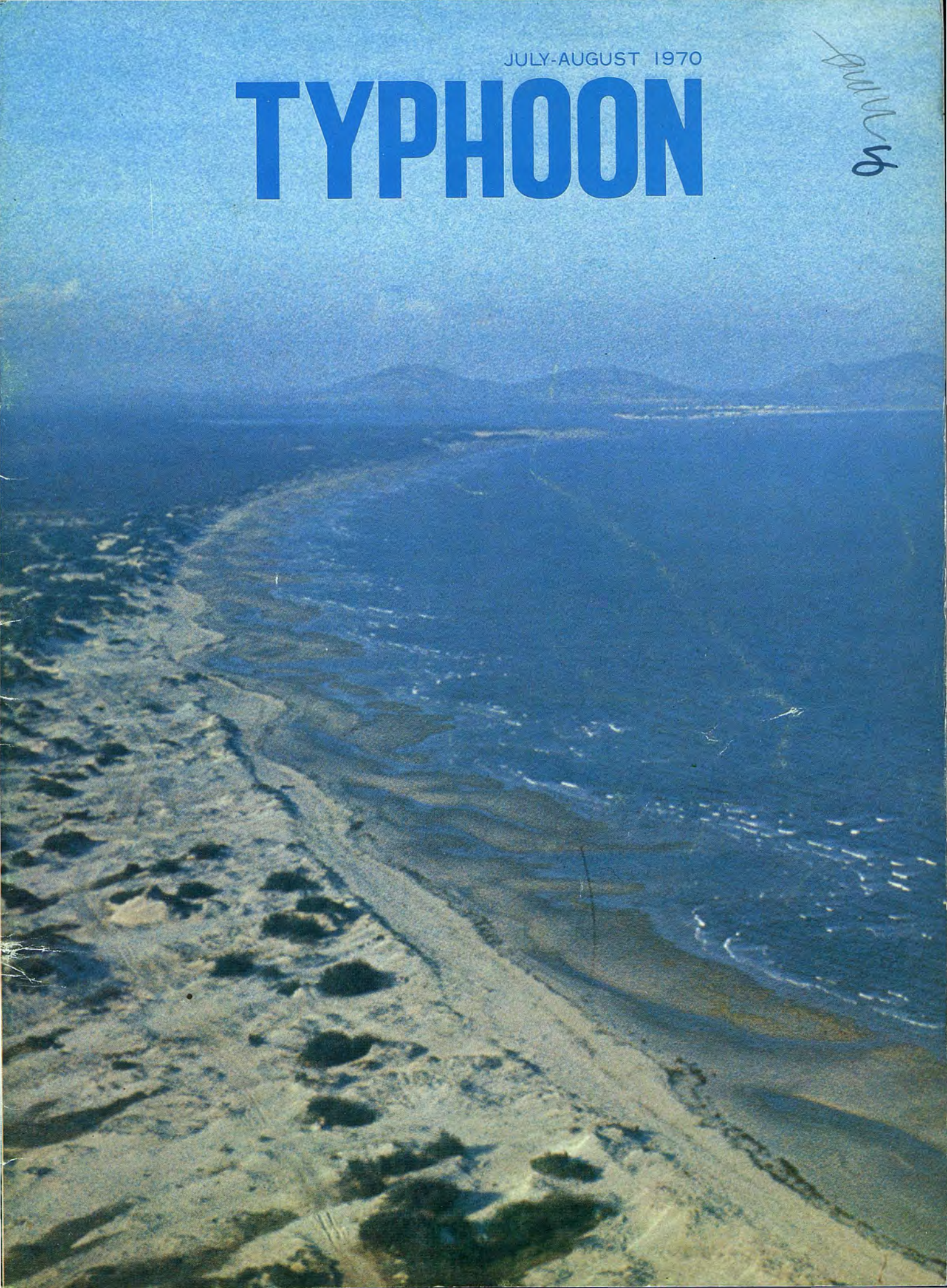
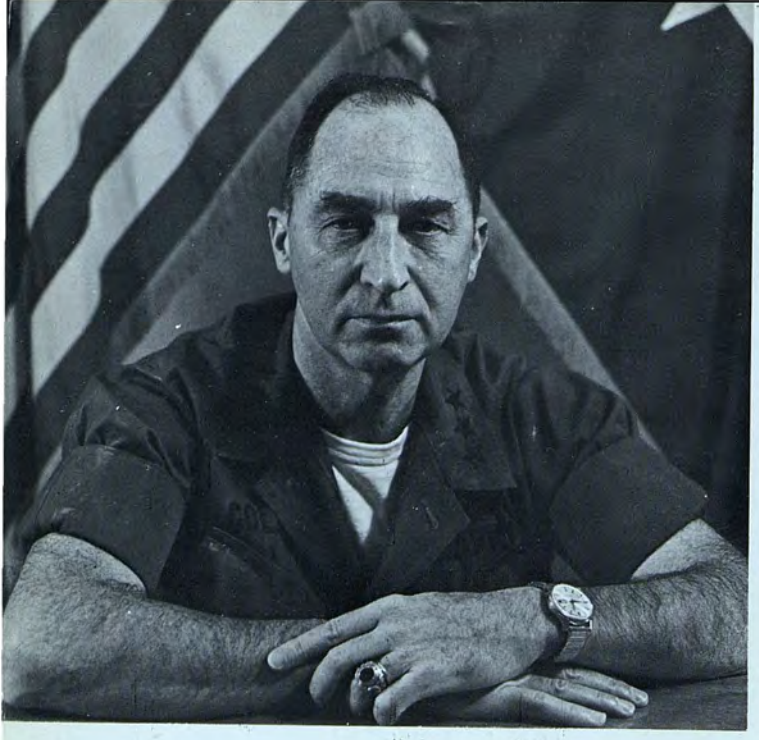
JULY-AUGUST 1970

TYPHOON





Commanding General's Message

Five years ago on 1 August 1965 I Field Force Vietnam was organized. Since that time, the bravery and professional performance displayed by the officers and men of the United States Army units assigned, attached, and under the operational control of I Field Force Vietnam have met a standard hard to match. Their performance on the field of battle provides us an opportunity to complete the task those before us set out to accomplish.

Now our mission is to work more closely than ever before with our comrades in the Army of Vietnam and the Territorial Forces and with Republic of Korea forces toward the day that the Vietnamese forces, unaided, can defeat our common enemy. The stories that follow in this special issue depict just a portion of the variety of activities that contribute to accomplishing that mission.

I extend my best wishes to the officers and men of I Field Force Vietnam on the occasion of our Fifth Anniversary.

A S Collins Jr

ARTHUR S. COLLINS, JR.
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

(2842)

BACK COVER: Viewed through barbed wire, a Chinook brings food and supplies to New Bu Prang. The distant outpost may be the last CIDG camp constructed in Vietnam (story on page 18). Photo by SP5 Lonnie Voyles.

Cover by CPT Lewis H. Hay

I FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

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TYPHOON

Vol. IV, No. 7 July-August, 1970

Dak Seang Still Lives

By SP5 John Wilcox

From the air Dak Seang looked dead. It had withstood two months of attack by NVA forces in a major test of endurance for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. Now, on the last day of May, the guns were silent and the camp was returning to life.

Two days before, three companies and two combat reconnaissance platoons of the 2d Mobile Strike Force Battalion, 5th Mobile Strike Force Command had made a 10-hour trek into Dak Seang from Nui Ek Mountain four klicks to the north. They had combat assaulted, then had dug in and held the top of Nui Ek. Surrounded and pinned down by NVA forces manning bunkers close outside their perimeter, they had fought nearly three weeks without relief. Already they had been a month without a stand down. By the time they could expect to be relieved, in early June, they would have been in combat for nearly a month and a half.

For the Camp Strike Forces holding Dak Seang, the marathon had lasted even longer. The attack, which started on April 1 at 6: 45 a.m. with a heavy bombardment of 120-mm rockets, B-40s, mortars and recoilless rifles, had continued almost without abatement until the end of May. The enemy forces had been identified as the 28th NVA Regiment, elements of the 60th NVA Regiment, and the 40th NVA Artillery. Time after time they had attempted to overrun Dak Seang with suicidal ground attacks. Each time they were beaten back at the perimeter, abandoning their dead in the wire. For days and nights without pause they had bombed the camp until they had demolished all structures above ground, leaving nothing but pits and rubble. Dak Seang, once known as "Happy Valley," was left a scarred ruin.

Now, as the winds which had brought the NVA from the north and west subsided, leaving the valley deathly calm, life began to seep back into the battered camp. At first glance the central core of the camp looked deserted; everything was obscured in the drab confusion, as if the bleeding of battle had drained every drop of color from this place. Once you focused on the scene, you could distinguish a swarm of activity. The people, most of them dark-skinned Montagnards dressed in Special Forces tiger fatigues, moved about like camouflaged parts of the ruin. They passed in and out of dark bunker holes on invisible chores, clearing, filling, digging and carrying like insects around their nests.

Rows of toppling sandbags shredded by shrapnel spilled their contents evenly in long layers like crumbling slices of cake. Sheets of corrugated iron studded with shrapnel holes stood in heaps, the sole remnants of what had been buildings. The team house, school building, dispensary, latrines—all were gone; in their place—broken foundations, pits, rubble and wreckage.

In the air a tickling sour smell of raw vegetables and rot mingled with the acid smell of smoke. Overhead the skyline of aerials and wires, once as dense as the sheets of a Clipper ship, had been blasted away, leaving frayed strands and bent poles towering like gallows above bare earth.

In this dead ground the Mike Strike forces worked steadily in preparation for the morning patrol. Fifth and Sixth Companies were to move northwest about two klicks and sweep the area for signs of recent enemy presence. There had already been indications that Charlie was planning to return. Fourth Company and the two recon platoons would remain at Dak Seang as a reaction force and work with the camp strikers cleaning up and rebuilding the camp.

After more than a month of combat these Montagnard troops, their Republic of Vietnam Special Forces (LLDB) leaders, and their 5th Special Forces Group advisors had lost none of their aggressiveness. They had beaten the enemy in the field, and they were determined to forestall any further attacks. During this first step of their stand down they did not dwell on what had passed; they made preparations for what could happen. They thought about the day's operation.

At 8: 00 a.m. the morning fog lifted to reveal the surrounding valley and the day's AO. Dak Seang sits squarely in the center of a spacious valley at the juncture of two mountain passes—one north-south from Dak Pek through Dak Seang to Route 51 and Ben Het, and the other west from Dak Seang toward the Laotian border less than 10 klicks away. Only its strategic importance in interdicting enemy routes to and from sanctuaries in Laos distinguishes this valley from many others in the northwest Central Highlands.

An unbroken ridge of steep mountains stretches north and south

along the valley's eastern border. Nui Ek dominates a chain of ridges to the north and west, separated from another series of ridges to the south by a valley which cuts directly west, opening the route to Laos. The setting of steep hillsides thick with groves of bamboo and stands of tall hardwood trees is lush and green, in contrast to the dead gray-brown of the camp. The impression is one of spaciousness and vulnerability. The valley floor stretches out in smooth green undulations to the mountains which tower over the camp on all sides.

Trooping out of the camp and lining up by platoons along the airstrip, the Yards looked like a group of schoolboys. Most of them were small and youthful looking, and they laughed and joked as they waited for the patrol to set out. They seemed unconscious of the heavy packs and equipment across their shoulders.

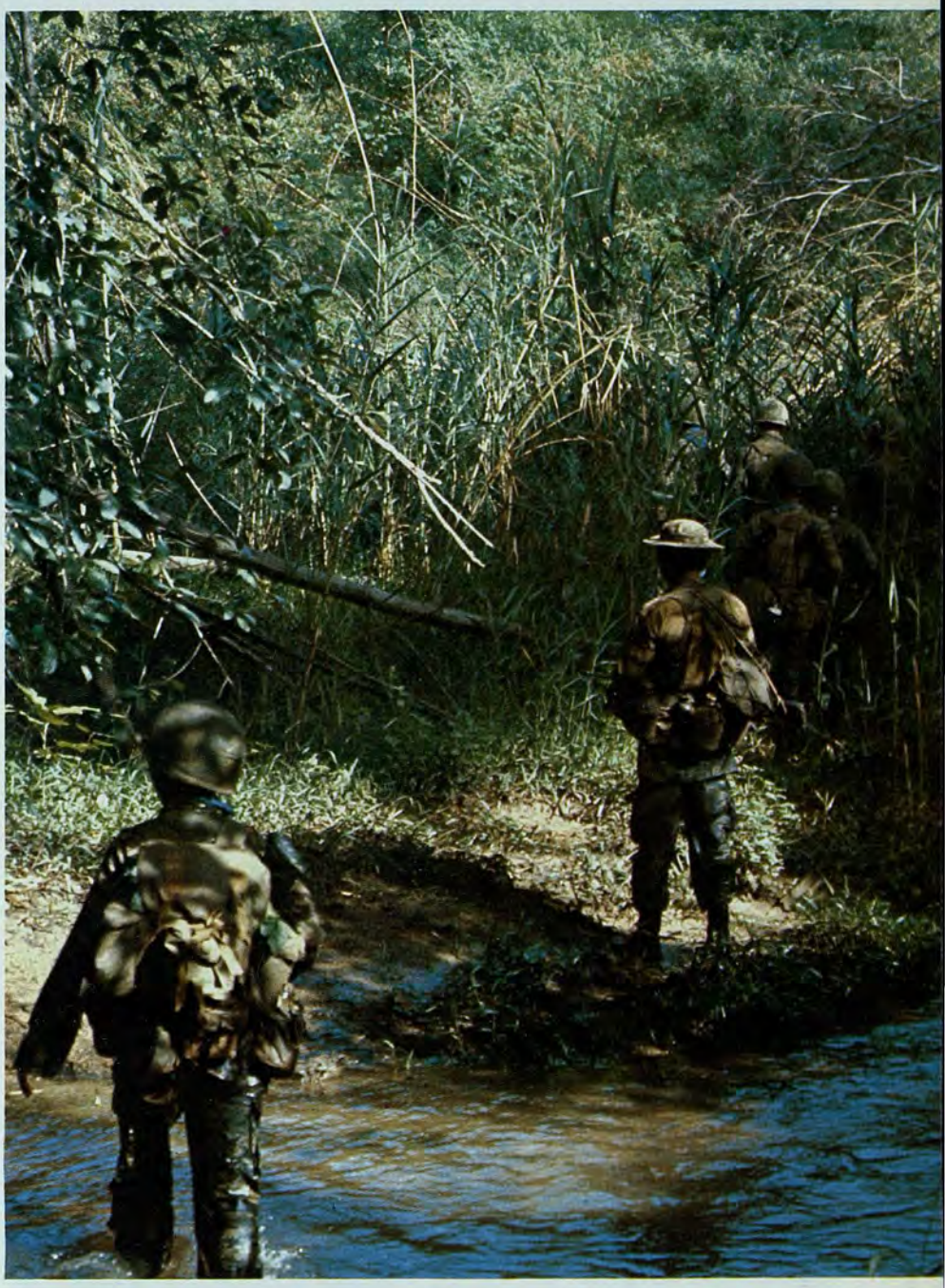
"You've never seen a fat Yard, have you?" said Sergeant First Class James E. Osborne, a Mike Strike Green Beret advisor. "Well, they can walk all day up and down these hills and never get tired—even with a 70-pound pack on their backs. It doesn't take much to keep them going, and they know this country. That makes them about the best fighters we've got in the Central Highlands."

Sergeant Osborne's enthusiasm is shared by everyone who has worked with these Montagnard soldiers. Since its inception, the Mike Strike Force has proven unexpectedly effective in recruiting, training and leading indigenous troops in the field. The Mike Strikers are civilians under arms; when they are enlisted they take no oath, and they are free to quit the service at any time. Many serve for two or three years, then return to civilian life with the money they have saved. Others alternate a year of service with a year of civilian life. The wages for their hazardous duty are proportionately high. Members of Detachment B-55, fully trained in the skills of the Special Forces, draw extra jump pay and extended duty pay.

The mission of these airborne light infantry troops is to provide a force for mobile guerilla warfare, a constantly alert reaction force (at this time the 1st Battalion was alerted in Nha Trang to relieve the 2d Battalion at Dak Seang), and to assist any besieged Special Forces camps. For the 2d Mobile Strike Force Command, with headquarters in Pleiku, this mission is restricted to the II Corps Tactical Zone; for the 5th Mobile Strike Force Command, working out of Nha Trang, the mission is Vietnam-wide.

During the battle for Dak Seang these two commands worked together under a Task Force with headquarters at Ben Het. Altogether, three Mike Strike battalions, two from the 2d Mobile Strike Force Command and one from the 5th, had fought steadily beside the camp strikers at Dak Seang for different periods since April 3. Although schooled principally in jungle warfare, the Montagnards adapted quickly to conventional tactics, fighting from trenches and assaulting fixed enemy positions.

Memories of those two months of fighting stayed with the Yards as they formed up for patrol in the shadow of Nui Ek. None had forgotten the three weeks of fighting



A Mobile Strike Force patrol fords a shallow stream and heads into a stand of bamboo during a security sweep near Dak Seang. Less than a week before, this area had been the scene of violent engagements with elements of the North Vietnamese Army.

SGT Jerry Burchfield

from trenches under constant bombardment with supplies running low and the NVA Regulars just beyond their perimeter. Some remembered Hill 882, where one element had combat assaulted and had fought nine days to move less than 200 meters and link up with forces on the adjoining peak. Others remembered the nights when only the artillery fire directed from the embattled camp had kept the NVA from over-running their perimeter.

The guns at Dak Seang had fired more than 5000 rounds during the battle; the heaps of shells were still piled by the gun pits in camp. One night Sergeant First Class Ottis "Bill" Hickox's gun crews had fired 171 rounds from two 105 Howitzers in two hours.

It had been a battle of extreme duration and violence; even now there was no certainty that it was over.

Moving northwest away from Dak Seang, the troops separated into three columns, evenly spaced, and started down a slope sprouting with new rice. They kept silent except for the tromp of boots and clinking of gear and the occasional static chatter of the radios. Each man seemed absorbed as he calculated his steps down mud slopes slippery with dew, through clinging bamboo thickets, across shallow streams and around caved-in bunkers and wide craters from the B-52 strikes. In some sections where airstrikes had hit, heat and concussion had stripped the greenery, leaving stands of bare saplings spattered with hard white gobs of petrified sap, which stuck to the branches like drops of boiled plastic. The burned ground was littered with fragments of metal and strips of torn wood.

After moving out about a klick from the camp, Captain Frank E. McNutt conferred with his LLDB counterpart and selected a site to set up a perimeter. They fixed on a low ridge line, covered with thick stands of bamboo, which looked out directly towards Dak Seang. Here the NVA had built an elaborate system of bunkers in concentric lines. These were clean rectangular holes, some nearly five-feet deep, covered with carefully camouflaged hatches of dirt and branches.

"A whole NVA Regiment was dug in here," said Captain McNutt, "and from the way they covered and concealed their bunkers it looks as if they intended to come back."

Sergeant Osborne and Yong, his Montagnard radio man, picked carefully at the covering over one bunker. "You've got to watch out for booby-traps in these abandoned bunkers," Sergeant Osborne said. Earlier he had found an unexploded mine alongside the trail. Looking closely for wires or trip mechanisms, he scraped away dirt with his fingers and pulled off layers of branches until there was a hole big enough to look down into. The bunker was clean.

Patrol teams, instructed to gather any abandoned enemy equipment and ordnance and to check for recent signs of enemy movement in the area, moved out to search in circles clockwise around the perimeter. The sun had burned off the cool morning air and began to penetrate the thicket. The Yards waiting inside the perimeter settled down in the shade to rest and cook their late morning meal. They lit small fires and in their canteen cups boiled a soup of greens gathered from the jungle and fish and spices from their dried rations. With this they mixed rice from long plastic ration packets.

The first patrol appeared and reported to Captain McNutt through an interpreter. In a gully about 500 meters from the perimeter they had spotted an unexploded bomb. "What kind of a bomb?" Captain McNutt asked. The Yards huddled together with their interpreter, talking and gesturing. With his

SP5 John Wilcox

After carefully dismantling the cover of an abandoned NVA bunker, SFC James E. Osborne looks down into the dark interior while Pee Wee, a young Montagnard soldier, looks on. Hundreds of bunkers similar to this one dot the area around Dak Seang.

Wilcox

Mike Strike troops set up their shelters among the rubble and broken foundations at Dak Seang. During the two-month battle which destroyed the camp's surface structures, the NVA launched mortar and rocket attacks from the hills in the background.

hands the interpreter described the bomb's size. "A 50-pounder, probably dropped during one of our own airstrikes," said Captain McNutt, noting its position carefully on his map.

In the early afternoon, after each of the patrols had reported, the companies moved north another klick, established a new perimeter, and sent out patrols as they had done in the morning. By late afternoon the area had been swept and reports brought in to Captain McNutt and the LLDB leader. They had found no signs of the enemy returning. The companies turned back toward Dak Seang, moving downhill through the jungle in three columns as they had come.

Out of the green valley Dak Seang rose up small and square like a frontier fort. Its squat towers, rows of thin wire and sandbag revetments seemed meager protection for 20th-century warfare. But they had held. The Mike Strikers trudged up the ramp, past a child who played at tossing up a tiny flare parachute salvaged from the battle.

During the day a Caribou from Pleiku had landed, depositing a week's rations and the first fresh food in nearly a month. Crates of chickens, ducks and pigs stood piled just inside the central compound. A young water buffalo tethered to the inside row of concertina grazed calmly on a small patch of grass and watched as the troops filed past laughing and talking; some reached out to slap its flanks.

Captain McNutt explained that the slaughter of this bull had a ritual significance for the Chams, who would not eat meat unless it had been blessed and freshly killed. The bull would provide them their first fresh meat since they had come to fight at Dak Seang.

Six Montagnards untied the bull and led it toward the gate. The animal trotted down the road past the double rows of concertina and Claymores, and across the tarred airstrip to a patch of concrete beneath the windsock which billowed out full and white like a banner. There was hasty discussion among the Yards; then a quick search brought forth a steel pipe. The bull waited with dumb patience.

Abruptly the pipe came down across the bull's horns. The blow was wrong; it barely stunned the animal, which butted and strained, rolling its eyes in panic. The pipe fell twice more, striking at the base of the skull. With a shudder the bull stiffened and sank down onto its side, kicking its legs with quick spasms. A knife slipped across the soft dewlaps, slicing through skin and white fat to the main arteries and windpipe. The bull died quickly with a gasping sound, its blood rushing out into containers and spilling onto the concrete where it darkened and congealed.

In 20 minutes the Yards had skinned, gutted and quartered the carcass. This unceremonious sacrifice of an animal for food, on a battlefield where so many men had shed blood for a cause, seemed a ritual in its own right. Captain McNutt looked at the carcass and then at the windsock which now hung limp from its pole. "The wind has died down," he said, "we should have a quiet night."

The sun set in the gully toward Laos, and a healing quiet settled over Dak Seang. Among the rubble, spots of light from fires and candles appeared and lit up pale vaults of space beneath groundcloths and parachute silks strung up as temporary shelters. The cloudy sky, a bed of ashes, glowed with the hovering sparks of night flares. In the darkness the earth was still warm to the touch, like dying embers.

Inside the camp sounds tangled together—discordant oriental music on a radio, the murmur of voices, the gasps and splashing of a Montagnard dousing himself with water. From outside the camp came distant sounds—the soft pop of flares, the thud and the feathery rushing sound of artillery rounds fired from Dak To and Ben Het passing overhead toward Dak Pek.

Dak Seang rested quietly as the fog moved in over Nui Ek, closing another day in Happy Valley. ■

RUTHLESS RIDERS

Story and Photos
By SP4 Mike Maattala

Moments after lift-off, the command and control helicopter was back in its natural element, cruising several hundred feet over the terrain west of Pleiku. Left below were the heat and dirt of the landing strip, exchanged for a coolness unfamiliar to most soldiers in Vietnam. At such a height, the land took on a new perspective; open fields looked like rolling green velvet and the thick tree tops resembled huge bunches of cauliflower.

Though the crew members of the UH1 model (Huey) fully appreciated the drop in temperature, they viewed the ground in a more objective manner. Their eyes were trained to scan the area, looking for enemy bunkers, hootches, trails, and movement. The command and control ship (C & C) belonged to Alpha Troop, 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry, stationed at Camp Holloway, Pleiku. The 7/17th had been operating at Dak Seang for several weeks; today was the second day Alpha Troop would cross the Cambodian border in support of elements from the 4th Infantry Division. The May drive to destroy NVA sanctuaries in Cambodia was in its early stages, and the men's attitude toward their involvement was one of casual acceptance.

Alpha Troop is one of five troops making up the 7/17th, nicknamed the "Ruthless Riders." Alpha and Bravo Troops, located at Camp Holloway, have their own ships and perform similar visual reconnaissance missions. Headquarters Troop, also at the camp, supports the other troops' ground insertions when necessary, working mainly with Delta Troop—a ground unit with no ships. Charlie Troop supports the 4th Infantry Division and the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

The basic reconnaissance mission of Alpha Troop involves three types of helicopters: the Light Observation Helicopter (LOH), Huey, and the Cobra gunship. Also involved is the Aero Rifle Platoon (ARP). The LOHs and Cobras perform vital but limited duties; the Hueys serve as lift ships for the ARPs and as C & C aircraft, besides handling medevacs and resupply missions.

Smallest of the aircraft utilized by Alpha Troop is the LOH, commonly called the "scout" ship. Shaped like an egg with a thin tail, it is manned by two people—the pilot and aerial observer. The observer sits on the left side of the cockpit, carrying his personal choice of weapon, usually an M-16 or an unmounted M-60 machinegun. The scout ship is also equipped with a 7.62 minigun, which is operated by the pilot.

During a visual reconnaissance (VR) mission, the scouts operate in teams of two, flying at tree top level in a "lead and wing" style. Searching for signs of enemy activity, the pilots maneuver close to the trees for maximum concealment. They also vary their flight patterns as much as possible to keep enemy

gunners from setting up on them.

The observer needs many hours of flying to develop his skills. "When I first started, it was hard to pick out objects on the ground, especially people," said Sergeant Hosie Tate, Erie, Pa. "But after a few months of flying, sighting has become a lot easier; I know what I'm looking for now." Most of the observers like to fly with the same pilot every mission, for knowing his style of flying makes the observer's job that much easier.

Flying within close range of possible enemy fire can make any LOH crewman uneasy. But it is comforting to know there is another LOH plus two gunships ready to provide cover if the ship goes down. While the LOHs are operating at tree-top level, the two Cobras orbit several hundred feet overhead, keeping 180 degrees apart. Their main function is to provide heavy firepower. If the LOHs discover a large enemy unit, they will move out immediately and let the gunships take over.

The Cobra boasts an awesome array of weapons, carrying a 7.62 minigun, a 40 mm grenade launcher, and 17 and 10-pound high explosive rockets. Some of the pilots prefer to use the flechette or "beehive" rockets in place of the 10-pounders. The Cobra is manned by a pilot and co-pilot, who sit one behind the other in a cockpit which is little more than 36 inches wide.

Circling above the Cobras and LOHs is the command and control helicopter. This ship is usually piloted by the troop commander or executive officer, who observes and directs the entire operation taking place below.

While these ships are working in the area of operation (AO), the remaining aircraft and the ARPs wait at the standby area, which is usually a camp or firebase. When the ships on station start getting low on fuel, the other two teams of LOHs and Cobras will fly to the AO, receive a briefing on the situation, and then take over. The ships will repeat this procedure until the operation is completed or it is too dark to see.

The ARPs must remain on call at the standby area all day, ready to be inserted at a moment's notice. Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie Troop each has one of these ground units. Alpha Troop's ARP consists of 38 men, with a minimum of 21 going out each day. The platoon is divided into four squads—each armed with M-16s, M-60s, and M-79 grenade launchers.

The ARPs are used mainly to gather intelligence and perform search and rescue operations. When the LOHs discover a complex containing documents or equipment, the ARPs will be inserted to gather the material. They will also go in if a small number of enemy soldiers is detected, normally not engaging larger than a platoon-sized unit.

The ARPs are transported by four Hueys. Each ship carries five to six packs, depending on the size of the platoon. After an insertion, the Hueys will remain on station, orbiting the area for 15–20 minutes in case an immediate withdrawal is required. During this time, the other team of LOHs will also go on station so that four scout ships will be on hand in case the ARPs get in trouble during insertion. If their support is not needed, the first set of LOHs will leave the AO and refuel.

During an insertion, the ARPs are dropped in an LZ as close to the AO as possible, usually only a couple of hundred meters away. Time is an important factor; the ARPs are not designed to stay in an area for a long time. Their mission is to be inserted, accomplish what is necessary, and be removed.

If one of Alpha Troop's ships gets shot down, the ARPs will be inserted to secure it. At a crash site covered by thick canopy, two squads will rappel in with machetes and chain saws and cut out a one-ship landing zone so that the other squads can be inserted. During an operation of this type, the ARPs will be committed against larger forces if they are threatening the downed personnel. In a heavy contact area, the ARPs will get the people out and then secure the ship until it can be removed.

Sitting in a standby area for several days without being called upon can become very boring. After cleaning their weapons upon arrival at the area, the men are left pretty much on their own. Sleeping and reading are favorite ways of killing

Resting peacefully in the standby area, a squad from Alpha Troop's Aero Rifle Platoon waits on call as a reaction force.

time. Some of them sit around their ships talking and cracking jokes, while others explore the surrounding area, using a few hours to construct a simple hootch in a nearby clump of trees. But these men will never wander so far that they cannot hear the important words, "Hook up!" which means they are going to be inserted.

Since the ARPs do not get inserted, much less engage the enemy, every day, there is little risk of physical fatigue. Their only problem is to remain as sharp as possible, and for a group of soldiers who may experience several days of "inactivity," their spirit is surprisingly high. "One thing that keeps the men from going stale is their knowing that each insertion guarantees something," said Sergeant Dionicio Soliz, Alpha Troop squad leader from Zapata, Texas. "Whether enemy soldiers or documents, something has been discovered during the VR.

After an uneventful day at the standby area, PFC Tony Morton, M-60 gunner for the Aero Rifle Platoon, prepares to board a Huey which will take his squad back to Pleiku.

There is no looking around; we are put right on it."

Though some sections of the 7/17th obviously see more action than others, each operation requires the fielding of a complete team—from ground troops to the C & C ship. For certain crew members, flying is just part of their job. Several hours must be put in after a day in the air to make sure the ships will be ready for the operation.

Returning to Camp Holloway late one evening after logging eleven hours of airtime, Specialist Four Charles Hood, C & C crew chief from Andrews, N.C., still had maintenance to pull on his ship before calling it a day. With the help of his gunner and another crew chief, the necessary first echelon was completed. By the time he had finished with the last bit of daily paperwork, it was past 2: 00 a.m. and Specialist Hood could finally turn in.

Less than an hour later, incoming mortar rounds shook Camp Holloway. Alpha Troop's C & C crew chief could be heard cursing the enemy all the way to the bunker. When the mortar barrage finally subsided around 5: 00 a.m., Specialist Hood merely headed down to the mess hall for breakfast. He was flying again that day, with a lift-off scheduled for 6: 30, and there was pre-flight work to be performed on a ship that he had left less than four hours ago.

On the second day that Alpha Troop supported the 4th Division's insertions into Cambodia, the C & C ship landed at New Plei Djereng, the standby area, at 8: 00 a.m. Major Robert Rackley, troop commander from Asheville, N.C., walked the few hundred meters up to the airstrip where the 2nd Brigade had set up its headquarters.

After a short briefing, Major Rackley returned to the standby area. By then the rest of Alpha Troop's ships had landed and the pilots gathered around him to get their own briefing on the day's operation. The scene resembled a secret meeting of businessmen, flown in by private planes to discuss an important deal in the strange setting of a small field.

Directly behind the C & C ship sat four Hueys which had transported the ARPs. Off to the right and up on a small hill were the Cobras, almost hidden by the thick brush. The LOHs were huddled together down in a valley to the left, looking like grounded hummingbirds.

Alpha Troop's mission was to conduct a VR of the areas which were considered potential landing zones for the 2nd Brigade. Working with the "Ruthless Riders" would be F-104 fighter-bombers from Phu Cat Air Base. By 9: 00 the C & C ship was cruising to the AO; everyone on board recognized the twisting river below as the border between Cambodia and South Vietnam. The only noticeable difference in terrain was the absence of bomb craters.

During the morning, Alpha Troop worked above two AOs. One was found to be cold and the first troops were inserted by 11: 00. But at the other area, two complexes were found. Inspecting the sites closely, the LOHs counted three 15′ × 50′ structures at one end of the LZ and about 15 smaller hootches at the other end.

After passing their find to Major Rackley and marking the spot with smoke grenades, the LOHs moved out of the area as the troop commander called in air strikes. For over an hour, the same routine was repeated: screaming jets dropped their ordnance; the LOHs hovered over the area checking their effect; and the jets returned to destroy what remained.

After the jets had made their final run, the LOHs examined the area closely, finally pronouncing it cold. The scouts moved out again and let the Cobras make several passes to fire up the LZ just before the troops were inserted.

Alpha Troop continued to work near both LZs for the rest of the afternoon, discovering two more complexes. One of them contained four 20′ × 40′ hootches, large bunkers, and pigs. Another had hootches, bunkers, and freshly dug trenches. After both discoveries, the Cobras worked over the areas for several minutes before the fighter-bombers were called in again.

Late in the afternoon, ground troops began receiving enemy fire at the LZ where the first two complexes had been discovered. Immediately, Alpha Troop's ships began orbiting the area. The LOHs found a 20-foot bunker and the aircraft began maneuvering skillfully, directing their fire in precision style. First the LOHs sped over the bunker, marking the spot with smoke grenades and firing their miniguns. Then the Cobras dove in, unloading their deadly firepower.

After working over the area for a half an hour and destroying the bunker complexes, the ships moved to the surrounding area again. The

The fastest and the fiercest. During visual reconnaissance missions, Alpha Troop's Cobra gunships orbit above the LOHs, ready to dart down with miniguns and rockets firing if trouble arises.

LOHs continued their tree-top level search until it became so dark that the shadows made it hard to see. Then Alpha Troop began the short flight back to the standby area.

The C & C ship had just neared the border when a message came over the radio, requesting them to fly over a downed ship and mark its coordinates. Earlier in the day, a Huey carrying 4th Division troops to one of the LZs had developed mechanical trouble and crashed just after taking off from Plei Djereng. All persons aboard—five infantrymen and four crewmen—were killed.

Crossing into South Vietnam, the C & C crew began scanning the ground, trying to pick up a sign of the crash through the evening haze. Finally they spotted a thin wisp of smoke and the ship cruised over to what proved to be the crash site. As the C & C ship circled over the wreckage, no one spoke for several minutes. Words seemed meaningless; the crew realized that it could have very easily have been their ship lying crumpled on its back in the small clearing.

After determining the location of the crash, the C & C ship returned to the standby area with the LOHs and Cobras. Alpha Troop had one more job to perform before they would be released for the day. Troops at one of the LZs had made contact with the enemy and needed an emergency resupply. First Lieutenant David Sims, Huey pilot from Lake Charles, La., would be dropping in the ammunition.

It was almost dark by the time the ships flew back across the border. Anti-collision and position lights showed the location of each ship, blinking a warning to the others. On the ground, rings of fire still burned where jets had dropped their bombs earlier in the day.

The infantrymen were shining flashlights to help guide the pilots as they approached the LZ. Soon Lieutenant Sims and two other pilots cautiouslv began their descent. Once at a low level, the ships made two quick passes over the area, turning on their landing lights in an attempt to find a spot suitable for dropping off the supplies. Each time they flicked them on, everyone in the C & C ship became silent; the bright lights were providing perfect targets for enemy gunners.

Finally on the third pass, Lieutenant Sims stopped and hovered near the woodline. While the two other ships waited nearby for protection, he lowered the Huey to within a few feet of the ground, where the men could kick out the boxes of M-16 and M-79 ammo.

As the landing lights were doused and the three aircraft began to rise from the LZ, one of the Cobra pilots was the first to break the silence. "Anybody ready to go home?" he asked. With the tension broken, replies to the question were quick and tinged with a sigh of relief.

"We ain't left yet?" asked Lieutenant Sims.

"We ain't there yet!" countered Specialist Hood.

Above: With sympathetic reaction a mother grimaces as Dr. Workman examines her daughter's teeth. Below: Dental assistant, Ngo Huynh Ngoc, stays busy during DENTCAPS, interpreting, handing out instruments and consoling young patients.

Khanh Hoa Province DENTCAPS

Point To Where It Hurts

By SP5 Larry Maloney

In their everyday struggle to survive, most Vietnamese can spare little time for basic health habits which Americans consider important. This negligence has taken its toll over the years, especially in the area of dental care. With such drawbacks as poverty and poor diets, the people have had more to worry about than picking a toothpaste with "sex appeal." And with their prolonged devotion to betel nut, only a few will ever have occasion to "wonder where the yellow went."

But in recent months, many of the people in Khanh Hoa province have been introduced to at least the rudiments of oral hygiene—thanks to the Dental Civic Action Program (DENTCAP) of the 934th Medical Detachment, Nha Trang. Twice a week two of the detachment's dentists travel to a village or hamlet to treat the people. Prior to each visit the detachment has made arrangements with the district chief in that area. The Vietnamese official then recommends a specific village. He will also see to it that the people are informed of the time and location of the DENTCAP.

"We usually see between 100 and 150 patients on each DENTCAP," said Captain (Dr.) Richard Workman, Boston, OIC of the 934th's DENTCAP operation since December. "At one location, we expect to see about 350 patients. The response is growing, as more and more people learn about the program."

Before the DENTCAPS, Khanh Hoa province, like most areas in Vietnam, could offer next to nothing in the way of professional dental assistance. The RVN government does not sponsor any dental health program nor does it operate any training facilities for dentists or dental technicians. Saigon claims the republic's only dentistry school. However, its classes are usually very small, and some graduates will leave Vietnam to practice elsewhere. With such negligible professional facilities and lack of health information, the average Vietnamese has little idea of how and why he should care for his teeth.

The DENTCAP program has tried to alleviate some of these problems. In a few short months, it has distributed health literature and dental kits. But more important, it has made professional care available to many people for the first time. In most areas of Khanh Hoa province, particularly Ninh Hoa and Van Ninh, the people have responded enthusiastically. Doctor Workman gives most of the credit to the Vietnamese district chiefs who publicize the program.

In Hai Trieu, a hamlet near Van Ninh, a recent DENTCAP typified the success of the new program. As in all DENTCAPS, the people had learned about the visit the day before, and a large crowd waited for the dentists under the shade of a coconut grove. A large wooden table marked the spot which would serve as an outdoor dental office.

Arriving at Hai Trieu, Doctor Workman and Captain (Dr.) Frank Foehr, Ashley, Ill., set up their portable dental chairs on either side of the wooden table. Their Vietnamese dental assistant, Ngo Huynh Ngoc, took out instruments, alcohol, anesthetic, and gauze from a field case and placed them neatly on the table. The dentists donned their surgical gloves. They would soon be treating a steady stream of patients.

The Americans' work that day would be lightened considerably by the help of two Vietnamese men trained in the fundamentals of dentistry by Doctor Workman. The two, Ngo Van Truong and Nguyen Xuan Khoi, had received instruments and supplies from the DENTCAP program and were able to do extractions and other basic dental work.

"Ideally, we'd like to train as many of these regional medics as possible who can do simple dental work and act in emergencies," said Doctor Workman. "By having Vietnamese do more of this work, the people feel that the GVN is helping them."

Photos by SP5 Ed Perez

Above: On the 934th's DENTCAPS each patient claims a special share of the dentist's attention. Dr. Workman injects novocaine into a woman's gums. Below: Dr. Workman extracts a tooth from a brave young patient.

By having regional medics do more of the DENTCAP work, the people soon feel that the GVN is helping them. Ngo Van Truong, trained in fundamental dentistry by Dr. Workman, treats a patient at Hai Trieu hamlet.

At Hai Trieu, the people seemed very eager and willing to be helped. They would come up to Doctor Workman or Mr. Khoi with scowls on their faces, visibly in pain. They would point to the tooth that was bothering them and receive a shot of novocaine. When their nerves were sufficiently dulled—and when they mustered enough courage—the patients advanced to the dental chairs. Doctor Foehr would try to calm them with a smile and a few words of Vietnamese.

"Point to where it hurts, mamasan. Okay, ha (open). That's it, are you sure that's the one? Okay." The process repeated itself again and again with only the patient changing. Cooly and methodically, even in seemingly impossible cases, the dentists would get the job done.

At times the task demanded an abundance of patience. One tiny bottomless todler screamed continually while Doctor Foehr removed three badly decayed teeth. It took three people to hold the small girl down. Another patient would rummage through the waste bag to retrieve his extracted tooth. Some, as if to save face, would only allow one tooth to be pulled, even though several were thoroughly rotted.

But for the most part the people were happy to cooperate. An older child might help the dentists by pointing to the teeth that needed attention on their younger brothers and sisters. They would hold the patient's hand, console or scold, and maybe even help the dentist pry open an unwilling mouth. The parents, too, were especially concerned. Their frowning faces and constant gestures to their mouths showed that they could almost feel the same sensations as the patients felt. But in seconds the troublesome tooth would be out, and there would be smiles all around.

The constant parade of people to the dental chairs created an atmosphere of excitement not usually found in the hamlet. The crowd of spectators almost outnumbered the patients. One little boy, watchful of the dentist's every move, planted himself next to Doctor Foehr's chair during the entire DENTCAP.

Everyone wanted to watch how papasan with the wispy white beard would react to the new experience. They would also see a young mother, with an unusually fine set of teeth, become very frightened and tense up as the dentist began to work on her. Ngoc, the dental assistant, quickly came over to ease the woman's fears. Dressed in camouflage fatigues and boonie cap, the young girl moved from chair to chair, interpreting for the Americans, handing out instruments, and comforting the patients.

Midway through the DENTCAP the dentists and their assistants took a short break, and the villagers treated them to fresh coconut. The shade of the coconut grove had dwindled considerably by this time, and the dentists' fatigues were sweat-soaked from the heat and the exacting demands of their job.

Back to work, with more and more teeth to come out—all types and sizes. "It is impossible to do any filling work out here," explained Doctor Foehr. "In most cases, the teeth are simply too badly decayed." (He had just finished several minutes' work digging out fragments of a tooth which had shattered when he attempted to pull it.) "We've had a few cases that were so bad that we had to coordinate with 8th Field Hospital in Nha Trang for treatment." For those who do desire fillings, they can go to Nha Trang's sole licensed dentist and pay an outrageous price or resort to "do it yourself" gold-filling kits which merely cover up the decay.

What DENTCAP is trying to do now is to teach the people proper dental care before their teeth become so badly decayed that extraction is the only alternative. The task is not an easy one. The dentists have to battle bad habits and conditions which have long affected the people. Betel nut, a major menace, destroys gum tissue and blackens the teeth. The poor diet of the people also softens the gums and produces excessive bleeding, particularly when a tooth is pulled.

Despite these difficulties, the 934th's dentists derive a great deal of satisfaction from their DENTCAPS. They go about their work in the field with the same skill and dedication that mark their ordinary practice. Each trip is also a lesson in human nature for them, a chance to learn more about the Vietnamese people.

At Hai Trieu hamlet, Doctor Workman and Doctor Foehr had met and treated nearly 100 people in four hours. They had transformed 100 scowls to smiles. Each patient had been different, and each claimed a special share of the dentists' care and attention. No one was rushed through.

Few of the people knew enough English to thank the dentists as they packed their instruments at the end of the DENTCAP. Several managed smiles made happier, if a bit more toothless, by the day's activities. As if to somehow possess the skills of the dentists, children fought over the discarded surgical gloves—one last relic of a DENTCAP. ■

Dear Soldiers,

You are by far the greatest fighting men in the world . . . how very proud of you we are! We want you to know that we are not only proud of you but that we care about you very much.

As the parents of four children we are aware of the freedom we have of seeing them playing in the yard . . . with no fear. We are grateful to you for helping to insure this freedom.

The best of luck to each and every one of you; you're in our thoughts and prayers.

A Grateful American Family

Mr & Mrs. Burnell R. Ward
and Dan, Deb, David
& Dennis, too

Students at the RECONDO School are trained in everything from map reading to observing for artillery. Here a student calls in an airstrike during practical exercises on Hon Tre Island.

Special Forces
LRRP Training

"RECONDO"

By SP4 Joe Farmer

Specialist Four Bill Blake walked into the orderly room at the 3rd Battalion, 506th Infantry (Abn), about 8: 00 a.m. on a Friday. The only reason he could imagine for the first sergeant wanting to see him was his hair. "Just hang loose a minute," Bill said to one of his buddies nearby. "I'll let you know what Top has to say."

About 10 minutes passed before Bill came running out of the office, hair still intact, and slapped his friend on the back: "I'm going to school," he said. "For 20 days I will be in the beautiful city of Nha Trang going to school." Bill's laughter rang out across the compound as he headed for his barracks to pack for his "vacation" at the MACV RECONDO School in Nha Trang.

"It's going to be rough," the first sergeant had said, "but I think you can make it."

"Make it," Bill had said silently to himself, "after four months of RECONDO here I guess I can make 20 days in school. What can they teach me that I don't already know from experience?"

His flight was at 10:00 a.m., so he had only an hour and a half to pack and spread his good news to all his friends. When he arrived in Nha Trang some three hours later, he caught the 5th Special Forces Group Shuttle Bus and headed for the school. "Wow!" Bill was thinking as the bus pulled into the school compound. "What are all those towers for? This isn't exactly what I'd expected."

Bill's misconception is not uncommon among soldiers volunteering to attend the RECONDO School. Twenty days in school sounds pretty good to a guy who is looking forward to a full tour in the field, and it never dawns on him until he's there that the school may not be a breeze.

The school was organized in September, 1966, to train soldiers as team leaders in long range reconnaissance patrol (LRRP) units. General William C. Westmoreland directed that a three-week program on long range reconnaissance be formed after a study had been made on the effectiveness of such units, also at his order. The job of organizing and running the school fell to the 5th Special Forces Group, and the group's commander inherited the job of commandant of the school. The term "RECONDO" was coined by General Westmoreland as a combination of the terms "reconnaissance," "commando," and "doughboy."

Since it was formed, 4,912 soldiers have attended the school. Of these only 2,960 have graduated. Up until fiscal year 1970, the school's attrition rate was almost 40 percent. "Due to better instructors and a revised instruction program," said Captain Larry C. Kennemer, Dallas, Tex., XO of the school, "the rate is down to about 22.8 percent for 1970." According to Master Sergeant Richard Perkins, Burlington, Vt., training NCOIC at the school, about 12 out of every 20 soldiers who are dropped from the course have medical disabilities which are not their own fault. "The course is tough," he said, "but if a man is accepted, he usually has the guts to finish it."

To be admitted to the school a soldier must volunteer for the course, be in top physical condition, and have at least one month in country and six months retainability. In addition, he must have an actual or anticipated assignment to a LRRP unit and a good knowledge of general military subjects. The men must be in peak physical condition when they arrive at the school.

"We're not putting these people in condition," said Sergeant Perkins, "we just want to show them what they're capable of by having them do it."

The physical trials begin on the second day of school and continue throughout the course. The soldiers are first administered the standard airborne PT test to determine their immediate physical condition. For several days thereafter they go on a two-mile march with full pack and equipment. Midway through the first week of the program, they set out on a four-mile march with 45 pounds of equipment. "When they finish that four miler," said Sergeant Perkins, "they don't have any more trouble with a little two-mile hike. Most of them don't think they can make it when they first hear about it, but once they have, their confidence in their physical abilities is greatly bolstered. We know they can do it—it's convincing them that's hard."

The course is divided into three major areas of instruction. The first eight days are devoted to the academic section with instruction in everything from map reading and how to set up field gear to VC tactics and weapons. The next four days are spent on Hon Tre Island in practical application of the academic studies. The students receive their final test in the form of a four to five-day combat operation in the mountainous areas surrounding Nha Trang.

The new student receives his first inkling of what he has let himself in for during an orientation given the first day. The orientation doesn't go into great detail as to what is included in the course, but it makes reading between the lines easy.

RECONDO consists of 310.5 hours of instruction, mostly actual combat or field training exercises. Classrooms are for Stateside duty—these men are not being trained for a possible assignment; they already know they're going to put what they learn into practice soon.

All the basics of forming and participating in a LRRP patrol are learned during the first phase of instruction. Any subject that could possibly be useful to these soldiers in the performance of their daily duty is covered. The pace is fast, but the men realize that everything being said could save their lives someday. They listen intently to the instructors, grasping every situation and explanation.

When the school was first begun, a map reading examination was administered on the first day of classes. Anyone failing this test was summarily dropped from the course. "We were sending 40 to 50 percent of the guys home the same day they got here," said Captain Kennemer. "We had to change it. Now we include a block of instruction on map reading the first day and then administer the test."

The remainder of the academic phase covers organizing patrols and their best use for security, medical training, intelligence, air operations, methods of exfiltration and infiltration, and communications. Some practical sessions are interspersed with the classes. Before beginning classes the students climb a 40-foot tower on a rope ladder and descend on a knotted rope. This helps prepare them for the climb into and out of a hovering helicopter during infiltration and exfiltration drills.

At the beginning of the second phase of the program—practical applications—the soldiers are taught to put together and utilize an Australian poncho raft. A poncho is spread on the ground, and all the soldier's field equipment is placed in the center. The poncho is then tightly rolled and tied at each end. Another poncho is wrapped around it and also tied. The poncho raft will support two men.

The students also receive blocks of instruction on the best way to enter and exit a hovering helicopter and are shown live demonstrations of the McGuire and STABO heli-rescue rigs. The STABO rig is the preferred setup at the school, and not necessarily because it was developed there. It can be readily assembled from materials accessible through regular supply channels. Since it is in the form of a harness, it can be comfortably worn from the time the soldier is infiltrated until his exfiltration. "We advise them to keep the rigs on," said Captain Kennemer, "because a few seconds could save their lives. Since the harness is part of the man's web gear, he can hook up to the helicopter's cables while lying flat on his back. It also leaves both hands free for firing during the flight."

Members of a LRRP patrol must be able to fire quickly and accurately without taking the time to aim. Students work long hours perfecting the "quick fire" technique.

Photos by SP5 Ed Perez

"The course is tough, but if a man is accepted, he usually has the guts to finish."

The STABO rig is also safe for use with an unconscious man. He is not required to hold onto anything and it is impossible to fall out of the harness. The McGuire rig is simply a looped cable. The soldier sits in the loop and holds to the cable. "The Australians had a man killed in the McGuire rig," said Captain Kennemer. "He was hit while they were flying and passed out. He fell out of the loop and was killed."

By the end of the practical application phase, the student's mind has been refreshed on the major things about RECONDO, and he has been introduced to some of the small points the instructors have picked up in their reconnaissance work such as: taping the muzzle of the rifle to prevent mud from clogging it, taping a piece of nylon cord around the grip for an easy-to-use sling, laying out the pistol belt in the most practical fashion and taping the extending ends of the belt to prevent expansion during wear.

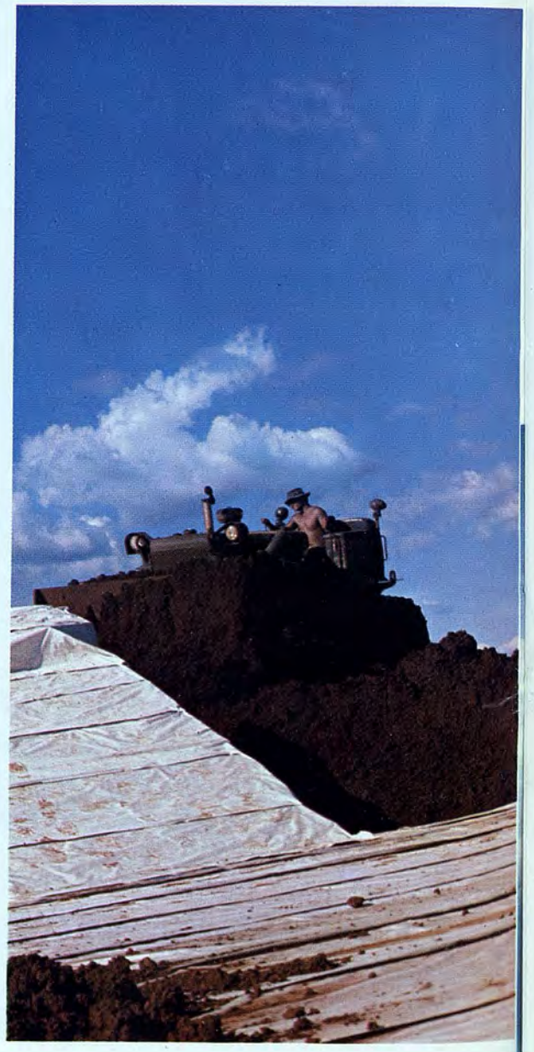
The training culminates in a four to five-day combat operation—the supreme measure of how much the students learned in the classes and exercises. The students form six-man teams and begin preparing for the operation. They select their own areas of operation and, with the help of their aircraft commander for the operation, select their landing zones.

During the operation they will act as forward observers for artillery strikes and will provide information and mark locations for airstrikes. They will search for intelligence on the enemy and gather detailed information on his recent activities. How often do they find Charlie? "We've made contact every time we've gone out since the school was formed," said Sergeant Perkins. "Let's say we've damned near made contact every time. I'd say 80 percent."

When a soldier leaves the RECONDO School he has received the most extensive training offered on long range reconnaissance patroling. He has been trained to provide his commander with the most current and accurate information on the enemy and their operations, and he has been trained to stay alive. ■

A grenade in a machinegun nest is worth two on the pistol belt. The LRRPs toss grenades into simulated enemy emplacement on Hon Tre Island.

What do you see, old man,
That makes you grin so?
You must have seen it many times before.
The memories are etched on your face
In leathered lines.



Photos by SP5 Lonnie Voyles

Bu Prang Revisited

By SP5 Larry Maloney

The Montagnards had found an enthusiastic admirer in SP4 Eric Richardson. And though he'd probably never admit it, the Philadelphia native could have almost as much fun with these reserved mountain people as he could with his friends in the States.

How could anyone possibly think of fun at Bu Prang, the scene of a vicious enemy onslaught last fall? But somehow the men of Delta Company, 19th Engineer Battalion were doing just that as they constructed the most elaborate and secure Special Forces-CIDG camp in all of Vietnam. For nearly four months, beginning in late January, the combat engineers worked at this remote hilltop site two miles from the Cambodian border. Without even the slightest hint of protest from Charlie, the men felt free to attack seemingly unending masses of clay and dirt. At the same time, they could enjoy the quiet but lively antics of the "Yards" who worked right alongside them.

"Man, the Yards are great," crowed Richardson. "I mean I've really tightened up with them. Last week I 'borrowed' a pair of scissors from the aid station and started cutting their hair—for free." Richardson called his friend Ringo over and pointed to the little CIDG soldier's fresh trim. "I messed up the first few I tried—man, I thought they'd never talk to me again. Instead they just went off to their own barber and got a shape-up for a reduced price. Nothing really upsets them. They're kind, and though they don't have much, they'll gladly share it with you. Let's see, I've had dog, rat, monkey. . . ."

Left clockwise: A bulldozer pushes soil over Bu Prang's underground warehouse; grading operations inside the camp; Delta Company engineers cut timbers for "living-fighting" bunkers; the airstrip at New Bu Prang.

The lighthearted spirit that prevailed during the construction of "New Bu Prang" struck a vivid contrast with the fear that gripped the old CIDG outpost last fall. Located five miles from the Cambodian border, the camp took 1500 mortar rounds and rockets in a 45-day attack from November 8 to December 23. Bu Prang did not fall, but Charlie's firepower had caused extensive damage to the team houses, the motor pool, dispensary, and CIDG homes. Everything located above ground was simply obliterated.

"After the siege, all the old camp really had left was its bunkers, weapons, and good tactical position," said Captain William Palmer, Valdese, N.C., the Special Forces team leader for New Bu Prang. "At that time, it was felt that it would be wiser to start from scratch and construct a highly defensible camp at a new and better location."

The new outpost, Special Forces-CIDG camp "A 236," is located 19 clicks southeast of old Bu Prang in Quang Duc province. Aside from the fact that the old site had been reduced largely to rubble, the move to New Bu Prang was necessary for other reasons. Situated near QL 14, the camp would provide security for that highway, which promises to be a key convoy route in the future. The camp's location also afforded ample space for a much needed 2600-foot airstrip, able to accomodate C-123 aircraft.

If the engineers had anything to do with it—and they certainly did—the new camp would not suffer the same fate as old Bu Prang. Because camp A 236 would be completely underground, Charlie would have almost nothing to aim at. Using a concept first employed at the CIDG camp at Ben Het, the engineers constructed 63 "living-fighting" bunkers, each 15 × 40 feet in area.

Ultimately, each of these bunkers will house four Montagnard-CIDG families. These structures, made from 12-inch thick timbers, lie beneath at least three feet of earth. Only the light from the doorways and from the slanted gunsight holes at the side of the bunkers breaks the tomb-like darkness inside. The bunkers will withstand nearly anything the enemy can serve up.

At the very center of this underground community, beneath many feet of soil, lies the most impressive part of New Bu Prang. Within a vast network of interconnected tunnels that resemble mine shafts or medieval passageways you find the camp headquarters. At the very heart is the 20 × 100 foot Tactical Operations Center (TOC), the commo and administration soul of the outpost.

To the left and right of the TOC area are the living quarters for the American and Vietnamese Special Forces teams. These houses, both 20 × 80 feet in area, have identical features which will eventually include a kitchen, shower room, and modern sanitation facilities. Finally, branching off from the team houses are the dispensary and warehouse, both 20 × 80 feet in area. The warehouse will also serve as a combination PX, school, and theater for the CIDG soldiers and their families.

Though highly secure in their subterranean homes, the citizens of New Bu Prang are well prepared to strike back at the enemy if necessary. A platoon from D Company, 27th Engineer Battalion came to Bu Prang in April solely to construct four 105 howitzer gunpads and ammunition bunkers. The big guns, located in the inner perimeter, face each direction. In addition, six 81 mm mortar positions, each with underground ammunition bunkers, are staggered throughout the central perimeter.

This inner perimter is surrounded by barbed wire, tanglefoot, and

concertina—all laced with claymores. It is separated from the outer perimeter by a circular dirt road which leads off at one point to the airstrip and at another to a wooded area where the camp's fresh water supply is located. The majority of the camp's "living-fighting" bunkers can be found on this outer perimeter. Twelve light mortar positions scattered throughout the outer circle protect the underground dwellings. Far down the hill, inclosing even the airstrip, stretches the outermost perimeter, another maze of wire and mines for Charlie to contend with.

The elaborate construction and feverish activity that surrounded the birth of New Bu Prang seemed almost out of place amid the beauty and solitude of the surrounding hills. The camp is literally in the middle of nowhere. You gaze at the deep greens of the trees and the paler shades of the soft rolling hills. The red of a single dirt road leading to a distant observation point weaves through the scene like a bulging artery. The sight is a restful one. The seemingly manicured hills, naturally landscaped, remind you of a golf course. At other times they seem to ache for a herd of grazing cattle or a white farm house. But this is still virgin country. The foliage on the rises and in the wooded areas near Bu Prang will yield deer, wild boar, monkeys, exotic game birds—even an occasional tiger.

Delta Company's engineers had little time to admire the breathtaking scenery around them. They were too busy getting accustomed to life on the "hill." During their four months at Bu Prang, few left the work site. Everyday was the same.

About 6: 30 each morning, when a dewy haze still draped the adjacent valleys, the boyish Montagnards made their way to the inner perimeter. Dressed in tiger suits, the CIDG soldiers waited patiently near the various work projects for the engineers. At the same time, the men of D Company were emerging from their bunkers and heading to the mess tent for breakfast. By 0700 hours the work day had begun. The steady humming of heavy machinery and chain saws filled the air.

The campsite was a flurry of activity. The four engineer platoons had split up into squads, each with specific projects. Some cut thick timber columns, while others lowered them gingerly into the deep holes made ready for the bunkers. After the men applied the necessary weather insulation paper, bulldozers pushed masses of red earth on the top and sides of the bunkers. The men took great pains to exert proper soil pressure on the underground structures. Nearby a man was boiling his fatigues in a large barrel—Bu Prang laundry. The smoke from his fire mixed with that from burning wastes.

In the command bunker, Captain Jack Bishop, CO of Dynamite Delta, made daily progress reports to 19th Engineer Battalion Headquarters in Bao Loc. Except for a slight delay on the airstrip, the engineers were able to meet the May 15th deadline for the project's completion.

At the edge of the perimeter, another squad labored unsuccessfully to drill a well. "The hill is just too high for us to reach water," explained one engineer. The camp would eventually construct a combination observation-water tower. A pump system would channel water from a stream below Bu Prang to a 3000-gallon tank on the tower.

Down the hill from the campsite itself, shirtless engineers guided their huge 290 earth movers and graders over the airstrip. These giant vehicles had cut away an entire hillside to form the strip. The 290s can take 20 to 30 yards of earth at one bite.

On the gently sloping hill between the camp and the airstrip, a constant succession of supply helicopters would set down—on lucky days. Yellow, red, and violet smoke grenades marked the spot for Chinooks which brought food, tools, and building materials. All during the camp's construction the big hooks delivered thousands of pounds of lumber precut in Cam Ranh Bay.

The arrival of a helicopter always brought a wave of excitement throughout the camp. At every landing, a heavy red screen of dirt would drift up toward the bunkers on the outer perimeter. The dust was blinding and stung the skin like tiny needles, but it didn't stop the people from running down to meet the helicopters. The big birds would lower a pallet of beer, a load of meat and vegetables, or a crate of chickens or hogs for the CIDG.

Gathering about the helicopter, the engineers would load the supplies into a truck or scoop loader and move up the hill toward the mess tent. The Montagnards would distribute the rice, vegetables, and livestock brought to them through Special Forces channels in Ban Me Thuot. At times this task could present a challenge. This was the case when a frightened hog escaped his crate and momentarily lost his pursuers in a cloud of yellow smoke from a signal grenade. The Yards caught the squealing animal half way down the hill toward the airstrip. Tomorrow there would be meat for many CIDG families.

The day's work completed, the Montagnards returned to their bunkers and to the evening camp fires where their women cooked the family meal in OD-colored cans. The engineers formed a line near the mess tent. They would stand waiting in their typical uniform: sweat and soil-stained trousers, shirtless, boonie caps. Nearly every-

one needed haircuts. If their sunburnt skin didn't betray the nature of their work, you had only to glance at their boots—no longer black but a cracked and creased form of dull brown leather, the green canvas now transformed into a drab, bleached-out yellow.

After-duty hours didn't offer much in the way of diversion. After chow the men shed the day's grime in their makeshift shower rooms, with 55-gallon drums as the water source. Then back to the bunkers with their low ceilings (made for Montagnards) and rough dirt floors. The men had placed wooden planks on the ground to keep the moisture out of their sleeping bags. Some tattered pinups added something of a homey touch. Miniature chairs fashioned from scraps of lumber gave the underground homes the appearance of doll houses.

Since the stench from the homemade diesel fuel and soda can lanterns was too overpowering to breathe for long, the men would crash early or sit outside on top of their bunkers. It was pitch dark at eight o'clock. There were no lights at all above ground, and you needed a flashlight to move any distance at all—and even then you stumbled about helplessly. Better to just sit near your bunker and gaze up at a million stars. Someone would comment on the moon, or an occasional radio would blare a tune. But mostly the nights were unbelievably quiet.

In the command bunker of Company D, CO Captain Jack Bishop, Albany, Ore., would be making his nightly radio call to 19th Engineer Battalion Headquarters at Bao Loc. Headquarters would continually press him to meet the May 15th deadline for the project's completion. And as that date approached, it appeared Dynamite Delta would make it—except for the airstrip. "The airstrip is my main worry," said Captain Bishop, who took over at Bu Prang as CO from Captain Raymond Gazewski in mid-April. "The rains are beginning now (early May), and our heavy machinery does more harm than good operating on that wet soil. We might be delayed perhaps a week beyond the deadline."

If Captain Bishop was worried about deadlines, he did not have to worry about his men. Under the most primitive conditions, they had maintained surprisingly high morale. Mail had been spotty; rations uncertain. The men were paid but had no place to spend it. There was nothing but the "hill."

During the construction of New Bu Prang, the Montagnard CIDG soldiers worked hand and hand with the engineers. The completed camp will house 500 CIDG personnel and 300 dependents.

Through four gruelling months Delta Company worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Almost miraculously, the company had suffered not a single broken bone, serious cut, or case of malaria. Being free of enemy harassment, the men could labor enthusiastically at jobs which most of them enjoyed. Toward the end, they began to tire, but their work did not suffer. If they kept pushing themselves, they would soon be off the hill.

Unlike the engineers, the Special Forces and CIDG personnel would not be leaving the hill. Bu Prang would be their home. Upon completion of the camp, some 500 CIDG personnel and 300 dependents would occupy it. Many would be airlifted from old Bu Prang.

The 14-man Special Forces teams, American and Vietnamese, will coordinate the operations of New Bu Prang. Eventually these teams will withdraw and leave the camp in the charge of local Montagnard elements—probably RF/PFs.

The Bu Prang CIDG personnel will carry on regular operations over 750 square kilometers of Quang Duc province. These soldiers were farmers and herdsmen recruited by Special Forces to serve at Bu Prang. In return for their service, the Special Forces equip, pay, and feed the men and their families. The job is strictly voluntary, and the Montagnards may leave the camp whenever they wish without being prosecuted as deserters.

"I really expect most of the CIDG to remain here, perhaps until they die," said Captain Palmer, American Special Forces team leader. "They have food and security here, and they've shown through their hard work that they believe in the camp."

The coming months will definitely prove whether the CIDG believe in New Bu Prang, very possibly the last Special Forces "A" camp to be built in Vietnam. Enemy troops are known to dwell in the dense mountain sanctuaries north of Bu Prang and inside Cambodia. Special Forces leaders have been closely following intelligence reports which indicate small concentrations of enemy troops nearby. It may be only a matter of time before Charlie tests the new camp.

"If the enemy remains faithful to his past pattern of activity, he'll hit us in late summer or early fall," reasoned Captain Palmer. "In II Corps, the NVA and VC have consistently struck at northern areas in spring and early summer—witness Ben Het, Dak Pek, and Dak Seang. Then in late summer he heads south. Hopefully, because of our strong defenses, Charlie might pass us up like he did Ben Het this year due to the construction of a superior camp there."

The New Bu Prang may never again know the relaxed atmosphere that prevailed during the camp's construction. Now there are no Eric Richardsons around to provide excitement and humor. There remains only a peaceful, shy people on a hill in the middle of nowhere. They are alone now. Like mice, they're burrowed deep in that red clay—awaiting their future. ■

Focus On I FFORCE V

1 August 1970 marks the fifth anniversary of I Field Force, Vietnam. Established in August 1965 as Task Force Alpha, the headquarters became Field Force Vietnam in November of the same year. In March 1966, a second field force was established in Vietnam, and the designation of I Field Force Vietnam was given to the older organization.

At its inception, Task Force Alpha laid the groundwork for the arrival of combat troops by setting up a Corps-level organization, while carrying on counter-insurgency operations in the II Corps Tactical Zone. In its first months Task Force Alpha had operational control of the 173d Airborne Brigade, the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division, a battalion of the 1st Infantry Division and a battalion of the 7th Marine Regiment.

The first challenge met by Task Force Alpha was the securing and developing of the coastal area and the ports of Nha Trang, Cam Ranh, and Qui Nhon. These cities were vital to the effort in II Corps, since they provided supply and support depots for both military and civilian personnel. Later, as I Field Force, the headquarters could direct operations into the interior from these coastal strongholds.

Significant battles in the interior of II Corps took place in 1968 in the Western Highlands and in Binh Dinh Province. The battle of Dak To, beginning in September 1967, found the 4th Infantry Division and the 173d Airborne Brigade engaging a numerically superior NVA/VC force. During the five-week battle the Americans killed 1644 enemy soldiers.

Tet 1968 brought an increase in enemy activity with nine major population centers in II Corps attacked by NVA and VC. Though pacification and rural development efforts were set back by this offensive, the enemy's military losses made the campaign a costly one for him.

In mid-1968, I Field Force headquarters began to place special emphasis on combined U.S.-ARVN operations and on upgrading the combat effectiveness of the forces of the Republic of Vietnam. This concept continues to be an important part of the operating philosophy of this headquarters. Along with improving ARVN effectiveness, headquarters also initiated an accelerated pacification effort to assist the GVN. The rural development programs and agencies disrupted by the Tet Offensive were also reestablished. A further outgrowth of this effort was the Combined Campaign Plan of 1969, a campaign outline incorporating the forces of the United States, the Republic of Korea and the Republic of Vietnam.

Pacification took the spotlight as a major goal in 1969. Operation Washington Green, conducted by the 173d Airborne Brigade in Binh Dinh province, was a major pacification venture. The military effort was followed by rebuilding and rural development programs.

In mid-1969 the Highlands again attracted attention as fighting broke out at Ben Het and Dak To in Kontum province. Support for the ARVN units in the area was furnished by I Field Force. Later in 1969, enemy activity resulted in major combined operations taking place at Bu Prang and Duc Lap in Quang Duc province. Fitting a pattern of increasing Vietnamization, primarily ARVN and CIDG forces beat back the enemy thrust. Elements of I Field Force Artillery provided fire support throughout the battles. Here, to cope with problems of control arising in combined operations, a Forward Mobile Staff was organized and deployed to Ban Me Thuot. This group, composed of representatives of the various staff sections at Headquarters, I Field Force, provided the Commander with staff capability at the battlefield level.

The Forward Mobile Staff concept again proved valuable during the battles of Dak Seang and Dak Pek which broke out in Kontum province in April 1970. Through a long and difficult seige, the Special Forces-CIDG camps at the two locations held. Allied combatants were principally ARVN units and Mobile Strike Forces.

Vietnamization in II Corps took on added impetus in early spring 1970 with the withdrawal of the 4th Infantry Division's 3rd Brigade. At the same time, the 4th moved its remaining two brigades from Pleiku's Camp Enari to An Khe's Camp Radcliff. ARVN forces then took over Camp Enari.

But though the 4th had been cut in size, it did not decrease the level of its battlefield commitments. In May the division struck at enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia's Se Son river basin west of Pleiku. Together with the 3rd Battalion, 506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, and the 22d ARVN Division, the 4th succeeded in capturing or destroying large amounts of enemy weapons, ammunition, and supplies.

But while combat operations remained an integral part of the mission of many units under operational control of I Field Force, more and more concern has been evident for the problems of food production and the establishment of a stable economy and strong government. In recent months some combat units, such as the 173d Airborne, have devoted their time almost exclusively to pacification efforts.

The early spring withdrawals also had an important influence on this important area of pacification. With the redeployment of the 41st Civil Affairs Company and the cessation of much of the 4th Division's civic action mission, ARVN and RF/PF personnel assumed a much greater share of pacification duties in II Corps. To meet the needs of this changeover, a II Corps ARVN Civil Affairs School was established in Pleiku to train Vietnamese and Montagnard personnel in such areas as engineering, agriculture, medicine, weapons' skills, and psychological warfare.

As I Field Force begins its sixth year of operation, the twin areas of Vietnamization and Pacification continue as the primary role. American units will place added emphasis on the training and skills of RF/PF, PSDF, and CIDG forces. At the same time, all efforts to improve the economy and living standards of the people will serve to bolster the GVN in the eyes of the populace. In this manner the way will be paved for the eventual withdrawal of all U.S. forces..

SP5 John Jamieson

Flowers that bloom in the wake of war
Spring from overnourished soil.
Their colors are brighter—
Their fragrance sweeter—
For they have fed on the suffering of men
For whom they raise their frail monuments.

Koester

CHAM

For 1500 years, beginning in 200 A.D., the Chams slashed their way through Vietnam and conquered a kingdom that stretched to Canton on the north and to Siam on the west. Fierce pirates and warriors, this Malayo-Polynesian people accumulated abundant wealth in gold, amber, perfume, aromatic wood, and cotton. Ruling from the capitals of Hue, Tra Kieu, and Cha Bon, they left behind an impressive heritage in grandiose temples, irrigation systems, sculpture, woven cloth and jewelry.

But with all its riches and power, the Champa kingdom would not endure. Its burgeoning might had long angered the Vietnamese, and conflicts between the two peoples raged from the outset. Gradually, from the 14th through the 18th centuries, the Cham empire began to crumble. One by one their prized strongholds fell to the Vietnamese: Vijoya, Phan Rang, Phu Yen, Nha Trang, and Phan Thiet. In 1757 the city of Chau Doc capitulated, and with it the secular kingdom of Champa faded into the memory of history.

Today in Vietnam, the 35,000 Chams cling to thoughts of their glorious past. No longer rich, powerful, or warlike, they eke out a living as farmers and simple artisans. A shy, retiring people, they huddle in small colonies along the coastal lowlands, mostly near Phan Rang, and along the Cambodian border near Tay Ninh. In the face of abiding poverty and adversity they desperately struggle to retain their own language, customs, and mores. But under the growing influence of the Montagnards and Vietnamese, they are now witnessing the loss of even their cultural identity.

In their war with ethnic death the Chams seek relief in the most sustaining relic of their illustrious past—their religion. As visible evidence of bygone fame, the red-brick Cham temples, 800 years old, still grace the land. The structures once housed a domain in themselves: priests, slave dancers, servants, and musicians.

Within the quiet darkness of the worn temple walls, the Chams still invoke and appease a full family of spirit-gods. The rituals and superstitions that surround their predominantly Moslem-Hindu religion hold the people in an uncertain bondage with the past. For even this last shred of cultural pride, their religion, totters precariously. Alien contacts have compromised the Cham faith, yet its ancient taboos still remain strong enough to impede the economic and social advancement of the people.

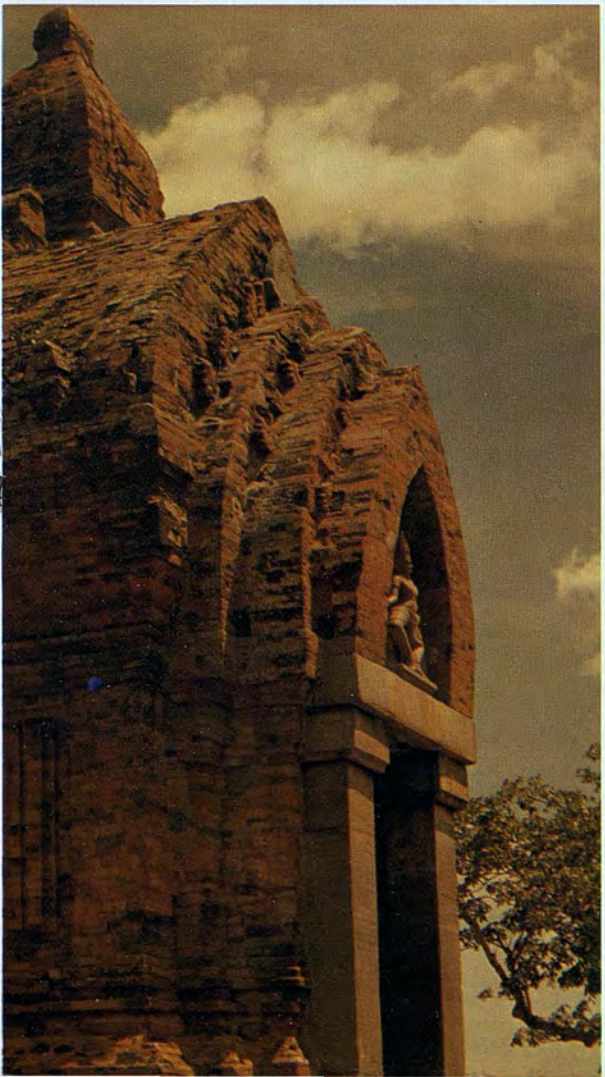
Assaulted by time and the elements, the Cham temples, like the culture itself, decay and wane. At times, on rare feasts, the venerable sanctuaries come alive again with worshippers. But these pulses of activity soon die. The temples are left to stand empty—lonely and defiant, crippled giants of an extinct empire.

L. D. M.

Voyles

Myers

Voyles



Koester

Photos by SP5 John Jamieson

Above: Soldiers from the 3/506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, OPCON to the 4th Division in Cambodia, sort out an enemy weapons cache. Below: Tankers with the 2/1st Cavalry take a break during road security operations along QL 19 in Cambodia.

Ivy Leaf Cambodian Thrust

Operation Binh Tay I yields huge caches

"The enemy hasn't stood and fought, and he won't. But what he has left behind makes this operation a success."

By SP5 Richard C. Soehngen

The rumors spread like an uncontrolled brush fire among the small clusters of men waiting patiently to board the choppers on the outskirts of New Plei Djereng, 10 miles east of Cambodia and 30 miles west of Pleiku. Like all unconfirmed reports not based on definite knowledge, they intensified the uncertainty with each circulation.

Infantrymen of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry, 1st Brigade were noticeably apprehensive. Many were shorttimers with less than 30 days to go; others with rear jobs had been told to pack their rucksacks and clean their weapons. Wherever they were going, it promised to be a big operation. Choppers carrying supplies were flying everywhere.

Just two days earlier, as other Allied units clashed with North Vietnamese regulars in the Parrot's Beak and Fishhook areas northwest of Saigon, the 4th Division soldiers had boarded C-130 aircraft at An Khe and headed for Pleiku. From there the unit was sent by chopper and truck to Plei Djereng.

Now the battle-hardened troops awaited word on their destination. The suspense was finally broken as word filtered down from company commander to squad leader and then to the individual soldier that the 3/8th would be air-assaulted into Cambodia.

"Cambodia, Cambodia? Well I'll be damned," uttered one infantryman incredulously. "This has got to be a pipe-dream. You mean we are finally going after them?"

Low whistles of exclamation and surprise followed the order to embark on the choppers. The feelings were mixed. "Well, at last we're not pussy-footing around anymore," remarked one grim soldier. Others weren't so sure, but when the order was given, they boarded the aircraft anyway.

Within minutes after leaving New Plei Djereng, the choppers crossed the border into Cambodia. The gently meandering Se Son river clearly divided the two countries. With a lighthearted attempt at banter, one groundpounder quipped over the noise of the rotors, "Hey Sarge, I forgot my passport. Do you think it will matter?" But no one laughed. Engrossed in their own thoughts, most turned their eyes to stare forlornly at the Cambodian frontier.

Operation Binh Tay I, code name "Pacified West," was under way. Two Allied divisions, the U.S. 4th and the 22nd ARVN, were committed to the operation. The 1st Brigade of the 4th would hit the northernmost sector of the Cambodian AO, known as Base Area 702. The 2nd Brigade would assault the central portion, and the 22nd ARVN Division would secure the southern flank. The 3rd Battalion, 506th Infantry attached to the 4th from their parent 101st Airborne Division, had already been inserted the day before.

The combined U.S.-Vietnamese force had been assigned the task of eliminating the Communist staging areas just across the border. Free from the threat of hot pursuit and harassment for more than five years, the enemy had used this privileged sanctuary as a training center for troops soon to be deployed to the south. The North Vietnamese and hardcore elements of the Viet Cong were always confident of their safety in this haven whenever the Allies made life unbearable for them in the Republic of Vietnam. They could always retreat to Cambodia and lick their wounds.

But more important, the primary objective of the task force was the destruction of the highly mobile logistical headquarters of the B-3 Front, the combined NVA/VC effort directly subordinate to Hanoi. From this headquarters commands and logistics support have been issued to enemy units supporting the insurgency in the south. Destroy this headquarters or disrupt its communications and a few more valuable months would be gained to strengthen the Vietnamization effort and insure the safe withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam.

The infantrymen charged with implementing this strategy had been largely unaware of the existence of such a key headquarters. Their main concern as they rode the choppers into Cambodia was not with strategy or politics. They only wanted to accomplish whatever mission awaited them and to survive the inevitable firefights. The men would not have long to wait for one.

As the choppers neared the primary landing zone, heavy ground fire greeted their approach. Repeated strafing failed to dislodge the enemy gunners or lessen their firepower. Unlike the previous thrusts into Cambodia in which tactical surprise was achieved, the 4th Division was now air-assaulting into hostile territory after the enemy had been alerted five days before by the operations in other areas across the border.

The site selected as the secondary LZ was found to be just as hot. Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry was ordered to secure the landing zone for the battalion which was to follow the same day. But well-placed snipers were drilling holes in every ship which attempted to land.

The landing zone, a small cultivated area, was situated in a valley surrounded by low, rolling hills. Forty-foot trees merged with triple canopy jungle to the very edge of the clearing which stretched for some 200 feet.

Through the maze of heavy small arms fire, the choppers attempted to

"It was eerie moving through the jungle. The snipers would hit somebody, then silence."

insert the troops. It was later estimated that three out of every four ships had to withdraw before putting the soldiers down. PFC Sid Neiswander, Petoskey, Mich., later recalled that "it had been very cold up in the chopper circling the LZ but very hot indeed when we went down."

A total of 60 troops landed that first afternoon. Under constant sniper attack, the infantrymen sought whatever cover was available. Some huddled in an unmanned anti-aircraft trench; others returned fire from behind tree stumps and rucksacks. Towards nightfall, the firefight subsided, and a medevac whirled in to pick up the wounded.

As the wounded were hauled aboard, First Lieutenant John Phillips, commander of Charlie Company, was killed supervising the loading. The landing zone was later named LZ Phillips in honor of the first man in the battalion to die on Cambodian soil.

After sporadic contact throughout the night, the rest of the 3/8th Infantry landed the following day without trouble. A five-gun 105 artillery battery and a platoon of engineers also landed.

As the engineers and Charlie Company went to work securing the LZ, the other three companies and the recon platoon of the battalion began fanning out in ever-widening clover leaves on search and clear operations. Their efforts would soon yield results.

Before going a hundred meters outside the perimeter, elements of the battalion found the bodies of three enemy soldiers killed during the insertion the day before. Then, with the help of a Kit Carson Scout who urged the enemy to surrender, the infantrymen detained their first prisoner. The man, later identified as a first lieutenant doctor, had been shot in both legs but was still clutching a 9 mm Chicom pistol. He told of a 30-building medical installation less than an hour's walk away. After finding a supply depot to the southwest, Delta Company with the recon platoon in support later located the medical complex, complete with X-ray machine, generator, and medicines.

Meanwhile, to the southeast, Bravo Company had met only scattered resistance. They found a training center where North Vietnamese troops received indoctrination before being sent to the south. Pictures of Ho Chi Minh, Lenin, Marx, Stalin, and Mao Tse Tung hung from the walls of the hootches and underground bunkers. It was here, too, that a number of NVA, VC, and Russian flags were found. One NVA flag (a loyalty flag) had the signatures of the members of the unit written in ink. A total of 2000 pounds of rice was also discovered.

But the most significant action for the 3/8th and the costliest in terms of casualties (five killed, 14 wounded) would be the two-day battle fought by Alpha Company. Sniper fire from unseen enemy positions began to take a deadly toll. The elusive enemy fought a delaying action while the main body of NVA regulars slipped away. Specialist Four Don Talbot, East Liverpool, Ohio, recalled the action. "It was eerie moving through the jungle. The snipers would hit somebody, then silence. If we raised our heads too high, we got it." The company would return fire, recover the wounded, then move on and get hit again.

Finally, Alpha Company reached a bunker and hootch complex stretching for 1200 meters. It was thought by reliable sources to have sheltered a battalion. Important documents, personal effects, rice wine, medicine, and livestock were captured. In addition, the infantrymen found 71 marked graves, four freshly dug. In exhuming the bodies for identification of units and for the possibility of an arms cache, the dead were found to be buried in coffins. Since this is a luxury rarely afforded a fallen enemy soldier in the south, it indicated a well-supplied logistics system in the area.

"There is no doubt that we interrupted a major resupply system," said First Lieutenant William B. Watson, the battalion S-2 from Marion, Ala. "The enemy hasn't stood and fought, and he won't. But what he has left behind makes this operation a success." The lieutenant pointed out that the medical facilities, training camps, storage areas, supply depots, and weapons and food caches uncovered in the

Ivy Leaf groundpounders of Company A, 3/8th Infantry carry part of an NVA cache back to their forward element's defensive perimeter. The company drew heavy sniper fire and fought the bitterest firefights of the operation.

On Firebase Curahee inside Cambodia members of D Battery, 2/320th Artillery prepare to fire their 105 mm howitzer into the perimeter woodline. The firebase was established when the original site aborted due to the high intensity of enemy fire.

operation would certainly disrupt enemy plans for future operations.

The 3/8th would later destroy or extract everything they found. There would be no training centers left in which to indoctrinate troops, no medical facilities left to treat the wounded, no rice or livestock for rations. The operation was designed to destroy and deny the enemy his staging areas and foodstuffs. It would be several months before he again could rebuild or replenish his supplies.

As the 3/8th and other units organic to the 4th Division continued search and clear operations, the 3rd Battalion, 506th Infantry (Airborne) uncovered two sizeable caches in the same area. The Screaming Eagles had spearheaded the assault the day before and set up Landing Zone Curahee. Fighting a series of sharp, brief clashes, the airborne soldiers uncovered more than 520 tons of rice. The following day, more than 700 assorted individual and crew-served weapons were captured. These included SKs, AK47s, carbines, pistols, Mausers, Swedish Ks, and machineguns of various calibers.

During the ten days of Operation Binh Tay I in Cambodia, the discovery of the caches and base areas continued to strengthen the fact that the enemy had taken maximum advantage of areas outside Vietnam to wage war, store supplies, regroup, and outfit.

The results of the operation were quite tangible. Allied forces had denied the enemy 600 tons of rice, 803 individual weapons, 23 crew-served weapons, 64 mines, 500 satchel charges, 604 hand grenades, and 1068 assorted mortar, recoilless, and rocket rounds. In addition, 671 structures were destroyed and 330 head of livestock taken. One hundred eighty-four enemy soldiers died in the action.

For the enemy, who for years acquired his supplies mostly item by item, it will be a loss hard to replace in the future. The assaults into Cambodia will undoubtedly hamper enemy movements. The losses will force him to reappraise his strength to launch attacks in the near future. ■

Push It... And Go Down

By SP4 Joe Farmer

The stage is the sky and the game is waiting. The moves are made by the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong, and the waiting is done by the 524th Vietnamese Air Force Fighter Squadron. It takes guts to play this game where the stakes are life and death. Every time a plane takes off the odds are shortened. Of course the skill of the pilot and the physical assets of his plane must be figured into the odds, and the Vietnamese pilots are among the best in the world.

The 524th has been playing the game and winning since September 15, 1965, when it was formed to provide close air support, fly intercept and escort missions and form an alert force for all of II Corps.

Up until January 30, 1968, the 524th was flying the old propeller-driven A-1 Skyraider. In their three years with the plane, they flew 19,720 missions, 82 of these into North Vietnam. They destroyed 11,200 enemy weapons and had 15,250 confirmed Viet Cong kills. Since switching to the A-37 jet fighter-bomber in 1968, they have flown 6,215 missions with 253 confirmed kills.

The squadron has 18 planes in service now with 30 pilots. It has its headquarters in Nha Trang with a detachment in Pleiku. When the drive started into Cambodia in May of this year, the main workload for the squadron was shifted from Nha Trang to Pleiku. Eight missions were flown out of Pleiku daily while only two were flown from Nha Trang. Most of these were into Cambodia.

The 524th has seen action at Ben Het, Bu Prang, Duc Lap and recently, Dak Seang and Cambodia. A breakdown of its pilots shows six percent with more than 3700 hours in the air and 1400 missions, 65 percent with more than 2200 hours in the air and 900 missions and 29 percent with more than 300 hours in the air and 100 missions. The unit has been decorated once, and three of its pilots hold the American Air Medal.

Impressive statistics for a squadron only five years old—impressive for its planes and its pilots. But after all a plane is only a weapon, a machine that must have a man to do its thinking. As Major Don K. Longmire, Natchez, Miss., an Air Force advisor who has been flying with the 524th for 10 months, puts it: "There's not much difference in flying any aircraft. They've got a stick, a yoke or a wheel—you pull it and go up or you push it and go down."

Major Longmire has been an Air Force pilot since enlisting 12 years ago. This is his first assignment with a fighter-bomber squadron, although he flew regular missions into and out of Vietnam while stationed in Japan. He was first trained as a navigator, then went to Graham Air Force Base, Florida for pilot training. How does he feel about flying with the Vietnamese? "I enjoy it," he said. "I can't really compare their bombing abilities with the Americans because I've never flown bombing runs with Americans. I will say, though, that I've worked around and heard about a lot of pilots, and the Vietnamese are as good as any as far as accuracy goes. I'm assigned to the 524th as an advisor, but there's actually no advising to be done. I just fly with them."

The 524th is commanded by Major Pham Van Pham, a 12 year veteran who was also trained at Graham one year after Major Longmire completed his training. He has flown 12 missions into North Vietnam and has been with the 524th since its conception. "When we were flying the old A-1 Skyraider," he said, "we could carry more bombs and stay in the air longer, but we took more hits from ground fire. The A-1 was slow and had a big fuselage, so it was a reasonably easy target for enemy gunners. The A-37 is thinner and faster, and it's a lot harder to hit."

It would seem that an enemy gunner armed with a small automatic weapon would have a difficult time hitting a small jet fighter. Major Pham explained the VC anti-aircraft technique: "These men

are trained in the most efficient way to hit a plane in the air. There's not just one man trying to zero in on your aircraft. Two or three men will point their weapons into your flight pattern and open fire. If you are on a bomb run, you have to follow your pattern into the target and you fly into the enemy fire. We've never had a plane shot down like this, but we do take quite a few hits in the wings."

The pilots of the squadron are justly proud of their new A-37s and most say that the jet is a definite improvement over the A-1. None of them, however, failed to mention that the A-37 would not carry the bomb load the Skyraider would. Their satisfaction comes from knowing that they have helped the troops on the ground, and the more bombs they can drop the more good they will do. "I have fun flying the A-37," said Captain Bui Gia Dinh, deputy commander of the 524th, "but it just won't get the job done like the old A-1."

Though the A-37 may not carry the payload the A-1 did, it will go farther faster, despite the fact that it won't stay in the air as long as the A-1. Perhaps the greatest point in favor of the jet is the fact that it's safer. A lot of time and money goes into training a pilot, and no property book will list one as an "expendable item." The A-37 not only takes the pilot to the target, but it brings him home.

The squadron has had a few

SP5 Joe Bradley

The 524th's pilots take their flying seriously. Captain Ngo Duc Cuu scans the landscape during flight into Cambodia.

Looking across the tips of napalm bombs on the wings of Captain Bui Gia Dinh's plane, Captain Cuu gains altitude enroute to Cambodia.

SP5 John Jamieson

problems with the A-37, but not many. Recently one crashed during takeoff from the Nha Trang Air Base, plowing through the perimeter fence and burning. The pilot received only minor injuries. "The plane was taxiing down the runway for takeoff," explained Major Pham, "when one of the engines failed. This presented no immediate problem since the plane can become airborne with only one engine operational. When the plane was about 10 feet off the ground, the other engine also failed. This runway is very short, and once you've started your takeoff there's no time to abort your mission. The pilot stayed with the plane until it stopped and then climbed to safety. He had no other choice, there wasn't enough time for him to stop the plane."

Captain Dinh is the only member of the squadron who has ever crashed, and that was in a Skyraider. "I was returning from a mission," he said, "and the plane just quit completely. I rode it to the ground and crash landed. I wasn't hurt, but I still don't know what went wrong with the plane, and that was four years ago."

Captain Luu Thanh-Son, a seven-year veteran, has the rather dubious distinction of taking the most hits in one mission of any of the Squadron's pilots. He returned from a mission during Tet of 1968, and the ground crew counted 36 holes in his plane. "See," he said pointing to a pamphlet on the squadron bulletin board, "Luu Thanh-Son took 36 hits (he was translating the Vietnamese story into English) and still returned his plane to base." He was smiling happily as he walked into the alert room.

Thanh-Son walked into the room, his flight suit legs rolled up and his boots half on and half off. He stepped out of the boots, picked up the book he was reading, a Vietnamese paperback, and propped his feet up on his desk. "I read a lot of American books," he said, "especially this kind. (He was holding the newest issue of Playboy.) I have a lot of time to read. It's the hardest part of flying—waiting for the alert. I'm what you would call the Officer of the Day today. I have to sit here and answer the phone and handle the alerts and the squadron paperwork. We switch it every day, so I only get it every two to three weeks. I love to fly, though. I wanted to be a driver, you know, jeeps and trucks. They wouldn't let me drive, so I just learned to fly."

The phone interrupted him, and he talked in low, assured tones, asking questions and consulting a map on his desk. Then he phoned Captain Dinh and Captain Ngo Duc Cuu and told them they were to fly a mission. The two pilots walked into the alert room wearing the traditional .38 caliber pistol, their only personal weapons, and carrying the small leather pouches containing their flight maps and other necessary pamphlets.

The old World War II John Wayne image wasn't there. There was no loud alert horn sending 20 pilots scrambling to waiting planes, and the Duke wasn't waving to Lana Turner standing outside the hangar with her hair waving in the breeze. These guys were cool. They were fast and efficient, because they had done this same thing hundreds of times before. They checked their course on the flight maps and checked out their equipment. Then they leisurely walked to their planes and climbed in. There were to be only two planes on this mission. Seven minutes after receiving the call, the planes were waiting for takeoff clearance from the tower.

If you've ever been sitting at a red light on a four-lane drive in a 426 Hemi 'Cuda or similar machine, you know just about how these pilots feel. You don't have to rev up the engine to prove what the car will do, the power is there and you know it. So too with the A-37. It's not like the C-123s and 130s, sitting at the end of the runway holding the brakes and building the engines up high enough so they will have enough speed to get into the air. With this aircraft, you just make the little curve onto the straightaway and open the throttles up. The two jets right behind you take care of the rest. It's smooth as silk.

When you get off the ground, all sense of speed and time are left behind. You're doing more than 350 miles an hour and you're almost five miles up, but you might as well be sitting in a soundproof room listening to Led Zeppelin or Jimi Hendrix through a set of stereo headphones. It affects you about the same way. As he crossed the Cambodian border, Captain Cuu was listening to some guy on the Dong Ba Thin radio station tell the troops at Cam Ranh Bay that the band which had been cancelled the night before would appear tonight. Then Glenn Campbell went into "Honey Come Back," and Cuu went into his dive.

The altimeter needle was only a blur as it spun to register the loss of altitude, and the climb and dive meter showed only black with the word "DIVE" glaring out in red letters. In a matter of seconds he had dropped from 25,000 feet at 250 miles an hour to 400 feet at 350 miles an hour. Coming in at an angle, he cut the plane 45 degrees to the right and leveled off for a dry run over the hill that was his target. All that was visible on the way down, out the sides, front and top of the canopy was the ground. When he turned and leveled off, the hill came into a prism-type sight mounted on the dash of the jet. He sighted the hill, then went up and circled for another dry run to be sure he had the target in the sight.

The dive itself has little effect on the pilot. But when he pulls the nose of the plane up to climb out of the dive, he experiences an increase in the gravitational pull on his body. A pilot weighing 150 pounds on the ground at one G, would weigh a ton at four Gs. After several dives the padding on that aluminum seat begins to feel awfully thin, and there is some question if a certain section of the anatomy will ever be the same again.

On his third run Captain Cuu released two of his bombs and circled to check the damage and watch Captain Dinh go in. Another bomb run and two rocket runs, and he was through. He circled several more times to find out from the Forward Air Controller if any strafing runs with his nose-mounted mini-gun would be necessary. The top of the mountain was obliterated by smoke and flames from the two planes' ordnance.

Mission completed, the two pilots headed for home. Before returning to Nha Trang, their flight plans called for them to fly to Pleiku and change to refueled planes. But since the target had not been as far across the border as they thought, they had enough fuel to fly directly back to Nha Trang. Captain Cuu set his plane at 25,000 and relaxed. The radio was playing a Credence Clearwater Revival tune, and he was tapping his hand on his leg with his head swaying to the beat. Then he was approaching the runway at a little over 110 miles an hour. It looked awfully short from where he was sitting. Two hours after the call came in the two pilots were walking back to the alert room discussing the successful mission.

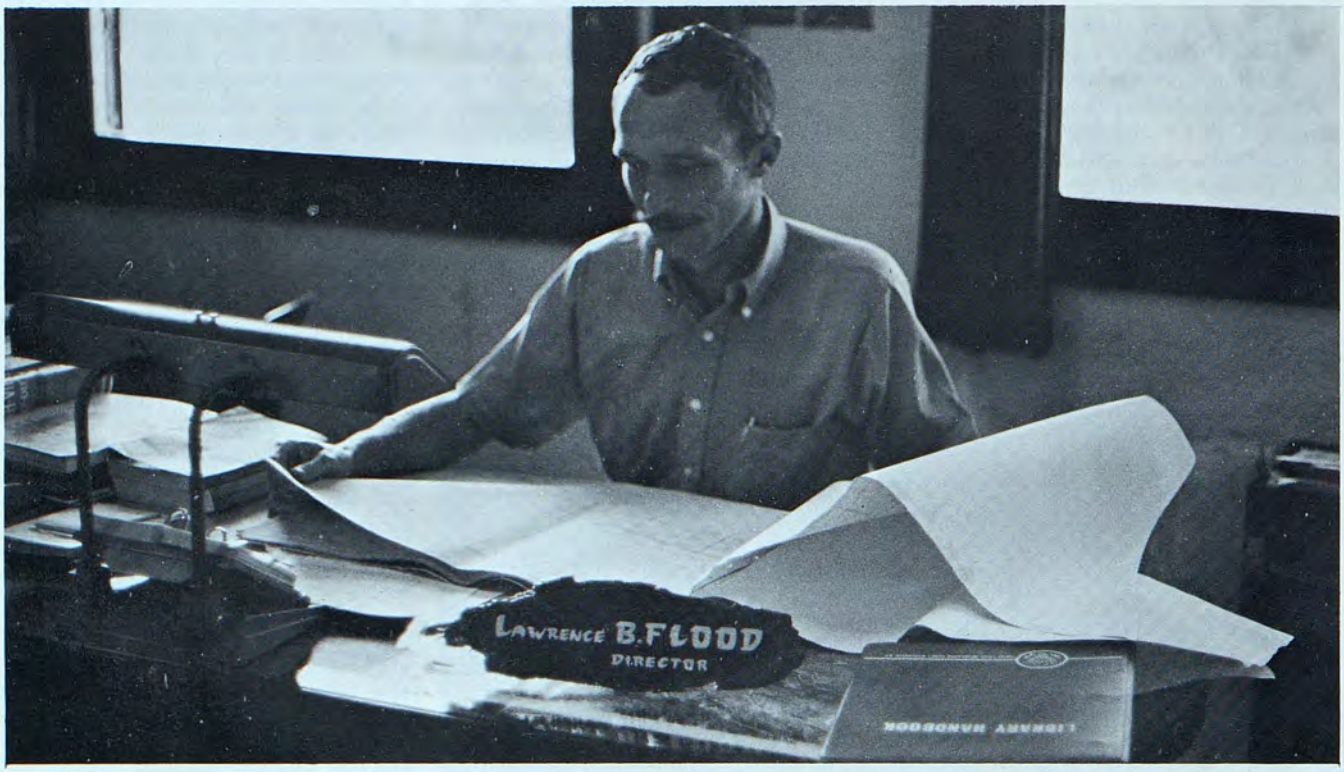
The conversation the day before hadn't been quite so cheerful. Captain Cuu and Captain Ca Su Ngoc had been forced to abort their mission when trouble developed in the fuel system of Captain Ngoc's jet. They had to fly to a spot far out in the ocean they call "The Rock" and dump their bomb loads. They can land a loaded plane, but the cost of the ordnance measured against the possible loss if the plane crashed during landing makes the maneuver impractical. "That was no good," commented Captain Ngoc. "I always hate to fly to The Rock."

The grand insult to these pilots is having to abort a mission. These men have spent years learning their trade, and their country has put its trust and a lot of its money into them. The pilots feel they must repay this debt. They're the top of the line and they always do their best.

The pilot's job seems pretty safe, but there's never been a Richter Scale developed to measure the degrees of danger in different jobs in a war zone. It's still war no matter what a man is doing, and he doesn't enjoy being in the war any more just because he seems a little safer. These pilots know death and they know danger, and they bring a lot of both to the VC as they try to make the groundpounder's job a little easier. ■

Farmer

Looking Beyond The War



Story and Photos by SP5 Larry Maloney

On Memorial Day weekend, the VC jolted Dalat City out of its customary serenity. With the terrifying presence of the enemy in several parts of the mountain resort, all activity ceased. Stores closed; the marketplace emptied; schools and universities cancelled classes; National police kept everyone indoors.

Amid all the worry and confusion of that weekend, some people seemed oblivious to the danger—almost laughing at it or at least calmly resigning themselves to the fates.

One such person was Larry Flood, director of the American Cultural Center, a civilian organization aimed at disseminating information about the history, culture, and government of the United States. Flood was sleeping peacefully Memorial Day eve while VC mortared and gutted Vice President Ky's vacation villa just a couple of hundred yards down the road. "I mean, what could I do anyway—one man against a company of VC?" he later recalled.

Larry Flood and the people who work with him in Dalat refuse to be shaken by the war. The nature of their jobs does not permit them to be intimidated by it. The American Cultural Center (ACC), an arm of the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO), must accomplish its mission in an atmosphere of peace. And Dalat, with its uniquely tranquil setting, has always lended itself to the free exchange of cultural ideas—Vietnamese with American.

So on the weekend which frightened most of Dalat's citizens, Larry Flood was probably more upset about the disruption of Dalat's aura of peace than he was about any personal danger. He stood in his backyard and watched an American convoy being attacked in the distant hills.

Many of the ACC's activities had been cancelled that weekend because

Left: Larry Flood, director of Dalat's American Cultural Center, looks over plans for the Vietnamese-American Association's new building complex. Right: Children play outside the reference wing of the Center's Lincoln Library.

of the seige: a meeting of the General Assembly for the Vietnamese-American Association (a sister organization geared toward explaining Vietnam to Americans), a dramatic presentation at the University of Dalat, and a lecture by a Vietnamese college student who had toured the U.S. through ACC channels. These events could be held the next week, but Flood had to let out an ironic chuckle when he thought about the four-acre plot of land recently donated to the center by the city of Dalat. The $150,000 site, which would someday house a complex of ACC buildings, stood next to an area held by the VC. It was now being strafed and pockmarked by machinegun and mortar fire. "Oh well, maybe they'll make our grading operations a little easier," said Flood.

At another location in the city near the Pontifical College, then held by several VC, the ACC's full-time librarian, Tran Hoc Hai, was evacuating his wife and three children. The residential section grew increasingly hazardous as ARVN bullets attempted to wrest the VC from the college and nearby buildings.

Two days later Hai was none the worse for the experience. He had moved his family from their temporary quarters at the University of Dalat back to their home. Apologizing for his crumpled clothing and somewhat haggard appearance from the weekend's ordeal, Hai was recovered enough to laugh at the scare. He was now more concerned about catching up on his work and helping the students who crammed the ACC's Lincoln Library in preparation for final exams.

Hai, who speaks French, English, and Chinese in addition to his native Vietnamese, manages the 7000-volume library and helps present the 4500 books that the ACC donates annually to area libraries, institutions, and individuals. "Many of these books, like those in the Lincoln Library, concern themselves with all phases of American life," Hai explained. "They also deal with the important idea of 'nation building.' This concept includes all the factors that go into creating a strong nation and shows the Vietnamese how their country can develop in spite of the war." The ACC's film library, which includes 365 documentaries lent out to institutions throughout Tuyen Duc province, delivers essentially the same cultural message to nearly 40,000 people monthly.

To people like Larry Flood and Mr. Hai, the VC activity Memorial weekend posed no real threat. It would soon pass, they believed. But those in the military who work with the ACC perhaps took the uprising more seriously. The ACC depends on many American servicemen as instructors in the Vietnamese-American Association's English-teaching program. But with the VC assaults on Dalat, these men had dropped their chalk and textbooks for the evening and grabbed flak jackets and M16s. All Dalat installations were on red alert and bracing for contact. Ordinarily several of these soldiers, including two former West Point instructors, would be teaching some of the 100 elementary, high school, and college students who take advantage of the program.

"The classes give most students a

"It is difficult to find a cultural center equal to Dalat. . ."

good English background," said First Lieutenant Steven Northup, who had to suspend his English classes that weekend. "With the 15 progressive levels of instruction, an exceptional student gets the opportunity to master enough English to pass tests qualifying him for study abroad."

Several Vietnamese in the Dalat area have grasped English well enough to study in the U.S., mainly through the help of the ACC. In its eight years of operation in Dalat, five high school students have studied in the U.S. through the American Field Service, directly supported by the ACC. In addition, the Dalat center has sponsored U.S. tours and study grants for several other Vietnamese students, educators, and professional people.

This exchange of talented people, largely supported by the ACC, is not limited to the Vietnamese. The center has brought American teachers and professors to Vietnam under the Fulbright grant program. These educators soon adapt to a life with few American friends. Some, in speaking almost constant Vietnamese, jokingly admit to forgetting their English.

Auburn University graduate Betty Wilkenson, now in her fourth year of teaching in Vietnam under the Fulbright program, has made herself at home in Dalat. And like other ACC supporters, she has learned to react automatically to the occasional inconveniences of war.

On Memorial Day, Betty didn't dare go to the University of Dalat where she teaches English. The institution had also felt the tremors of the enemy attack. But Betty was running out of C-rations and bravely ventured to the market downtown to pick up some bread and vegetables. All that was open was the flower market. The National police told her politely to go home. Leaving the marketplace, Betty met a few of her students. Surprised to see her in native black silk pants, the students shyly told her how "dep" (pretty) she looked.

Betty Wilkenson, perhaps because she has been in Vietnam so long and can speak Vietnamese fluently, can well estimate the success of such programs as the ACC. She has worked closely with Vietnamese college students and can feel their reaction toward the influx of American culture, language, and ideas brought on by the war. At the University of Dalat the results have been gratifying.

"Fortunately, the students here are working hard to learn all they can about the English language and American life," Miss Wilkenson said. "But probably more important changes are occurring in the university's administration. Mr. Tran Long, the dean of the School of Business and Government and also president of the Vietnamese-American Association, has heavily emphasized English. He has also tried to pattern his school after the American educational system rather than the French which requires the students to attend no classes but merely pass a semester exam."

Betty Wilkenson, like Flood, revels in Dalat's atmosphere of solitude. She points out that students come to Dalat and feel relaxed and free to study. "They can get away from all the confusion and activism of places like Saigon," she says. The fact that families throughout Vietnam send their children to study in Dalat reaffirms Miss Wilkenson's beliefs.

The American Cultural Center takes full advantage of Dalat's naturally contemplative setting and has established deep ties with the many educational and cultural institutions there: the University of Dalat, the Pontifical College, the Nuclear Research Center, the Pasteur Institute, the National Geographic Service, the Redemptorist Seminary, the Dalat City Library and Archives, the Vietnamese Military Academy, the Command and General Staff College, and the Political Warfare College. In Dalat, with a population of 85,000, those involved in these many institutions can easily meet and share ideas. They represent a wide variety of national and professional backgrounds.

"For its size, it is very difficult to find a cultural center equal to Dalat," says Larry Flood. "In Vietnam certainly no other city can equal its educational standards with one out of six people at high school level and one out of 14 at college level or equivalent."

Flood himself probes every possible medium which can lead to a better exchange of culture and ideas between Americans and Vietnamese. The ACC director has lectured to student groups of all kinds. His instruction on the Apollo moon shots, spoken almost entirely in Vietnamese, reached 3500 students.

Many American Cultural Center activities are held at the University of Dalat. The university is beginning to pattern its schools after the American system of education rather than the French.

Flood has also brought numerous art and science exhibits, speakers, musical presentations and theatrical groups to Dalat under ACC auspices.

The American Cultural Center's work in Dalat resembles JUSPAO and U.S. Information Agency efforts throughout the world. In Vietnam other centers operate in Saigon, Hue, Da Nang, and Can Tho. Larry Flood prepared himself for his Vietnam assignment by working with university students in Argentina and serving as assistant cultural attache for the U.S. in Uruguay. In the course of his government service he has learned to speak Spanish, Portuguese, French, Russian, and Vietnamese.

What does separate Dalat's ACC from others world-wide and especially those in Vietnam is the close-knit nature of the community and its willingness to accommodate an international flow of ideas. More important still, the city has nearly always been free of enemy activity.

Have the events of Memorial Day weekend ruined Dalat's prized atmosphere? "Everyone is very confident that the ACC's work will continue despite potential VC activity," said Larry Flood. "We are going ahead with our plans as scheduled."

Chief among the ACC's plans is the construction of the $200,000 Vietnamese-American Association complex. The project will include offices, classrooms, a library, and an auditorium. If all goes well, the buildings will be completed within the next two years.

Such an ambitious project might seem foolhardy in the middle of a war that has already seen ACC centers bombed in Saigon and Can Tho. Flood feels that his center will be left alone. "Up to Memorial Day weekend, the VC had consistently avoided religious and civilian educational institutions in Dalat," Flood said. "We feel sure that our project will be completed without serious incident."

Flood and many of those he works with believe enough in the future of ACC to stay in Dalat. Having completed one tour of duty, Flood has volunteered for another year-and-a-half stint to complete his many projects. Others, like Betty Wilkenson, have also extended their stays in Dalat to bring their work to fulfillment. Together these people form a talented and involved international set with an intense devotion to culture, learning, and human understanding.

As civilians in a country torn by violence, Dalat's ACC supporters are admittedly in a precarious position. They pursue their goals with a belief that danger will somehow pass them by. The American Cultural Center has a definite stake in Vietnam and will survive long after the last American soldier leaves. For the present, its supporters merely turn a defiant shoulder to the occasional perils. They look beyond the war. ■

Above: Tran Hoc Hai, full-time librarian at Lincoln Library, is typical of the talented people involved in the center's work in Dalat. The librarian maintains close ties with other area institutions. Right: Students study for final examinations in Lincoln Library's reference section.

The Love God of Coop 12

And Lord Windgate

By SP4 Joe Farmer

This is a story about George and Pete. George is a pig, and Pete is a chicken. They live on a small farm in the Philippines. Now George is not a very handsome pig, as pigs go. He is short and fat and has a pug nose, with ears that sort of stick straight up and fold over on the ends.

Pete on the other hand, is a very handsome chicken. He stands almost two feet high and has a bright red comb with auburn feathers. All of the hens around the farm refer to him as the "cock of the walk."

One day George was lying in his favorite mudhole when Pete strutted over from the hen house. "George," he said, "we need a little vacation."

"Where," George asked, "are we going to get the money for a vacation?"

"Ah, that is where the beauty of the idea comes in," replied Pete. "The U.S. Navy is starting a program to improve the diets of the men in the Vietnamese Navy, and some lieutenant will be here tomorrow to buy livestock for the project. All we have to do is be in the right place at the right time."

Pete was absolutely right. Just days before, two young lieutenants (j.g.), Robert Wilcox and Richard Gash, had boldly approached Admiral Elmor Zumwalt Jr., Commander of Naval Forces Vietnam and Chief of the Naval Advisory Group, about raising pigs and poultry as a possible additional food source for their Vietnamese counterparts. The Admiral, realizing the economic impact of such a program, immediately authorized $5,000 from a contingency fund for the foundation breeding stock. The two lieutenants headed out to buy the stock on the open market in Saigon and the Philippines.

At dawn the next day George and Pete were preparing for the arrival of the Naval officers. George, for the first time in his life, was clean. Well except for a couple of smudges on his nose—you can't stop a pig from rooting. Pete was standing to his full two feet, with his comb stately erect, and his tail feathers spread in a most provocative way that had all the hens breathless. Pete and George were both the first draft choices in their classes. The best laid plans of pigs and chickens very seldom fail.

Pete, with a degree in chicken medicine, controls the diets of all the baby chicks. Here four of his many dig in.

They had done it. They were on their way to Vietnam for an all-expense paid vacation. They failed to consider, however, that the trip would be one way.

As they boarded the boat, George was searching for a good dirty spot to sleep in, and Pete was scrutinizing the hens. "I think we did the right thing," said Pete as he eyed a cute little hen clucking away in the corner and looking at him over her left wing. "This trip could be very interesting."

"Yep," was the only reply George could manage as he rooted into a pail of slop thoughtfully provided.

When they reached Vietnam, George and Pete discovered that they were to be separated. Pete was to go to a chicken farm at Cat Lai, and George to a pig farm at Cam Ranh Bay. Their parting was filled with emotion, mostly fake because George had no desire to live at a chicken farm, and Pete no desire to live at a pig farm. Although trying to look remorseful, Pete could barely contain a big grin as he hopped aboard the truck that would carry him to Cat Lai.

Arriving in Cat Lai, he was surprised to find the most modern chicken coops built high off the ground. If he was the cock of the walk at his old home, he was super chick at Cat Lai. His coop contained himself, two Vietnamese roosters, and 10 Vietnamese hens. The Vietnamese chickens were scrawny and underfed, and he immediately became the love god of coop #12. Pete worked like a demon, and eggs were popping out all over the place. As soon as a baby chick cracked out, he was hustled away to a separate coop, so Pete didn't have any of the usual paternal responsibilities. He did have one major worry though—being eaten. Every night he groomed himself for the next day, brushing out his comb and applying a little touchup dye to his tail feathers. He had to be the number one chick producer so he would be retained as part of the breed stock.

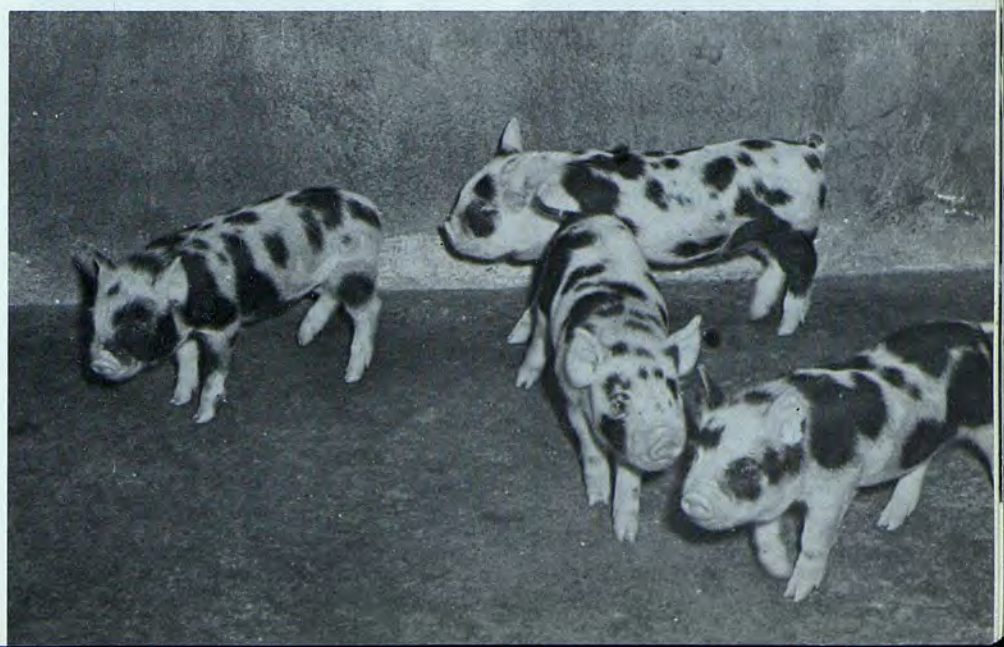
Pete's worries were unfounded however. His little chicks, which had cost 100 piasters to raise, sold on the open market in Saigon for 800 piasters—a 700 percent profit. Pete was a success.

Pete was not the only one happy with his success. The Navy's pilot project was also an unqualified success. The Vietnamese sailors used the money from the first batch to buy feed and 500 more one-day-old chicks. In 10 weeks these would be marketable. In time the protein deficiencies of the sailors and their families would be eliminated since they now had a stable meat diet. An additional source of income for the underpaid sailors would also be provided.

Meanwhile, at the pig farm in Cam Ranh Bay, George was living quite a different kind of life. George, who had never been one to appreciate the finer things in life as humans know them, was very disconcerted to find that his sty had a concrete floor and a fence around it. His two greatest enjoyments in life were food and a good mudhole. The food had better be good, he had already decided, or he would hop the next boat back to the Philippines. The food, as it turned out, was outstanding. George soon came to love the new air of well-fed cleanliness. To add a bit of flair, he even changed his name—George was now Lord Windgate.

George had never considered himself an outstanding boar. Breeding was almost the last thing he ever thought of, so when he was passed over for this purpose for another, much more conceited boar, he felt no regret. After all, a pig's number one desire in life is to be eaten. George spent his days gorging himself and sleeping, contentedly awaiting the day the axman's blade would fulfill his life's desire.

George lived with 55 other assorted



Left: Lord Windgate, not a very handsome pig, indulges in his favorite pastime. Right: Four of Lord Windgate and The Admiral's litter. The one in the middle is named Pete after the famous chicken.

Photos by SP5 Paul LeMay

boars and sows, all from the Philippines, in stys with overhead shelter and running water, not to mention the cement floors. They had been carefully selected from such breeds as Hampshire, Duroc, Yorkshire and Landrace because of their choice quality and good breeding potential.

You can imagine George's surprise when he heard that Filmore's (Filmore was the conceited boar that was chosen for breeding) first litter had been stillborn and the second aborted. He was even more surprised to learn that he was the second choice as a breed boar. Sure enough, the next morning Lord Windgate (George) was shown into the sitting room of a lovely sow called the Admiral. Lord Windgate, being a religious pig, immediately called in Rufus, the local pig parson, and he and the Admiral were married. Shortly thereafter they parented a litter of 11 beautiful piglets. George had led the way for the pig program, and by December, 250 more pigs will be born.

George and Pete got together recently to discuss the progress of the overall livestock program. Since they were pioneers in the project, both are now advisors in their sections. At George's insistence, the facilities at Cam Ranh Bay have been expanded to handle 1,600 pigs by mid-1971. It is expected by that time that several new litters of pigs will arrive each week. These will be farmed out to the 31 Vietnamese bases currently participating in the project. There are 39 different pig and poultry projects underway now. These projects are managed and provided with technical advice through the initial breeding cycle by 11 enlisted Animal Husbandry advisors from the U.S. Navy. These advisors, of course, were carefully screened by George and Pete before they were selected.

Pete, who holds a doctorate from the Rhode Island Red School of Chicken Medicine, suggested that the chickens be inoculated against outbreaks of New Castle disease and the pigs against cholera and hoof and mouth. He also helped the advisors set up a Disease Prevention Program with the Vietnamese sailors to teach them disease prevention and treatment for their stock.

During a recent interview, Pete said that the success of the Navy's long-range pig and poultry program in cooperation with the Vietnamese sailors had been phenomenal. "With an initial outlay of stock and help from the advisors," Pete crowed, "many of the projects have already become self-sustaining. This in turn has persuaded several Vietnamese bases which initially refused the program, to reconsider and ask for help in starting their own projects." George, busily rooting in a fresh pail of slop, mumbled something about the "pigs making out all right too."

George and Pete are perfectly contented in their roles as breeders and advisors, a much more glamorous life than the Philippines. No doubt their usefulness will have expired in a couple of years. Their fate then is obvious—a pot in a Vietnamese mess hall. ■

An exceptionally handsome rooster, Pete had all the hens at Cat Lai dreaming of his charms. One of the Vietnamese Pete hired gives part of his harem their daily sustenance.

Suppertime
Is a happy time
Sometimes

Secluded from the war, the population of Dakkia Leprosarium has created a

Shangri-La in the Central Highlands

By SP5 John Wilcox

Photos by SGT Jerry Burchfield

At Dakkia Leprosarium a Montagnard boy rides his bicycle through well-kept gardens. The dormitory behind him was built in large part by the leprosy patients using local materials.

The road to Dakkia runs west from Kontum. It turns across the wide and muddy Kontum River, past successive barricades of sandbags, bunkers and barbed wire, and leads away from the city into the quiet countryside. For five kilometers the road winds past small thatch houses, newly planted rice fields and groves of ragged banana trees, until there are no more jeeps or trucks or uniformed soldiers. This is farm country. Only the dull thud of distant artillery intrudes as a reminder of the war.

The road passes over a dry gorge, and there on the right two white posts and an open gate mark the entrance to Dakkia Leprosarium. There are no fortifications, just a dusty lane bordered with flowering trees. A lone Montagnard sits on his haunches in a shelter by the gate. He is a leprosy patient. His smile and bow welcome visitors to the leprosarium.

The name Dakkia, loosely translated, means "separated by water," a literal reference to the small river bed, during monsoon a tributary of the Kontum, which forms one boundary of the leprosarium. Figuratively, the name suggests the stigma which for centuries made the victims of leprosy outcasts among their own people and which even today requires that their treatment centers be isolated and self-sufficient.

In war-torn Vietnam this solitude is a blessing. Since superstitions and ignorance about leprosy persist among the population of the Central Highlands, the 12 nuns and more than 700 Montagnards at Dakkia can carry on their work without fear of interference or attack. During decades of war in Vietnam the hostilities have never touched the leprosarium.

Dakkia, the largest Montagnard leprosarium in the Central Highlands, was founded in 1920 by a Frenchman, M. Jerusalemy, who first brought medical aid to the small band of lepers encamped near the village. In those early days there were no facilities to transport leprosy patients from inaccessible villages in the Highlands, and Dakkia's reputation spread slowly. The first permanent building was not constructed until 1927. In 1938, after a number of reorganizations, the leprosarium came under the charge of the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, a Catholic Order from France.

When the first sisters arrived, the area was a wilderness—an isolated Montagnard village with a few thatched bamboo huts and one small brick building which served as dispensary. The sisters lived in Kontum and made the difficult journey to Dakkia twice a week by cart to bring supplies and medicine. Not until 1954, when two sisters established full time residence at Dakkia, did the leprosarium begin to expand and offer effective medical treatment to control the spread of leprosy.

From primitive beginnings the leprosarium has grown into a large and efficient operation. With government transportation and an ambulance donated to the leprosarium, patients are now brought to Dakkia from villages all over the Highlands. Funds for construction come periodically from Misereor, a German relief organization. The Vietnamese government, through the Ministry of Health, Leprosy Division, contributes a daily stipend for each of the 300 leprosy patients at Dakkia.

The physical plant at Dakkia, which now covers more than 10 landscaped acres, includes not only the dispensary and permanent housing for Montagnard families, but schools, nursery and dormitories for the 250 children, a living complex for the 12 sisters, a large chapel, service buildings, gardens and a Montagnard cemetery. This central settlement is surrounded on all sides by extensive cultivated fields and pastureland. The Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul have organized their community with the self-sufficiency of a feudal estate in order to rely as little as possible on outside assistance. In their collective effort the Montagnards share the work as well as the benefits of their sanctuary. The result is a small utopia for those who have been forced by disease to abandon their villages and their traditional way of life.

Despite its autonomy, the leprosarium does not shun contacts with the outside world. The men of Battery C, 6th Battalion, 14th Artillery in Kontum have long been welcomed as friends and benefactors. What began as informal and unofficial excursions to the leprosarium by a few men at Charlie Battery has now become a sanctioned bat-

"... There is no truth whatever in the ancient belief that leprosy can be contracted by touching an infected person or some object he has handled, or simply by passing him on the street. Leprosy is one of the least contagious of the infectious diseases. . . . It is contracted by prolonged, close contact with a person who has an active case of certain types of leprosy. With modern treatment, most cases of leprosy can be controlled or even arrested.

"Leprosy is caused by Hansen's bacillus. . . . It generally attacks the skin and nerves. It does not affect the brain. It is not inherited. . . .

"The most common symptoms include the typical leprosy patches on the skin, small nodules on the face and legs, and a loss of feeling in limited areas of the body, such as the fingers. . . ."

THE COMPLETE MEDICAL GUIDE
by Benjamin F. Miller, M. D.

talion civic action project. The Battery Mess Sergeant, SP6 Paul H. Walls, Checotah, Okla., inherited responsibility for assistance to the leprosarium from his predecessor. "There's no pressure to help them," he said. "We do it because we want to and because we enjoy going out there, especially to see the kids and ride the horses."

Charlie Battery donates excess food—canned goods, fruit, powdered juices, bakery mixes, candy for the children—as well as empty ammunition boxes, canisters and other supplies which could be useful to the Montagnards. "It's amazing how they use everything we give them," said Specialist Walls. "Nothing goes to waste. The Montagnards have constructed complete buildings from the short side boards of ammunition crates. They even take the ends of the boxes with their rope handles and paint them bright colors for the children to use as stools."

Sister Marie Laure, a Vietnamese nun whose position as Assistant to the Sister Superior gives her much of the administrative responsibility at Dakkia, agreed that Charlie Battery's donations had contributed to most of their construction projects. She pointed out rows of artillery canisters painted white which marked off the fields and lined the pathways throughout the leprosarium. All of the floors in one new building, which houses women leprosy patients who have no families, were constructed with boards from ammunition boxes. Dark-skinned Montagnard women sat on the open porches weaving lengths of black cloth on hand looms and plaiting delicate bamboo baskets. Many had pale patches on the skin of their arms and legs—a symptom of leprosy. A few had their hands and feet bound in cloth.

Behind the row of houses, a few women worked in the dark cookhouse, where each had her own Montagnard "kitchen" consisting of a hearth and shelves holding simple cooking utensils—gourds, wooden bowls, bamboo and palm baskets. Here each woman prepares her own meals separately in adherence to Montagnard custom.

Outside the dispensary, one of the first permanent buildings constructed at Dakkia, groups of Montagnards and their shy children waited in the hot sunshine. More than 300 leprosy patients receive medication in the one outpatient treatment room. The dispensary has become too small to accommodate even the few patients who require constant care. To meet the need for more space, construction has already started on a new infirmary. Although the leprosy patients do most of the heavy construction work—clearing the ground, carrying stones, lumber and cement, making bricks from local clay—construction progresses slowly. "Building materials are scarce and expensive," said Sister Marie Laure, "and skilled workers are difficult to find. We had to hire these to come all the way from Saigon." She indicated three men laying bricks along the open foundations of the new infirmary. "The walls of the rooms are already beginning to take shape," she added, "but the building won't be finished for several years." Until then, treatment continues at the crowded dispensary.

Diagonally across from the infirmary construction site stands the chapel, completed this year after 10 years of work. As spiritual center of the leprosarium, the chapel is placed in a commanding position. From all directions broad avenues lined with scrub pines and coconut palms lead up to the entrance. The chapel's high peaked roofs rise above the treetops, and its long porches look out across banks of flower beds to the complex of buildings and landscaped grounds. Small dry saplings stand at the edge of the porch; on their trimmed branches the worshippers hang their hats and outer garments. Near the front entrance hangs a large Montagnard drum which calls the people to prayer.

Inside, the chapel is cool and silent. Light filters through pierced screens and wrought iron grilles and across the soaring white walls and tiled floor. On the central dais stands a large altar table of rough cut black stones. The Montagnards brought these stones from the surrounding jungle and chiseled them by hand to uniform size and shape. They made the bricks and pierced tiles for the walls from Dakkia clay, and carved ornamental woodwork which stands along the inside walls. Even the plans and scale drawings for the building were the work of the sisters.

One avenue leading from the chapel passes through a pine grove to the residential quarter where Montagnard families live in white-washed brick buildings arranged neatly along intersecting pathways. An old Montagnard on crutches, both feet wrapped in brown cloth, gave directions to a group of women carrying baskets of stones and raking the gravel path. He is the supervisor for the nearby group of houses. Twice a week all of the families under his direction turn out to police the grounds, trim the bushes and flower beds, plant new trees, rake the paths and make repairs to the buildings.

The entire leprosarium is maintained by this constant collective effort. The leprosy patients who are strong enough work every day in the gardens and fields which provide nearly all of the food for the leprosarium. Beyond the limits of the settlement, acres of cultivated fields stretch out to the edge of the jungle. Small groups of Montagnards bend over the dry soil, poking holes with a small stick then placing a seed of rice or corn in each hole. Although

the leprosarium has a tractor, the Montagnards still prefer to use familiar methods of cultivation by hand.

The sisters emphasize that their purpose is to avoid interfering with the Montagnard culture and to reinforce traditional village customs at Dakkia. Despite the collective nature of their life, the Montagnards keep as much independence as they would have in their native villages. Each family grows and harvests its own crops, maintains its own rooms, cooks its own food. Throughout the leprosarium, in their architectural details and art work, in their daily routine and activities, the Montagnards follow their traditional way of life. The women weave cloth on hand looms and sew clothing for their families. They make their household utensils from natural materials and furnish their houses simply with mats.

The major departure from village life at the leprosarium is the enforced separation of children from their parents. Sister Marie Laure explained that because leprosy is transmitted by prolonged and direct skin-to-skin contact, the children, who are most susceptible to the disease, must be kept away from adults with leprosy. The sisters have managed this separation with only slight disruption to the strong Montagnard family ties by setting up a routine which keeps the children away from their families during the week and gives them weekends at home.

New-born infants and children too young for school are brought to the nursery every morning. The sisters feed, bathe and give them a dose of medicine to build up immunity to infection from their parents. In the afternoon the infants are returned to the care of their mothers.

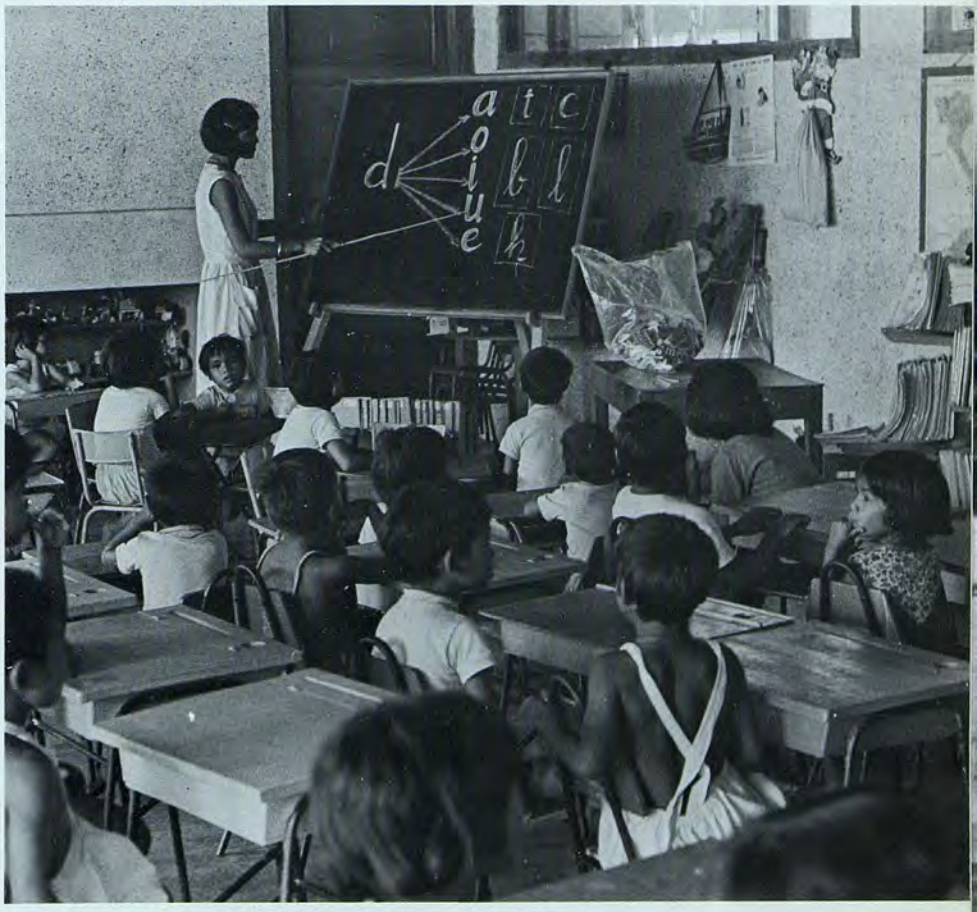
As soon as they are old enough to leave their parents, the children move into dormitories where they are grouped with others their age. They follow a set daily routine, much as at a boarding school, which includes seven hours in class, meals together and organized play time. Toys, many donated by Americans, many made by the children themselves, are shared and passed down from older to younger children.

Singing and laughter come from the classrooms. The children begin every day in school with prayers followed by songs in French, Vietnamese and Montagnard dialect. They learn the alphabet by singing the sounds of the letters. Their classrooms are colorful and filled with toys and picture books. Along the walls bright murals, painted by a leprosy patient, depict customs and activities in a Montagnard village. This is not an austere monastic life. In contrast to the dreaded sickness which has brought them to Dakkia, the children's days are carefree and full of activity, for they are being prepared to lead normal lives, not to succumb to disease.

Dakkia represents a new life for victims of leprosy. In the past, Montagnard lepers were strictly segregated from the healthy population and forced to lead a sedentary life waiting for hand-outs. Even if they were fortunate enough to receive medical aid, their lives were empty and undirected. The Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul realized that medical treatment need not disrupt a patient's life as long as he is not incapacitated by disease. With a minimum of direction, the sisters organized the Montagnards to take advantage of their communal existence and by working together to create an environment far more bountiful than that which they had been forced to leave. These people are no longer outcasts.

Today a small Montagnard village stands just outside the boundary of the leprosarium. It is populated by former leprosy patients and their families who, although able to leave Dakkia, have chosen to stay. They send their children to the leprosarium school; they return to work in the fields and to help with construction and maintenance. Theirs is a high tribute to the quality of life at Dakkia.

The leprosarium, begun as a shelter for the sick and homeless, has won the allegiance of its population and has developed into a community. The isolation which was once a stigma now guards the peace and security which these people have established, even though their country is at war. ■



Inside the main school building a Montagnard girl, trained as an assistant teacher, drills a grade-school class in the basic alphabet. The children, sons and daughters of leprosy patients, share books, school materials and toys which have been donated by relief organizations around the world.

In a pit miles from their target
7/15th gun bunnies practice a form of...

DETACHED VIOLENCE

By SP4 Mike Maattala

Silent for the moment, the tube of one of Alpha Battery's 175mm guns stretches in silhouette from its pit at LZ Blackhawk.

They call it "the pit." Whether a simple trench in a field or an elaborate construction in a base camp, each pit is the home for an artillery piece in Vietnam. It is also the place where the men who fire the guns spend most of their waking hours.

The pits used by Alpha Battery, 7th Battalion, 15th Artillery, were already constructed when they moved into LZ Blackhawk in the Central Highlands. The work had been done by Charlie Battery, 7/15th, which had since returned to battalion headquarters in An Khe. The move by Alpha Battery was its third since January; this time the guns, two 175s and two 8-inchers, were driven from An Khe, a grueling trip over a 40-mile section of QL19 that included the treacherous Miang Giang Pass.

Working in the pit during the early morning hours, the crew of gun #3 had numerous routine jobs to perform. They worked steadily, shirts off under the already hot sun. Powder and jo's (projectiles) needed counting and the 175 had to be checked and cleaned. The refurbishing of the pit was still underway—when the men first arrived most of the bunkers were in need of repair and now they were sandbagging and putting a waterproof membrane on the roof of the last one.

Alternating bunkers and thick timbers ringed the area in which the 175 rested. Powder and jo's were placed in each of the four bunkers so that no matter what direction the gun was firing the men doing the humping could be as close to the rear of the gun as possible. The floor of the pit, made of layers of timber, had already suffered from the constant grinding of the tracks. In places the wood had collected in piles, resembling huge chunks of shredded wheat.

The biggest artillery piece used by U.S. forces in Vietnam, the 175 has a spade attached to the rear which enables the crew to "dig in" the dirt surrounding the wooden floor. The recoil of the gun is still powerful enough to churn up the ground, and the men were busy smoothing out several rough spots left in the pit from a mission the previous night.

A recent rain had transformed the red dirt into a cement-like substance. As they scraped some of it from the spade, Staff Sergeant Jimmy Fortner, section chief from St. Paul, Va., muttered to no one in particular, "We oughta use this stuff for our new messhall floor."

Gun #3 crew members remove mud which accumulated on the spade of their 175 during the previous night's fire mission.

SP5 Tim Koester

Early in the afternoon, an ammo truck arrived from An Khe. Making its stops at the different gun sections, it finally backed into the pit of gun #3 and the men began the heavy task of unloading and storing the jo's. Right in the middle of the work a fire mission came up: 70 to 80 VC had been spotted in the open. The truck quickly pulled out of the pit; the driver turned the gun around; and the spade was dropped. Specialist Four Howard Landrum, Fayatteville, Ga., hammered furiously at the powder canisters to loosen their tops.

Twice the spade had to be picked up and reset as the softened dirt made it hard to dig the gun in securely. When all was ready, the crew waited eagerly for permission to fire. Several minutes passed and clearance had still not been obtained. Disappointed over the check-fire, the men left their positions after a few minutes and began repairing a bunker in the pit. A half hour later, the word finally came down from the Fire Direction Center (FDC) at the LZ: the mission was scrubbed.

Later in the afternoon, Captain John Caldwell, battery commander from Middlesex, N.J., commented, "Obtaining clearance is one of the biggest problems we have. We not only have to be cleared by the senior U.S. ground commander in the area but also by the province chief. This authority is delegated to certain clearance agencies, and sometimes the process takes a while."

At dinnertime one man remained in the pit while the others went to eat; there must always be someone watching the gun. The consolidated messhall at the LZ had limited eating space, so after picking up their food the men returned to their hootches.

The rooms were small and the light bulbs hanging from the ceiling dimmed frequently, according to the whims of the generator. At times the lights went out completely, drawing cries of anger from the men. When this happened, they quickly shut off their tape recorders and record players and waited for the power to return. Each room had a desk or cabinet of some sort, constructed from discarded ammo boxes.

When one of the big guns fired, its effect on the hootches was obvious. The walls and ceilings trembled. Everything seemed on the verge of coming apart and frequently did. Specialist Four Ardis Brown, Dothan, Ala., hammered a nail into his wall, securing a section which had been loosened by the pounding of the guns.

Putting up with the powerful blasts is just one of the peculiarities

SGT Jerry Burchfield

in the life of a "gun bunny," as the men refer to themselves. Fire missions are conducted in a pit miles from the target—a "detached violence," as Captain Blake termed it. They never see what they are firing at and they normally don't learn of any material results unless a sweep is made of the area afterward.

About half the missions fired by Alpha Battery involve direct support for troops in contact with the enemy. When the men learn they are firing a contact mission they get the gun ready and hump jo's and powder just a little quicker than usual. They are capable of putting the first round out within three minutes after receiving the mission.

The non-contact missions break down into several types. At times when the enemy's location is not known for sure, they will shoot "harassment" fire, hoping to disturb Charlie even if they don't hit him. If a trail is discovered and believed to be in use by the enemy, the battery will wait until dark and put some rounds on it—a firing known as "interdiction." Somewhat more positive in nature, they will also fire at suspected enemy positions based on reports from forward and aerial observers.

Occasionally, Alpha Battery will send two guns, one of each type, out on a "raid." The guns, along with a mobile FDC, will go out for two to three weeks to support a specific operation. This was the 7/15th's original purpose for sending two of Alpha Battery's guns to LZ Blackhawk. In an LZ the guns are set up with the usual protective walls and storage bunkers. But sometimes they will just drive out to an open field, in which case a trench will be scooped out and the gun will dig in with only a dirt berm pushed up around it.

Gun #3 normally conducts a fire mission with a crew of eight men. Some of the positions require mainly physical strength, such as humping jo's and powder, while the gunner and section chief, working side by side, need more technical knowledge of the gun. But each job is equally important. Without the men on the ground doing the legwork, a round would never leave the tube.

"We try to let each man learn all the positions," said Sergeant Fortner, "because he might have to fill in for someone at a moment's notice." Most of the men look forward to earning a spot on the gun; there is a certain amount of pride involved. A few months of humping jo's might also have something to do with it.

Each projectile for a 175 gun weighs 147 pounds; the powder weighs 94 pounds. When a hot fire mission is in progress and rounds are being put out one after another, the men on the ground have all they can do to keep up with the firing. But somehow they manage.

It's hard enough humping powder and jo's under "normal" conditions. Sitting in the pit of gun #3, Specialist Four Tom McCann, West Bridgewater, Mass., recalled an experience at a previous LZ. "We were firing a night mission, and the mud was knee-deep behind the gun. We were just wading in the stuff. Well, we dropped a jo and didn't find it until the next morning."

After dinner, word spread among Alpha Battery that volunteers were needed to help work on the floor for the new messhall. The men were tired and a few hesitated momentarily, but the free beer and sodas offered as a "bribe" were too much to resist. Shoveling, mixing, and drinking, they worked until dark before calling it quits.

Gun #3 was scheduled as "hot" tube for the night; if any missions came up, they would be the ones called out to fire. The men went to bed predicting, from previous experiences, the hour they would be awakened. Most of them guessed around one o'clock.

They were an hour off; at midnight someone from FDC woke up Sergeant Fortner.Quickly the word was passed through the hootch, "Fire mission—gun three." They dressed hurriedly and ran out into the darkness toward the gun pit. As the driver maneuvered the 175 on the wooden floor to align it with the correct azimuth, it sounded like a snowbound truck rocking to free itself.

The only light the men had to work in came from a flashlight and one taillight on the gun. They probably could have done it in the dark; they had been through the routine so many times before. With precision they began feeding the jo's and powder into the huge tube. After each blast, smoke hung over the pit, eerie in the dim light. Every time Specialist Four David Newton, Wathena, Kansas, pulled the "tail" on the gun, his body was jerked slightly into the air like a puppet, for he was left holding nothing but the lanyard. Halfway through the mission the loader-rammer jammed and the men had to hand-ram the remaining rounds.

Their mission finally completed, the crew of gun #3 left the pit. As they reached the front of their hootch, the only sound in the night was the dull scraping and stomping of mud-clogged boots. Specialist McCann expected to sleep uninterrupted for the rest of the night. But before crawling into his bunk, he placed his boots, clothes, and steel pot within easy reach—just in case. ■

A quick yank on the lanyard and gun #3 sends out another round during a fire mission.

SP5 Ed Perez

SP5 Tim Koester

FOUR
AIR MAIL
STAMPS

From: _____

To: _____