncho liner on the ground. Since it makes little sense to wander from the tracks in the dark, those staying up will usually congreagate on the rear ramp or else keep the man on guard company.

The top of an APC is a strange position from which to observe the night grow old. The surrounding woods melt into a black wash and the sky becomes a cineramic screen of stars. When flares pop from a nearby LZ, the first thought is, "What's happening there now?" Tracers attract the attention a little more and the jarring sound of incoming mortars at the LZ wakes a few of the Scouts. Then everything quiets down again, the last flare dies, and there is nothing left but the stars and the vague outlines of seven APCs huddled together in the middle of a rice paddy.

■

Above: After returning from a mission near Binh Lam hamlet, Scouts prepare to pull maintenance on their APCs at LZ Sandy. Below: SR4 Harry Engler, M-60 gunner for the Scouts, cools off under a shade tree after a morning operation north of Thien Giao.

Aussie Diggers in Phuoc Tuy Province are

Getting The Bloody Job Done

By SP5 Richard C. Soehngen

Neatly stenciled at the top of the form letter were the words, "Australian Military Form, On Her Majesty's Service." Underneath the salutation was the crisp command: "You have been selected by the ballot to serve in the Army. Report for a physical examination on. . ."

Like draftees the world over, Maurice Beasley, Queensland, was a bit despondent after getting his national service notice. After four years of studying industrial chemistry at a technical college, he had been looking forward to working in the sugar industry. And then of course there was the question of Vietnam. He remarked rather ruefully later that it was the only lottery he had ever won. Now a section leader with "Biscuit" Company, 8th Royal Australian Regiment (8 RAR), Corporal Beasley is typical of the Aussie infantryman or "Digger" as they prefer to be called.

Stoic in his attitude toward the war and his tour in Vietnam, Beasley probably appreciates better than his American counterpart what is at stake in Vietnam. "During the Second World War, Papua, New Guinea, was invaded by Japanese troops and the city of Darwin in the northern part of Ausralia was heavily bombed. The domino theory is very real to us. It could happen to us again; that's why we Australians have sent troops to help out over here now."

The Australian commitment to Vietnam began in June 1962 when 30 Army officers were assigned as advisors to Vietnamese forces. Then, as the war took on added proportions, the Australian government increased its military contribution to Vietnam. Six thousand troops of the 1st Australian Task Force, including three infantry battalions of 750 men each, were sent to Vietnam in May, 1966. With their headquarters at Nui Dat 35 miles southeast of Saigon, the unit was assigned the task of securing and pacifying Phuoc Tuy Province, long rife with Viet Cong. Today, this Australian AO, responsible for 100,000 Vietnamese nationals, has been transformed from a Viet Cong-dominated region into a relatively secure and prosperous part of the country.

Although the Viet Cong, or "Nogs" as they are called by the Aussies, continue to operate from a few scattered mountain strongholds in the province, their movements outside these sanctuaries have been severely curtailed. But scattered contacts continue to flare up as the Diggers relentlessly patrol the countryside.

"Biscuit" Company had been in the field for six weeks and was due for a rest. Except for a few days spent in Vung Tau on stand-down, the company had been operating continuously since 8 RAR was deployed to Vietnam four months before

Platoon Sergeant Bob Ritchie passes a hand signal back down the line during an ambush operation. Strictly professional. the Aussies move quietly and talk as little as possible.

Photos by SP5 Lonnie Voyles

One of only nine infantry battalions in the entire Australian Army, 8 RAR has four line companies and an administrative (HQ) Company. Each battalion comes over for a year of duty on a rotation basis. With the 8th RAR is the 7th RAR and the 6th RAR, which in August 1966, won a Presidential Unit Citation for an action involving its D Company. Two hundred forty-five enemy soldiers of a Viet Cong main force regiment were slain by the company as they attempted to maneuver on the base headquarters at Nui Dat. Before the two-day action was over, 17 Diggers were killed in action—a significant toll for the small Australian Forces.

"We're a small army so we depend on every one of our blokes," remarked two-tour veteran Platoon Sergeant Bob Ritchie from Brisbane. "Any casualty we suffer hits us pretty hard."

As the water boiled for his "brew" of tea and he fumbled with a P-38 over a can of C-Rations, Sergeant Ritchie made some comparisons between the Diggers and the "Yanks" with whom he worked closely on his first tour. "You know our young lads are drinking coffee now—they're going American. We like your food over ours but, personally, I think our brew and sweets are a little better. Who ever heard of not having tea with the meal?

"We use our ammunition more sparingly than your mob," continued Ritchie as he methodically began to run a cleaning rod down the barrel

Above: Diggers from 6th Platoon, B Company, patrol a section of road near Fire Support Base Discovery. Right: "Rocky Bullwink," who lugs an M60 besides a 45-lb pack, pauses for a break.
Below: An Australian soldier beats out a brush fire in his platoon's AO southeast of Saigon.

"We are a small army so we depend on every one of our blokes."

of his weapon. The reason for this is apparent when one examines the British SLR rifle, equivalent to the M-14 and standard issue to the Aussies. The automatic selector switch has been removed and the basic load of ammunition is only eight magazines. The Aussies are justly proud of their "gunners" who find their target without a display of firepower.

What weight the Diggers save in ammunition, they make up in extra water and food. It's not uncommon for a unit to go five or six days without being resupplied. No cold beer or soda for these lads either. If they are lucky, they might get a change of clothes every two weeks, a shower only when the company rotates to the base camp or a fire support base for a few days of guard duty.

A look at their base camp at Nui Dat or at any Australian fire support base indicates a basic difference in Australian and American construction methods. The Aussie engineers show a thorough understanding of the benefits Nature has to offer. Instead of bulldozing every tree or shrub away before building, Aussie engineers have kept in mind that overhead foliage affords cool shade. As a result, their tents are built in neat rows among the trees, and the area is generally several degrees cooler.

Although the Australian and American armies share the same goals in Vietnam, there are differences in their methods and in the personalities of their soldiers. The American "boonie rat" is an unusual breed of citizen soldier. He seems happiest when he's got something to complain about. He'll scoff at professionalism and apple pie among his fellow soldiers, yet in battle with his leaders fallen, he will display the sort of personal initiative which is the hallmark of the American soldier.

A product of the British school of military discipline, the average Digger is extremely professional in his personal affairs and conduct in the field. Since discipline is tight, he has to be told the reason less often. Although not well-equipped or resupplied, the Digger manages always to grin and bear it. No gripes, no complaints—he just carries on with the art of soldiering.

Morale for the Digger is nurtured to a great extent by his personal appearance. In the morning before he moves out, he takes a razor to his face and a brush to his boots. "We expect our soldiers to look like soldiers even when they're out in the field," explained Lieutenant John Brien, Queensland, 6th Platoon Leader.

Although this sort of discipline would discourage many GIs, the Digger on the other hand is privileged to sport a handlebar mustache. Many choose to do so and are permitted to go home with their distinctive new look.

Sometimes under skillful leadership, the drudgery of such menial tasks as boot polishing can be humorous. "Aw right lads, we're going to Hoa Long (a Vietnamese village the Aussies have swept through before) to a dance tonight, so be sure to pretty up," quips Sergeant Ritchie. The Diggers have heard different variations of this joke before, but he's always able to produce a good laugh.

All humor is gone, though, when Sergeant Ritchie and Lieutenant Brien begin the briefing for that day. A letter is read by the Lieutenant from a wounded buddy now doing well in a hospital in Vung Tau. This news is followed by an announcement that two of the Diggers have received orders for R&R and will be leaving on the next "Albatross" (Huey) to come in with resupply. Then the mood shifts again. "Aw right, mates, snap to and listen up," drawls Sergeant Ritchie. "We're going to go for a bit of a sniff. If the trek looks fresh, we'll set up claymores with machineguns on either end and wait. If not, we'll see what we can see further along. We move out in ten minutes."

Packs on and weapons ready, the platoon soon begins to move along an azimuth which will lead them to a trail a few hundred meters away. The men walk stealthily, several yards apart as they carefully negotiate the jungle-covered lowlands interspersed with rolling hills.

This makes the sixth day of operating in this area for the Aussies. Frequent security halts help ease the weight of their 45-pound packs which have begun to rub their shoulders raw. Eash man can smell his mates—and himself. It's a repugnant smell of wet fatigue clothing and sweat—the smell of an army in the jungle.

The soldiers pass a hand signal down the line from man to man. Its message is simple: take five minutes. One by one the men ease themselves down in the bushes and rest on their packs. Like soldiers anywhere, when they are given five, they "expect three and get two." Soon the signal is given; they struggle up and continue.

From somewhere down the trail the radio squawks as the operator adjusts his head set and picks up a message from the 5th Platoon. The sister platoon is in contact 2000 meters to the southeast. Faces tense and grips tighten on weapons as the word passes along the 25 men in the platoon. Sergeant Ritchie and Lieutenant Brien consult their maps. The contact doesn't sound serious, so they decide to continue with the original plan and await further developments.

The point man moves out again, this time with flank security. The men reach the trail and in single file proceed up it, eyes alert for movement.

Sharp-eyed scouts detect signs of use only a few hours old. They find a likely ambush site with good cover, and Sergeant Ritchie motions the men into the undergrowth. "We'll harbor here," whispers the platoon sergeant. "I'd sooner set up an ambush anyway; you know you'll get the nogs then."

The two machineguns take up positions at opposite ends of the ambush as the platoon settles down to wait. Talking falls to faint whispers, and the men prepare their food using odorless heat tablets on little individual stoves. They add canteen water sparingly to Australian dehydrated food until the right mixture is obtained. The soldiers wash down the chow with tea, coffee, or hot chocolate.

As the hours pass by in the afternoon, some men nap while those responsible for security remain within an arm's reach of their weapons. The radio operator receives word that the 5th Platoon had made contact contact with two Viet Cong earlier in the day. One VC was killed, the other slipped away. A follow-up sweep found a bunker complex and two more VC. In this skirmish the Diggers killed one and took the other prisoner after wounding him. They also captured two weapons, a Russian SKS and an M-1. The Aussies suffered no casualties.

Late in the afternoon as the shadows deepened on the jungle floor and with no further sign of the enemy, Lieutenant Brien gave the order to move out a few hundred meters into a night position. The men immediately establish a defensive perimeter.

For almost an hour, until dusk finally descends, the men remain motionless behind their weapons. This is "stand-to," a military tactic stemming from World War I when attacks could be expected at dusk or dawn. In the morning the men will "stand-to" again.

A few quiet discussions fill the air as the men begin to bed down. Like all soldiers, they miss drinking and women. "Yeah, mate, I'm looking forward to a glass of draft and a friendly sheila. Yeah, that will do, I reckon," says one Digger somewhat pensively.

For the most part there is no short-timer talk. The Diggers come over and return as a unit. For Corporal Beasely and 50 percent of the platoon who are National Service, returning will be the end of the war and a beginning of a new life.

The whispered word is relayed around the positions—"We'll move at daybreak." One by one the men turn over and drift off to sleep. ■

A British Centurion tank provides close support for the Diggers in major ground operations. The plains and gently rolling hills in Phouc Tuy Provience offer good tank country.

Civic Action for Special Forces Hero Was

A Full-time Sideline

By SP4 Joe S. Farmer

Along QL 19, just east of Pleiku, dirt trails lead off to the stilted huts of Montagnard villages. To the average soldier these villages on the treacherous highway represent tokens of an unknown way of life and possible VC hiding places. To CW4 George Railey, formerly with Company B, 5th Special Forces Group at Pleiku, they were homes for a misplaced, backward people who needed help—help he tried to give.

Every day Railey walked along those dirt trails, carrying food and clothing to the refugees. He walked them for the last time on March 4 of this year when he was run over and killed by a speeding jeep while distributing his gifts about five miles east of Pleiku. The Montagnards have not forgotten him. They have erected a monument at the site of the accident in which Railey was killed as a small remembrance of the great debt they owe him. Inscribed on the monument are the words: "In memory of CW4 George Railey, who died here by accident while distributing gifts to refugees on 4 March 1970."

The monument, with the inscription in both English and Vietnamese, is small in size but commemorates giant accomplishments.

The 48-year-old green beret came to Vietnam in March 1969. He had lived in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and had completed more than 24 years of military service. He was scheduled to leave Vietnam on March 29 this year, but had extended for six months shortly before his death.

Upon his arrival in Vietnam, he was assigned to Headquarters, 5th Special Forces in Nha Trang as Maintenance Officer. His civic action accomplishments while in Nha Trang were numerous.

Working entirely in his spare time, he began a program to build playgrounds for the children in Nha Trang. Not having the facilities or materials to equip the playgrounds himself, he sought help from Filipinos stationed in Nha Trang. The Filipinos built swing sets, slides and seesaws for the playgrounds, and Warrant Officer Railey installed them along Beach Road. Now the playgrounds are crowded with happy, laughing children who, surprisingly, maintain the facilities themselves. Sometimes an adult can even be spotted swinging back and forth in deep thought.

Still not satisfied, CW4 Railey began a project to build a "Kiddy Train" to give the children rides. With an old Air Force tractor, some old tires and other paraphernalia he set to work. He reworked the tractor, installing a large drum to give it a train look and built a wooden engine cabin complete with the instruments from the tractor's dash. From

Photos by SP4 Frank Sullivan

wood he carved headlights and painted them to resemble eyes. Then he decorated the engine in bright colors.

His work still not complete, he built an open air "passenger car" equipped with seats and following the color scheme of the engine. Using wood again, he constructed a caboose also brightly colored and equipped with seats. One thing about the train that catches the eye immediately is a painting on the rear of the engine of an American flag crossed with a Vietnamese flag.

While still in Nha Trang, he drove the train to the Orhpanage every Sunday and stacked as many children into the cars as the train would hold. Then he drove the load of screaming children around town for two to three hours or as much time as he could spare. When he was later transferred to Pleiku, Mister Railey carried the train with him and continued the practice at the orphanage there.

Although children were his main concern, CW4 Railey also did much for the older people around Nha Trang and Pleiku. Finding that the elderly Vietnamese people at the Old Folks' Home at Nha Trang had an abundance of spare time with no useful way to fill it, he began a program to build them a carpentry shop. Working entirely on his own, he scrounged or bought the equipment to stock the shop.

After getting the equipment, he discovered that there was not enough power at the home to sustain the electric tools. Undiscouraged, CW4 Railey somehow acquired two generators to supply the power for the shop and gave them to the home.

Now the old men at the home spend their days building chairs, tables or bookshelves in a revived air of usefulness. They were shocked when they heard that the man who had done so much for them was dead. Trying to show their gratitude in the only way they could, they held a memorial service for Railey. Their opinion of him was unanimous: "He was a wonderful man."

In addition to his work at the Old Folks' Home, CW4 Railey also tried to aid the people confined to the Leper Colony at Nha Trang. He tried to show the people ways to spend their time at the colony and help them develop useful skills for after they were released from the colony. Without heed for his own health, he traveled to the colony as often as possible to give these outcasts from society any help and guidance he could offer. His visits brought to these people a little of the life that nature had denied them.

The childlen of Nha Trang make constant use of the playgrounds CW4 Railey installed along Beach Road. Railey also worked with the people at the Old Folks' Home in Nha Trang and started a Rehabilitation Center for disabled soldiers.

Just before his death, CW4 Railey became concerned with the problems of the Montagnards around Pleiku who had been resettled because of the war. These people had been forced to leave their homes and settle in a new part of the country where they knew no one. Still clinging to their primitive ways, they built grass huts and settled into the only way of life they knew.

Seeing these people's dilemma and once again overcome by a desire to help, CW4 Railey helped institute "Operation Miami," a program in which people from the States send food, clothing and medicine to be distributed among the people. Receiving the packages, Railey would go into the villages and give the articles to as many people as the supply would reach. It was while distributing these gifts that he was killed.

Shortly before his death, CW4 Railey's civic action work among the Vietnamese people was recognized—he was the recipient of the Barry Goldwater Republican Club Award for Community Service. This award is given each year to the group or individual the club feels has done the most toward the betterment of a community somewhere in the world. There is little doubt that CW4 Railey earned the award.

The playgrounds he built are still in operation as is the carpentry shop at the Old Folks' Home. Where did he find time to do his job and still accomplish so much civic action work? First Lieutenant Rob Shaffer, one of CW4 Railey's immediate superiors at Pleiku put it this way: "Railey was more or less a quiet man. He was competent in his job, and even though it seems impossible, civic action was like a full-time sideline for him."

George Railey is dead. The memorial services have been held and the monument has been built, but his accomplishments still thrive, waiting for someone to take up where death made him stop. ■

That Others May Live

By SP5 Richard C. Soehngen

The radio crackles as the staccato of exploding grenades and sharp reports of automatic weapons fire punctuates a company commander's urgent request for tactical air support. Fighter planes on station above the battlefield respond quickly, peeling off one by one. The jets release their ordnance.

The enemy pays dearly as the jets rain death upon them, but the withering fire of enemy machineguns delivers destruction of its own. As one of the jets begins to pull out, it is caught in a crossfire and takes numerous hits.

The left wing bursts into flame as the pilot strives vainly to gain altitude. In dry monotones the pilot radios his predicament in professional jargon to his wingman close on his tail. "Heavy enemy mike-mike fire...all systems critical...I'm losing control...going down." Then the control stick goes limp in his hand as the crippled plane begins to shudder, buckle and nose downward.

Flames lick at the fuselage as the voice of his wingman reaches the pilot through his headset. "You're on fire, Blue Streak, bail out now." Automatically the pilot reaches for the ejection ring below the seat and pulls. In the next instant he is catapulted from the cockpit. The rest is automatic; his parachute opens, and the emergency radio begins to beep his plight to an HC-130 aircraft which is monitoring the air waves for such signals.

The pilot's situation is grim; he has time for only a fleeting glimpse of the crash site before landing in the thick jungle growth. He is hung up momentarily in the trees, but rappels down on a rope.

On the ground he takes a quick stock of his equipment. Whipping out the antenna to his emergency radio, he contacts the HC-130 "King Bird" circling the area. The sophisticated electronic equipment aboard the HC-130 pinpoints the location of the downed pilot. Using a brief questionaire provided before the flight, the "King Bird" confirms a friendly.

Now the rescue machine begins to crank in earnest. The King Bird calls for a rescue mission from the Air Force's 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS) at Da Nang. The 3rd ARRS Group Headquarters at Tan Son Nhut is also alerted.

Sirens wail over loudspeakers in alert shacks of the 37th ARRS. Eight men scramble to the call. Others in mess halls and barracks on 45 minute notice are also alerted by small portable walkie-talkies. They will scramble if the two crews now on station need assistance in making the pick-up.

The eight men compose two crews of four each. Within two minutes they are on the flight line running to the "Jolly Green Giants" parked just off the runway. Maintenance crews stand by as pilot and co-pilot start the engines and run through the pre-flight checklist. Two enlisted personnel, the flight engineer and pararescue specialist, don helmets and survival vests and begin checking the hoist and the M-60 machineguns swivel-mounted on each side of the aircraft near the cockpit.

The two choppers taxi down the runway a few hundred meters, gain clearance from the tower and begin to climb. Leaving the sprawling airbase and city behind, the Jolly Green Giants break formation and assume stations. The lead ship, flying at low altitude, is the primary recovery ship. This "low ship" will pick up the pilot on the first pass if possible; however, if it comes under too much fire and is forced to withdraw, the "high ship" will become the primary recovery aircraft.

Commanding the low ship is Major Walter Barnes. A veteran of fifteen successful rescue missions in Southeast Asia, he is an experienced pilot in both fixed wing and rotor aircraft. Of medium build, his bearing and manner cut a commanding figure among his men. Flying is his forte—he is expert at the controls and his cool, assured voice indicates a natural leader.

The Jolly Green Giant is capable of landing and floating in water. The long probe extending from the fuselage serves as a fuel line; the aircraft can refuel in flight by coupling with an HC-130 tanker, giving it an unlimited range capability.

The interior of the Jolly Green Giant resembles a C-123 fuselage on a small scale. It has portholes and a rear ramp. "Parachute doors" are located near the cockpit. Several standard airplane seats are provided, but most of the space is alloted to the pararescue specialist and an assortment of cots and medical supplies.

Like most pilots and flight engineers involved in air rescue work, the pararescue man is a volunteer. A very select group (there are only 250 pararescue men world-wide), they are distinguished by their maroon berets with the words, "That others may live," inscribed on the emblem. A guardian angel with the world in her grasp symbolizes their rescue skill. Whether it is an Apollo astronatu or a downed pilot in Southeast Asia, the pararescue specialist is dedicated to his job.

Nicknamed PJs for short, they have completed one of the most rigorous courses offered enlisted men in the armed forces. Besides being qualified airborne jumpers, the PJs are trained as scuba divers, mountain climbers, and skiers. They have also mastered jungle warfare techniques including survival. In addition, their medical skills closely parallel those of a Special Forces medic.

PJ on the primary recovery ship piloted by Major Barnes is Sergeant Terry Wetzel from West Newton, Pa. After making sure his medical supplies are ready, he relaxes on one of the litters. A friendly, likeable type, he has the most dangerous role of the rescue. Should the aircraft be forced to leave before completing the pick-up, he may be stranded on the ground with the pilot.

As the choppers move to the rendezvous site, the drama continues to unfold on the ground. The downed pilot examines his plastic map. With the aid of a compass he scans both the map and the terrain for a pick-up point. Signs of enemy movement prevent him from taking the easiest and most direct routes. Enemy soldiers fan out in their search, forcing the pilot deeper into the jungle growth to escape. The pilot is in hostile territory now; he must avoid capture at any cost.

As he runs to escape the enemy dragnet, the downed pilot removes the 38 caliber pistol from his holster, unlocks the cylinder, spins it a couple of times to make sure a round is in every chamber and continues. Not the best weapon for holding off the enemy, but it is a weapon. If only he could find an opening in the jungle so that his rescuers could spot him.

As he nears a tiny clearing, two

Artwork by C. Ladera

Above: SGT Steve Northern, a veteran of more than 40 jungle rescues, readies the jungle penetrator on a Jolly Green Giant helicopter. Below: Major Ronald Boyle is helped from a Jolly Green by members of rescue 35. The pilot had been forced to bail out of his F-100 jet.

"Sandies" or A1s fly over at low level. The WWII vintage, propeller-driven aircraft are looking for the downed pilot. They also test for any fire before declaring the area secure. The downed pilot first makes contact with the emergency radio, then signals his position by mirror.

The Sandies spot the mirror flash, and one of the pilots calls, "Gotcha pinpointed. You got trouble heading your way a few hundred meters to the west. We'll see what we can do to even the odds. Better lie low. By the way, the Jolly Greens should be here shortly."

Wave after wave of fighters are now called in, at half-minute intervals, spitting bursts of 20 mike-mike. The planes keep the enemy at bay.

The Jolly Green Giants arrive on the second and quickly spot the pilot's location. Major Barnes makes a rapid assessment of the situation and brings his craft low over the trees and hovers above the downed pilot.

The flight engineer quickly lowers the jungle penetrator through the vegetation. The hovering chopper is highly vulnerable to enemy gunners at this time. Several rounds penetrate the fuselage as the FE (Flight Engineer) brings the pilot up. The para-rescue specialist, whose services are not otherwise needed because the pilot is unharmed, returns fire on the enemy with an M-60.

Twenty feet. Ten feet. The distance between the dangling pilot and safety narrows. When the pilot reaches the door he is quickly hauled in. "Let's go home," yells the FE over the intercom. "Roger that," returns the co-pilot. Skillfully, Major Barnes heads the Jolly Green Giant out of the danger zone for Da Nang. Later he'll describe the rescue as a milk run: a typical "feet dry pick up" (rescue on land), and praise the performance of his crew and all those who supported the rescue mission.

The squadron's successful pick-up brings the total to 540 (32 this year), and the big board in squadron headquarters duly records the change. Since Air Force rescuemen began their work in Southeast Asia in 1965, more than 3,000 "saves" have been recorded.

Fifty men in the sky and hundreds in scattered installations have rescued another downed pilot, a man with hopes and dreams, a wife and children. ■

Eight Years To Freedom

By SP4 Thomas Baker

SP5 Lonnie Voyles

Hvem is a slight, frail man, a 40-year-old father of three, a Montagnard of the Sedang tribe. He has a shocking story to tell.

Eight years ago, in September of 1962, an element of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) came to Hvem's hamlet in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. They forced Hvem and his entire community, including old people and children, to leave their hamlet, to leave behind all their life-invested belongings, their hopes, dreams and dearly loved freedom, and march north. The NVA needed food producers.

Eight years ago, when Ngo Diem was still president of Vietnam, long before the United States had made its heavy commitment to assist the tiny, embattled nation on the southeastern corner of Asia, the NVA abducted these people and enslaved them. Vietnam had been little heard of then, not since the Indochinese War which had supposedly ended several years before in 1954. Hvem and his people were to grow food for the NVA.

In late 1965, several months after the Gulf of Tonkin incident, when the state of affairs in Vietnam had taken on a much more crucial nature, Hvem's primitive community was herded back to the Central Highlands, 12 kilometers northeast of the frequently besieged village of Dak To.

During that year, as every year since, the Central Highlands became a hotly contested area; but Hvem and his comrades knew little about the conflict. Isolated from the rest of the world by a thick, triple-canopied jungle, these mountain people could not even venture to the nearby village of Dak To. For years they lived under the oppressive hand of their captors.

The situation was intolerable, and several of the mountain folk escaped. As punishment, and to impress upon those still enslaved the futility of hoping to improve their lot, the NVA separated families among the three encampments and imposed a heavy guard. Day after day, the Montagnards dolefully labored for the NVA, growing rice, corn, and cassava—used to make bread. They would rather suffer than leave their families, an act which would make their loved ones vulnerable to inhumane brutality. So they continued to give away their crops, leaving next to nothing for themselves.

Not only were these people subjected to harsh physical labor and punishment but also to considerable mental anguish. Hard-core Viet Cong pleaded with them continually to join the local VC forces. The mountain people refused, despite promises of greater comfort in return. Enemy propaganda was hardly convincing. How could Hvem and his people possibly believe that their captors were struggling for liberation, for freedom, when they offered their captives nothing but slavery and deprivation?

Nevertheless, on March 18th of this year, when a VC cadre asked them to come fight, the tribesmen said they would. They agreed on the condition that the recruiter and the rest of his cadre would leave them alone for a couple of days that they might get their things in order before going to war. The cadre granted the mountain people their wish and had hardly left the work camps when Hvem and his people began madly fleeing toward Dak To. Aided by the cover of an extremely dark night, all 164 men, women, and children rushed through dense jungle, miraculously slipping unnoticed by a dangerous network of enemy and friendly force ambushes. They arrived safe and free at Dak To.

The mountain people are now classified as Hoi Chanhs (returnees to the Government of Vietnam) and refugees. They have proved willing to tell the allied forces all that they know about the enemy. Technically, since their affiliation with the enemy was forced, they are not Hoi Chanhs; then again, because they knowingly assisted the enemy effort through their food-growing tasks, they are eligible for the benefits of rallying to the Government of Vietnam.

Those of the group who worked longest for the NVA and filled forced positions of leadership are Hoi Chanhs now. They number 56, with 27 dependents, and comprise one of the largest single groups of ralliers in II Corps Tactical Zone in the last 12 months. The remaining 81 men, women, and children are refugees and now have their own hamlet with building materials to get it under way.

Several members of the group carried Chieu Hoi leaflet #3079 which was air-dropped over their area earlier. The leaflet offered new and improved housing to ralliers, an item for later concern. Right now, Hvem and his community of refugees are merely thankful to be free. ■

Hamlet Homecoming

By 1LT John Allgood

People do not easily forget their home towns. Down through history, when such towns or cities have been destroyed by war or natural calamities, the people have returned to build new communities.

In Vietnam thousands of people have stood by helplessly as the fist of war smashed the work of their life times. Too often, since the war still rages and the people stay mired in poverty, they must reluctantly abandon their villages. They cannot rebuild.

Thanh Xuan, a fishing hamlet of Hoai Huong village in northern Binh Dinh province, appeared to suffer this fate. By 1964 the VC had complete control of the hamlet, and Communist soldiers enjoyed utmost security in its huge and intricte tunnel system. The Allies viewed the Communist entrenchments as a prime target, and in 1968 American and Vietnamese forces assaulted the hamlet. In the ensuing costly and bitter fighting, demolitions and bulldozers were used to seal off the tunnels.

Thanh Xuan joined the list of hamlets which, because of Communist activity, the Allies had to "destroy in order to save." Nothing—not even ruins—remained of this hamlet at the mouth of the Lai Giang River. And yet 2500 had once called it home. Most of the families moved to the Hai Minh refugee settlement at Qui Nhon. A few settled at the nearby hamlet of Kim Giao. Thanh Xuan did not exist.

But though Thanh Xuan was a mere memory and its former inhabitants scattered, the people did not forget their home town. They would return if they could only find help.

Help was not long in coming. Less than two years after the hamlet was razed, more than 500 people were back in Thanh Xuan—rebuilding their homes. Thanks to the new

In terms of time and materials, Thanh Xuan's three-story monument to fallen ARVN soldiers represents the most expensive structure in the community.

Photos by SP5 Lonnie Voyles

Completely razed by Allied operations in 1968, the hamlet of Thanh Xuan now boasts a swelling population and neat rows of houses and garden plots.

GVN pacification program and the energetic work of the 1st Battalion, 40th ARVN Regiment, the new Thanh Xuan promised to far surpass the old VC-infested community.

Though people in hamlets such as Thanh Xuan contribute what they can in labor and materials, the new pacification program provides most of the funds and materials for roads, dispensaries, schools, water pumps, rice mills, agricultural projects, and market places.

With these new opportunities available to them, the people of Thanh Xuan have shared the burden of reconstructing their hamlet. At the very outset, they met and decided on the projects the hamlet would need most. They presented their ideas to the Hoai Hunong Village Council, which established priorities and authorized certain projects. More costly projects were submitted to the Province Council for approval. A new Thanh Xuan was rapidly being born.

As the hamlet citizens began to develop their projects, they received able assistance from Commanding Officer Major Huynh Van Chuong and the men of the 1st Battalion, 40th ARVN Regiment. The major and the village council laid out the hamlet in a four quadrant pattern divided by the main roads. The plans allow for additional blocks as more citizens return to the village. Once again the people saw ARVN soldiers operating bulldozers in their hamlet, but this time to prepare road beds, drains, and areas for houses and a marketplace.

Since Thanh Xuan was being entirely rebuilt, it could plan to make the best use of local terrain. The market was placed near the mouth of the river where the fishing boats would land. The village council gave equally close attention to the placement of hamlet wells, the school, the hamlet office, and the citizens' houses.

These plans made special provisions for the former Thanh Xuan villagers who had moved to Kim Giao. These people would not have to abandon their homes to resettle in the new Thanh Xuan; they could take their homes with them. When the time came to move, soldiers of the 1st Battalion would lift the bamboo and thatch houses onto boats. The whole refugee community of Kom Giao was floated across the river to Thanh Xuan in one day.

Back in the new hamlet, the people had already prepared foundations for the Kim Giao refugees' homes. Upon arrival, each house was carried to the appropriate lot according to plans. Each dwelling now occupies a central position on a lot separated on all sides from neighboring structures. Most have bamboo fences and some have elaborate gate posts facing the streets. Neat garden plots are located behind the huts.

To further the order and smooth functioning of the new Thanh Xuan, the community built a gazebo-like news center in the middle of the hamlet. Looking like a Vietnamese version of the town bandstand, the news center serves as a community bulletin board, announcement center and display point for the latest newspapers, posters, or leaflets. The open sides of the gazebo and its strategic location give news items good exposure to interested citizens.

But probably more striking than this well-planned reconstruction of an entire hamlet is the new dedication of its people to the GVN. Once a Viet Cong stronghold, Thanh Xuan now houses a mere handful of Communist sympathizers.

As a token of their allegiance to the government, the people planned and constructed a three-story concrete obelisk honoring the Vietnamese soldiers who have died fighting for the Republic of Vietnam. The people are justly proud of this memorial. In terms of time, labor, and materials, the monument represents the most expensive structure in the community. Located in front of the new hamlet office, the monument bears the inscription, "Vi Nuoc Quen Minh"—"Because of country, we forget ourselves." Funds for the monument came from former hamlet residents still living as refugees in Qui Nhon. They had not forgotten their home town.

Thanh Xuan has accomplished a great deal in the few short months since its rebirth. Much still remains to be done. In terms of population, the hamlet anxiously awaits the return of the many families who still live in refugee centers. These people first need to collect supplies of rice and materials necessary to resettle. And in the new hamlet itself, important work projects at times lack essential supplies and materials for completion.

But the citizens themselves are happy and confident. Now they live on familiar ground instead of in refugee camps. Their village, once terrorized by the VC and destroyed in battle, is gaining new life and strength almost daily. The plans and hard work of the people have made Thanh Xuan a showplace of successful pacification—all because they wouldn't forget their home town. ■

MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY

That good 'ol summertime—hot dogs and beer, beach trips and girls, vacation and a chance to sleep late, party long, and generally live it up. Back in the world, that time has rolled around again. Baseball season is well under way. Seashore and mountain resorts are jammed with people. Everybody is crowding onto the highways for that summer trip. The next month or two will bring the transformation of thousands of pale, frustrated suburban families into pictures of American post-vacation contentedness—sunburned, broke and ready to forsake the dubious pleasures of the beach house or camper (bugs, heat, sandy food) to return to the comforts of home.

Somewhere about the middle of this holiday period comes the most frantic weekend of the season, the granddaddy of American holidays, the Fourth of July. This is the time for a day at the shore, picnics, parties on the patio and dozens of other celebrations. Most of the vacationers will have little time in the action-packed weekend for pondering the meaning of the holiday. There are far too many items on their schedule to worry about the apple pie and flag-waving traditions that the holiday represents. Those of us here in Vietnam can't really blame them, either. If we were back in the world we'd be planning that big weekend, and you can bet we wouldn't be wasting any of that precious time.

While the Fourth has always been a time for celebration, the festivities have undergone drastic changes over the years. The early celebrations were serious ones, as befitted the times. The country was new; it was as yet unproven; and it had many difficulties to face. The Fourth of July was a day for serious speeches and grassroots campaigning. Later, as things looked brighter for the rapidly developing country, the holiday became more a time for relaxation and celebration. Parades were held in every town; picnics for whole communities took place all across the country. The serious discussions began to give way to camp-meeting styled politics. Dignitaries and hopefuls mounted platforms and addressed whatever portion of the crowd they could attract. The years immediately following wars were the most exciting of all, with companies of veterans and reservists marching in the parades and showing off their uniforms. It was the big day of their year.

The rapid growth of cities and suburban areas brought an end to community celebrations in most parts of the country. Folks began to seek more individual ways to entertain and amuse themselves. More and more people planned trips over the holiday, and less and less time was spent in organized festivities.

Many people today miss the significance of the holiday. Others have little time to think about the meaning of Independence Day. Some folks just don't care, and others sneer at any mention of the traditions and values that made the day a special one for Americans. Well, that's the way it has always been in our society. We've always had variety—in people as well as in their beliefs. The right to dissent is part of our heritage, too.

A year in Vietnam means missing each holiday once, and holidays have a double significance for men away from home. They are the roughest days to get through; the time passes most slowly then. But they are the milestones of our Vietnam tour and serve to mark the passage of time. "If I can just make it to Thanksgiving" or "When Christmas comes I'll really be short" are often heard in conversation. Missing the holidays gives the solidier in Vietnam a chance to think what those days mean. Sure, if we were at home we'd be making it to the beach on the Fourth, but here we're going to have time to think a little. And, in our situation, it's an interesting holiday to think about. We've developed a fairly realistic attitude over here—some of us might even have become a little cynical. We're not going to fall for any windy political speeches, and we may not be impressed by an emotional song and dance about patriotism and the grand old flag. But, you know, there are some pretty real things in Uncle Sam's past, some things that we as soldiers can relate to and appreciate.

There really was a Revolutionary War, remember? Even though the history books make it sound as mythological as the Greeks invading Troy, there were real men involved. Scared, tired, never sure of resupply or reinforcement, those old boys fought like tigers once they had decided that their cause was worthwhile. Later, there was an internal war in which it was harder for a man to be sure of his purpose, for it was a war that split states, towns, even families. Each man had to decide for himself what he believed. Men on both sides believed in the causes they fought for, and men on both sides died for their beliefs. Later still, men fought in two world wars because the United States felt an obligation to protect her allies from tyranny.

Yes, we've heard all the stories before. We've become hardened to their message because we've heard them so often. Here in Vietnam, however, they can have a new meaning. We're not reading someone else's story now; we're helping to write one of our own. There's a great deal to think about in what's gone before. There are traditions that we alone can carry on, and beliefs and values that only we can perpetuate.

In the eternal summer of Vietnam, it's easy to forget the excitement of the warm days of summer back in the world. The routine of heat, rain and heat again can dull our appreciation of a summer weekend away from the old grind. It's also easy to ignore the holidays as they slowly approach, then disappear as marks on our short-timer's calendars—identical to all the other days.

This Independence Day there may be hot dogs and beer, maybe even the beach for a few, but it won't be like the states. Our attitudes on this Fourth of July will be different too. It can be a meaningful difference. ■

TWO
AIR MAIL
STAMPS

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To: _____

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The Pleiku kiddie train

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