

THE HURRICANE

AUGUST 1970 NUMBER THIRTY-FOUR
A PUBLICATION OF II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

Medical Aid in the Delta

A MONTH BEFORE U.S. TROOPS MOVED INTO CAMBODIA, the enemy was mounting one of his "high points" in South Vietnam. On the last night of March and the first morning of April, 111 enemy shellings were reported across the country, many against outposts and firebases just across the border from the communist sanctuaries in Cambodia.

Fire Support Base Illingsworth was a small, temporary location on high ground just five miles from the Cambodian border. It was near the "Dog's Head" region of Tay Ninh Province. At 2:20 a.m. on April 1, some 200 mortar rounds and 15 rockets rained down on the two-week-old firebase. Two companies of enemy soldiers launched a fierce ground attack that lasted two hours. In the end, 24 Americans had been killed and 54 wounded—a toll the newspaper accounts said was the highest in nearly two years in terms of American casualties in a single engagement. Later, the bodies of 62 enemy soldiers were found and 28 individual weapons were captured.

*Sergeant Keith McKissick, a 25-year-old soldier from Pueblo, Colo., was at Illingsworth that night. His account, printed here, first appeared in the *Triumverate*, the mimeographed newspaper of the 5th Battalion, 2nd Artillery. Sergeant McKissick is in I Battery, 2nd Battalion, 29th Artillery, which is attached to the "Nickel-Deuce."*

I am a young soldier contending with "truth through experience."

The war of my generation, the "big war" to us, is in Vietnam. I, like many others, was drafted, trained, and sent to this place in Southeast Asia. Once here I was assigned to a support unit. My job was to provide night security for small LZ's (landing zones) and fire support bases. To accomplish this mission, I had one man and a jeep-mounted searchlight, which produces beams either visible or IR (infrared).

Our mission constantly kept us on the move and after about eight months I ended up at a small firebase called Illingsworth. It was quite typical.

We moved to the firebase with a quad 50 machinegun squad. For the first few days we and the quad 50 personnel combined efforts in a day and night vigil against the enemy and together we built protection

for ourselves and our equipment. Things began to settle down around the fourth day and fell into the routine of guard at night and sleep during the day.

We got to know one another fairly well; in fact, some of us became as close as brothers. Scrounging for the barest luxuries was a daily duty. My specialty was ice and soda. Two of the others scrounged nothing but water for showers. The rest kept us stashed with "C" and LRRP (long range reconnaissance patrol) rations. All in all we were getting along fine.

In the field, you lose all comprehension of time; one day becomes just like the next. One man might be sitting on the quad contentedly writing proverbs on his steel pot cover—Chicken Little Was Right and Books Make You Sterile. Another would be listening to rock or soul music on the radio. Someone else might be taking a sweat bath or trying to sleep and kill flies at the same time.

Things do fall into a routine as you talk to each other about home, girls, cars, or whatever you have in common (the one thing everyone had in common was the nightly vigil against the deadly enemy).

This night was not unlike any other, except we were unusually restless and nervous. That happens now and again, especially when intelligence reports say you could get hit. I felt something might happen this night.

The night and guard were proceeding as usual, and I was beginning to relax, thinking my uneasiness was unfounded. I had just scanned the area with IR and found nothing. My turn at guard was over and I had gone into the bunker to get some rest.

There was none of the "smell of gun-grease and bayonet shine" theme. Just suddenly all hell broke loose. Large mortars and rockets hit the firebase. The people in FDC (fire direction control) took a direct hit killing all inside. The mortar squad took a rocket killing or wounding them. Two 105mm guns also took hits knocking them out of action.

Meanwhile we had problems of our own. My partner had taken shrapnel in the upper back and I sent him to get attention. The quad 50 crew was busy putting out a

deadly stream of fire against the enemy. An officer came by and said to move the light to make room for a fighting position for his men. The men never materialized.

The dust was so dense you couldn't see 50 meters in front of you. I took to my M-60 machinegun beside the quad. The M-60 fired about 200 rounds and jammed. The 60 was my strongest weapon for firepower. I had the top cover open trying to eject the trapped rounds. To my surprise an NVA soldier appeared to my right firing his AK-47. War is not supposed to be a personal thing; very rarely do you see the man who is trying to kill you. I fell to the ground, but the enemy soldier continued to advance. My M-16 was laying at my right side. It did its job.

My hand was bleeding very badly and my first aid pack was in the jeep. I made my way to the jeep and tried to dress the wound, but I couldn't wrap it well enough to stop the bleeding. I needed help and I found the artillery medic, but he was in worse condition than I was. He did, however, have two hands, so he bandaged my wound.

Most of the people in the arty were dead or wounded and those left needed help firing their guns. I wanted to return to the quad but it was too far away to reach safely. I chose to stay and help the people on the 105's. We were firing direct and got off about ten rounds before the gun failed.

By this time we had help from gunships, jets, and artillery. But we also had NVA sappers in the compound that had gotten into our ammo dumps. The sappers were finally driven back.

I have extremely poor eyesight and without my glasses I am practically helpless. My glasses had been blown from my face and broken when one of the ammo dumps exploded. I wanted to get back to the quad and find my partner, but a medic came up and said to go with him. The medevac birds were landing.

I left Illingsworth, hoping never to see it again, but knowing I am a little closer to the self truth I am seeking.

On June 13, Sergeant McKissick received the Silver Star for gallantry in action on the morning of April 1.

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NO

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One of the most critical needs of the Vietnamese people today is effective and continuing medical care. Lieutenant Pete Ginder travelled to the US-advised hospital in Rach Gia to report on the strides being made in providing a well-trained, self-sufficient Vietnamese medical staff for the Delta area (story, page 20). Pete shot the cover photo while visiting the operating room at Rach Gia.

While in the Delta, Pete also found progress in many areas of the pacification effort and reports on these in his story beginning on page 25.

Staff Sergeant Jerry Van Drew made the rounds in Saigon to find material for his report on the Saigon Tea-houses and the girls who work there. His in-depth report on his experiences in the big city begins on page 2.

Also in this month's *Hurricane* is a look at small industry in Vietnam by Specialist Tim McGovern (page 10), a report on the air traffic controllers at Cu Chi by Specialist Mike Tharp and a short-story visit to Big Nguyen's Black Market Bazaar by Specialist Phil Schieber.

To add a bit of color, the *Hurricane* also visits the formal gardens at the Cao Dai Temple in Tay Ninh City in a photo feature starting on page 14. Captain Dave Givens shot the rear cover photo while on assignment in Tay Ninh.

The Editor

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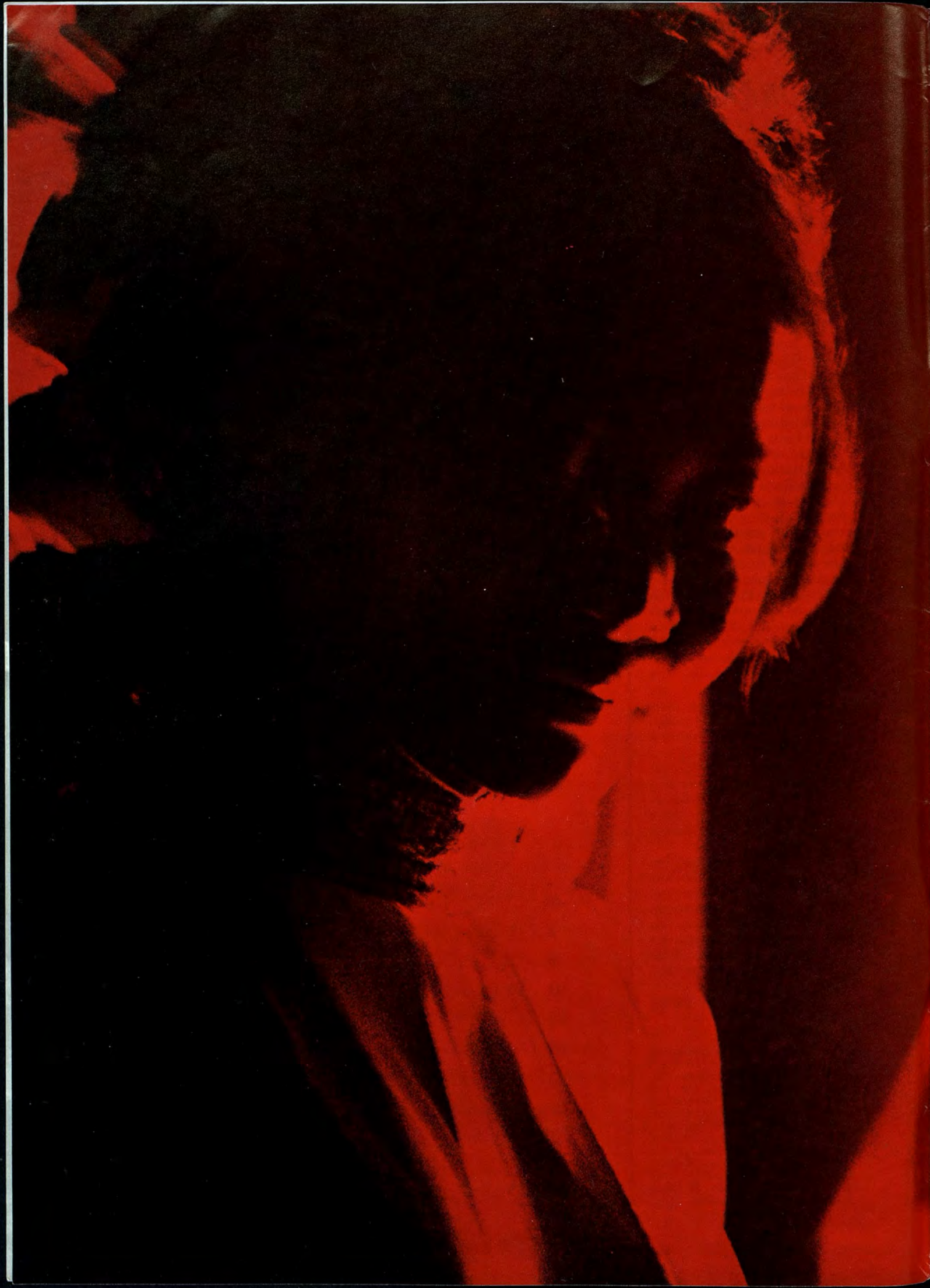


CAO DAI GARDEN

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THE WORLD OF

S AIGON T EA

by Staff Sergeant Jerry Van Drew

MOST OF THEM WEAR MINIDRESSES which reveal their smooth-skinned legs. The better endowed wear low-cut necklines; the slimmer ones wear closed necklines which conceal the exact nature of their charms.

They wait for customers near the doorways of the bars. The more enterprising stand outside; the more aggressive beckon and call to passing American soldiers. The others simply sit near the doorways inside, ready to shower their attentions on their next customer.

They are petite and appealing companions who will dispel your loneliness, cater to your whims, and bow to your demands—all for the price of a glass of Saigon Tea.

They are the bargirls of Saigon. Servicemen with previous tours in the Orient will find Vietnamese bargirls similar to those in Japan and Korea after the previous wars. They wear Western clothes and speak a new brand of GI English. But their slight stature, delicate features, quaint philosophies, and submissiveness toward men mark them as females of the Orient.

Newcomers to the Far East are likely to be surprised. Bargirls in the West generally serve many customers and wait on many tables. In Saigon, there's a bargirl for every customer.

She sits with him. She serves him. And if he is willing to pay the bill, she drinks with him.

The bargirl is paid a percentage (generally 50 percent) of the value of the drinks she and her customers consume. So she prefers, for herself, expensive drinks which can be quickly consumed and which will have no aftereffects. Her favorite is the infamous Saigon Tea.

Saigon Tea is simply green (Oriental style) tea "on the rocks." It is non-alcoholic and non-filling. Served in shotglass dosages, it isn't even stimulating. A gulp-sized goblet costs 200 piasters (\$1.70 at the official rate of exchange).

Other typical bar prices are 70 piasters (60 cents) for a can of soft drink or a bottle of Vietnamese "33" brand beer, or 100 piasters (85 cents) for a can of American beer.

The prices have not been stable through the years, but have in fact increased considerably. Price inflation in the bars was once so obviously excessive that American soldiers in Saigon rebelled and conducted sit-in boycotts which they dubbed "STIF" (Saigon Tea is Fini).

The following excerpt is from an anonymous notice still found occasionally on Saigon bulletin boards:

"...In 1967, the price of tea rose from 80 to 200 piasters in less than two months! But the American GIs would not be taken for 200 piasters and formed STIF. In a matter of weeks, the price was back to normal..."

"Groups of about 25 GIs would infiltrate a bar, sit down and order their drinks. When asked to buy Saigon Tea, the reply was, 'STIF is here, no tea!' The bars caught on and lowered the price of tea..."

One bargirl in a club off Tu Do Street was especially happy at the end of an unusually busy day (a payday for her American soldier customers). She had consumed 45 Saigon Teas, earning 4,500 piasters (more than \$38.00) for herself in the process.

If a girl could earn \$38.00 a day every day, of course, she would earn more than \$1,150 per month. But \$38.00 days for bar hostesses are rare, even on American paydays. Girls working in the nicer, better

furnished establishments do well to average sales of \$16 to \$20 per day. Girls in the average bars do about half as well.

One girl in a bar on Plantation Road reports that her average monthly earnings vary from 10,000 piasters (\$85) during a poor month to 15,000 piasters (\$127) during a good month.

To make \$38.00, the hostess has to sell \$76.00 worth of drinks. Few American soldiers can or will spend that much money a day drinking. So \$38.00 days are built upon selling a few drinks to each of many customers. Most of the girls therefore try to build up a clientele, a group of steady customers that will buy them a few drinks per visit, and make repeated visits. The hostesses have an unwritten code that they will not accept drinks from the "steady" customer of another girl in the same bar.

Many of the bargirls go without customers for long periods during their 12-hour-long working days.

The fulltime hostesses go to work at ten o'clock in the morning. The bar managers have rather ingenious means of insuring that the girls, who share the typical Vietnamese disregard for punctuality, report on time. Two meals a day are furnished to the employees of the bars. The first is served promptly at 10:00 a.m. Latecomers miss the meals. If too late, they are also fined.

The bars cater strictly to American soldiers. The prices are too high for Vietnamese soldiers (a Vietnamese private, for example, earns the equivalent of \$35 per month), and there aren't enough other Allied troops to support large numbers of hostesses from the money they spend on drinking.

But few American soldiers are free to visit the bars during the day-



GARDNER

time; only those with days off, or who work nights.

So the bargirls spend most of the daytime simply waiting. They talk with each other, play cards, and drink big glasses of Saigon Tea (on the house).

There are also numerous part-time bargirls who work only in the evenings. They are often daytime students or workers who, for one reason or another generally related to money, want to do the job.

The job of a bar hostess is to be nice to her customer, to devote her time and attention to him and thereby encourage him to spend more money drinking with her than he otherwise would drinking alone.

Most of them have difficulty communicating in English. They rely heavily on stock phrases like "Be good!", "Be nice!", "Don't do that!", "No tea, no talk!", and "No money, no honey." Extensive conversation is rare.

To compensate for this language deficit, the girls sit close to their customers, flirting with and teasing them. This casual flirtation, the semi-private booths, dim lights, soft music and alcohol provide an atmosphere conducive to amorous hugs and caresses. But many of the girls object to kissing.

Public displays of affection are looked down upon in the Orient. Even holding hands with the opposite sex is rarely seen, and then only by the younger generation. A kiss in public is thought to be outright shameful.

The bargirls are thus torn between two standards of behavior. They spend their non-working half of the day in a society which disrespects close association between women and men. And they spend the working half of the day closely associating with foreign soldiers.

Each hostess sets the limits for her own behavior, and each has her own code of conduct. Yet, because of the nature of the job, many of their countrymen condemn them all and consider them akin to prostitutes, although most are not.

The long working hours keep the bargirls away from their families and homes most of the time when they're awake. Close association with lonely American customers leads to friendly attachments which sometimes grow into romantic involvements.

One middle-aged bargirl in Cholon, for example, is the mother of an American soldier's four-year-

A constant lookout at the front door insures that no potential customers will pass by without an invitation.

Hey, GI!

You Buy Me Tea?

SHE'LL TELL YOU her name is Nguyen Thi Hoa. It's a fairly common Vietnamese name, but she's no ordinary Vietnamese girl.

She's aggressive, independent, and self-confident.

She'll call out to you as you pass the nameless bar on Tu-Do Street where she works. Her appeal will be tailored to the situation. If it's daytime and hot, she'll ask you inside to get cool. If you seem tired, she'll ask you inside to rest. If you're carrying a camera, she'll ask you inside to take her picture.

She's attractive, and she knows it. She has a nice figure, and she shows it. Her smile is spontaneous and challenging. She'll give you the impression that not everyone can be her friend, but that maybe you can be.

If you accept the challenge, go inside the bar with her and buy her a glass of Saigon Tea, she'll show considerable interest in you.

She'll ask you "Where you work?" Your answer will tell her how near you're stationed to Saigon and how often you can come back.

She'll ask, "You stay here tonight?" And your answer will indicate how much money you intend to spend.

She'll sit very close to you, and be very attentive. But she'll sit especially close and be especially attentive when she delivers the drinks and you take out your money to pay.

She'll tell you that her father was very rich, and that she and her mother live in a very nice house. She learned to speak English in high school, which she finished when she was nineteen.

Her unspoken slogan is "No tea, no talk!" If she doesn't have a drink, the manager—a sinister-looking, rough-talking older woman—won't let her sit with you any longer. The Saigon Tea drinks consist of only a few sips each.

She'll tell you she's a very good cook, and invite you to her house for a Chinese meal, which she'll prepare.

She'll pose for pictures for you, and say,

"Very pretty, no?" And she'll tell you that you can take nicer pictures of her at her house.

When your money is gone, though, she won't be able to sit with you any longer. The manager may fire her.

If you leave before your money is gone, and you're stationed in Saigon, she'll invite you to return to the bar the next night. If you're not stationed nearby, she'll exploit any interest you've shown during her conversation in an attempt to get you to visit her house—after paying her manager so that she can take the rest of the evening off from work.

In the event that you don't have enough money to pay this fee, she'll ask you to give her what money you do have, and invite you to



VAN DREW

meet her at closing time. If you give her your money, she probably won't be there when you return. If she is, she'll tell you she used the money to buy herself more glasses of Saigon Tea. She'll need much more money before she can take you to her house.

You'll notice that she shows a characteristic irritation during conversation in English when you use a word she can't understand. If you're perceptive, you'll notice this same irritation when she converses in Vietnamese. And if you ask her why she has difficulty understanding Vietnamese, she'll reply:

"Because me no Vietnamese. Me Chinese!"





A game of cards helps to pass the long afternoon hours when business is usually slow.

old child. She wanted to marry the child's father, one of her "steady" customers, but explains "He didn't come back." Her American customers now seem to remind her of her lost love, and she gives the impression that she's looking for a substitute. She has worked in bars since 1962, and shows no inclination to leave.

Saigon bargirls are attractive women, and they enjoy posing for pictures. But they don't like to have candid photographs of themselves taken. They especially resent pictures showing themselves drinking or sharing affection with their customers.

The tea hostesses range in age from as young as 16 to as old as 40. Most are in their early or middle

twenties.

Many of them are unmarried girls earning extra money to supplement parental income. A few are the sole breadwinners for large families of brothers and sisters (either without parents or with parents who are not able to work).

Some are wives and widows, supporting or helping to support their families. Others, especially among the part-time group, are high school or college students working their way through school.

The student-bargirls perhaps feel the least shame from their jobs. Their attitudes, and those of their generation, are akin to those of the West. They see their jobs as means toward achieving their educations.

One student-bargirl working on

Hai Ba Trung Street proclaims, "Working in a bar gives me a chance to practice speaking American English." And she speaks it much more proficiently than the average bargirl.

Still other part-time girls hold full-time day jobs and simply work in the bars at nights. One girl in a bar on Tu Do Street works as a secretary for the American Army, earning about 15,000 piasters per month from her daytime job. She works in the bars at nights as a means of meeting American men, some of whom she shares her apartment with. Not a prostitute, she says, "I like Americans, but I don't want to get married."

Many bargirls ride to and from work on the back of their boyfriends' and husbands' motorcycles. Others are so sensitive toward the ill repute of their profession that they work far from their homes so that their families and friends will not know.

The difficulty arises from the attitudes that the girls feel their families possess about their work. Girls who feel their families consider social opinion very important will do everything possible to avoid bringing the shame of their occupation to their family's attention. Those who feel their families will understand generally tell them.

One girl working in a bar on Plantation Road, the widow of an ARVN soldier, wears Vietnamese clothes to and from her home and changes into mini-dresses at work. Her income as a bargirl feeds her two children and helps her seven younger brothers and sisters through school. She is determined that they will get a better education than her own—she wasn't able to complete the last two years of high school because her family couldn't afford it. She gives all her earnings to her mother, who cares for her children while she works. Her mother knows the source of the money, but she is afraid to tell her father because "he wouldn't understand."

Some of the girls live with their families. Others rent apartments and visit their families periodically.

Above all, each bargirl is an individual person. Each has her own reasons for working, her own moral code, her own problems and hopes and fears.

Most of the girls work in the bars because they need money and the pay is good. They don't have any marketable skills, and there aren't enough jobs in the war-torn and refugee-crowded city of Saigon to go around. Wages for unskilled labor are low (7,000 to 8,000 piasters).

ters per month), the work is physically demanding, and the working conditions are poor.

One girl in a bar on Tu Do Street plainly states, "I like to work in bar. I wear nice clothes. I go to beauty shop every week. Family not know me." She ran away from her family-arranged marriage with a husband she didn't love to seek anonymity in the American-patronized bars. She changes bars often, and when asked if she will be at the latest bar on the next day she replies, "Who knows about tomorrow?"

The future is uncertain for all the bargirls. They're totally dependent on American soldiers for their incomes, and the American forces are leaving in stages now.

Some reporters estimate that there are more than 200,000 bargirls in South Vietnam catering to American soldiers. Although this estimate is high, there are many of them. And reduction and withdrawal of American troops will cause problems for them.

The number of bargirls, if seems, can be better estimated by considering the possible number of customers. Most of the Americans in country are not able to patronize

bars. Many of those that can choose not to.

So, of the more than 400,000 American servicemen in country, probably less than 100,000 are able to visit the bars regularly. And the regular soldier patron of the bars probably spends, on the average, no more than \$100 per month.

It would thus take two regular soldier customers to give the average bargirl \$200 monthly sales, and \$100 monthly income. For the less than 100,000 customers, then, there are probably no more than 50,000 bargirls, and perhaps many less than that.

Earning better than average income, the bar hostesses are often charged more than average prices. Those taking taxis home from work, for example, are often charged the same rate as Americans. The uncompromising taxi drivers know that the girls can pay a price double that normally charged, and that late at night they don't have any other choice but to pay. Vendors selling their wares to the bargirls likewise charge inflated prices, knowing that they can get away with it.

On the other hand, the bar hostesses represent a substantial market

for western-style clothes, hair dressers, wigs and cosmetics—luxury items sold at luxury prices. Businesses catering to fill these demands will suffer along with the bargirls as they progressively lose their clientele.

The future of the bargirls probably depends mostly on the level of continued American presence in Vietnam, and subsequent development of the economy. There will probably be many of them as long as there are sizable numbers of American troops stationed here, and as long as the average income of the Vietnamese worker remains a fraction of that of the American soldier.

In the longrun, the Vietnamese government will probably react with laws to combat continuation of the phenomena.

Most of the 50,000 or less bargirls, of course, live and work in Saigon. The problems they present are principally social problems to the city.

They live relatively easy lives. They earn better than average incomes. And they perform an appreciated function for their soldier customers.

They are pleasant girls to be with. That's their business.



On Tu Do Street or Plantation Road—always the promise of an open door and the prospect of a pretty girl for the evening.



The Oceanographic Institute in Nha Trang

New Life from the

SEA

by Specialist 4 Phil Schieber and Don Sockol

ALTHOUGH THREE-FOURTHS OF THE EARTH is covered with water, and 90 percent of life thrives in oceans, we know little of the sea. Through our television satellites and astronauts, we have viewed the other side of the moon and even landed and walked on the moon. But no man has ever set foot on the floor of the sea at its deepest point.

Soon we will probably know more about the moon than the world of the sea, where an estimated one million species of fish and animals go about the business of life.

Only in the last 25 years have we actively begun to explore the sea. For just as our past is linked with the sea, so, too, is our future.

People in landlocked countries seldom develop much enthusiasm for oceanography, and those living in a war zone seldom have the time or resources to study the sea and its life.

So it is in Vietnam. Although there are almost 300,000 fishermen in Vietnam who depend on the sea for their livelihood; although to the nation's millions the sea represents a major source of protein, from nuoc mam to lobster delicacies; and although the sea influences the climate and environment in this coastal country, there are only two oceanographers in all of Vietnam at the present.

One of these men is Dr. Tran Ngoc Loi, the director of the Oceanographic Institute at Nha Trang. The Institute was founded in 1923 by Dr. Armad Dremppf, a Frenchman. Dr. Loi has been head of the institute since 1967.

According to Dr. Loi, Nha Trang was chosen as the site of the institute for several reasons. Aside from its centralized location, Nha Trang is not far from the continental shelf to the south. It is close to the deepest part of the South China Sea. Nha Trang also has a nearby river, islands, rocky shores, and sandy beaches, which proved ample opportunity for field research. In short, Nha Trang offers a fairly wide variety of possibilities for oceanographic studies.

In 1951, the Vietnamese began taking over the institute, and in 1956 the Vietnamese government officially assumed control of the institute, placing it under the ministry of education as a branch of the University of Saigon.

"A problem of the institute," said Dr. Loi, "is that after the French left, no Vietnamese could take care of it. It is not easy to work in the ocean. Intellectuals

want to be 'intellectuals,' and not work with their hands and get dirty."

"In the ocean, your skin gets like this," said Dr. Loi, extending a rough, sunburned arm.

Dr. Loi relates his escape from the intellectual armchair in this way. "I come from Saigon. My parents used to take me to the seaside, especially at Vung Tau. The ocean fascinated me, and I liked to collect shells," he said. "I wanted to study oceanography, but my parents weren't very receptive to the idea. So, I studied medicine for two years, out of respect for my parents. But then I changed my mind."

Despite the war, activities at the Oceanographic Institute have expanded. In 1962 there were 45 people on the staff who worked within a budget of 4,293,000 dollars. This year 75 students and instructors are studying at the institute, and the budget has almost quadrupled to the sum of 16 million dollars. Three new post-graduate courses will be established in 1970, involving thirty students. And the Oceanographic Institute

Dr. Tran Ngoc, director of Nha Trang's Oceanographic Institute, enjoys the view of the nearby bay from his office—"the ocean fascinates me."



MANCINI



From a thorough study of the sea, scientists at the institute hope to find new sources of food and industry for Vietnam.

is anticipated to be the core of the projected University of Nha Trang.

"I also invite high school students to visit, and we have seminars every year for high school science teachers," Dr. Loi said. "Ten scholarships a year are given to study at the institute for one month. We now have about eight former scholarship students working at the institute. None of them have oceanography degrees, but they have science degrees."

Since fishing is an important industry in Vietnam, the institute has quite naturally devoted much study to improving the fisherman's catch.

"Fishing is the biggest industry of the future for Vietnam," said Dr. Loi. "And oceanography can do a lot for the fisherman. Take Peru, for example. Peru is a very small country, but thanks to oceanography, Peru is now the leading fishing country in the world. They caught 40 million tons of fish last year."

Just as the rod and reel fisherman attempts to figure out where and when the fish will be biting, so must the Vietnamese fisherman decide where and when to drop his nets. Experience and the natural instincts of the fisherman have long served him well, but the institute is trying to improve the catch.

The South China Sea is relatively shallow and has two principal currents which influence the migratory habits of the fish. During the Northeast monsoon, one current runs from the north along the coast. Geographically speaking, this current comes from Taiwan. A counter-current flows from the south and Indonesia northwardly along Vietnam.

Dr. Loi explained the significance of these currents. "This season, the monsoon wasn't a strong one," he said, "So we're sure the current flowing from the north

cannot reach Nha Trang. As a result, fish traveling with this current must be north of Nha Trang."

Therefore, if a fisherman dropped his nets in ocean areas south of Nha Trang, his catches would probably not be as large as those of fisherman who were working their nets north of Nha Trang, dipping into the main migratory artery of the fish.

"The bottom of the sea determines what kind of fish you're going to catch," said Dr. Loi. "If the bottom is muddy, you'll find certain varieties of fish; if it's sandy, another. Some fish are dependent on certain limits of water temperature, and others are restricted in their movements by water depth and pressure. In the end, it all becomes very complicated."

Besides identifying the currents of the South China Sea, the institute has discovered approximately 150 new species of marine life since its founding.

The institute used to keep an aquarium, but public interest was not sufficient to justify its existence, so they gave it up.

Every other month scientists from the institute perform experiments and gather data at sea, in a 14-foot boat. A 48-foot boat is now being built for the institute, but until that ship is completed, the scientists rely on their small craft and an occasional ride with the Vietnamese Navy.

"300 kilometers is the farthest we've gone from Nha Trang," said Dr. Loi. "We don't go very far out in international waters, though, because of the war."

In spite of the war, though, Dr. Loi and his associates continue their studies. The South China Sea is relatively virgin in the area of oceanographic studies. And like most of the sea, its mysteries remain largely untouched.

Vietnam's Cottage Industry

Waging the Economic War on the Home Front

by Specialist 4 Tim McGovern

NGUYEN VAN NGHIA is a resident of the Long Van urban area in Tay Ninh Province. Father of seven and former instructor at Le Van Trung High School, Nguyen now owns and operates a seat cover and chair refinishing business known as Tan Tan, a thriving enterprise conducted not from a separate building in a business district, but from his own living room. His employees are his wife and children.

His business is a classic example of handicrafts in Vietnam, which has been a means of livelihood since the Cham period, about 500 A.D. Commercial crafts are a kind of cottage industry and loosely parallel a small-scale entrepreneurship in the United States.

Cottage industry in Vietnam is an economic area that defies attempts at statistical analysis. The volume of business of the average craftsman is so small that his output never shows up in the production

indexes, which exclude enterprises with annual volumes of less than two million piasters. Today, according to the guess of a Saigon ministry official, 85 percent of those above infancy in South Vietnam's population of 17,400,000 are engaged in some way in the production and sale of handicrafts. Increased Vietnamese government assistance now is helping these industries improve and expand.

A cottage industry operation involves all aspects of business from purchasing raw products through processing to distribution of finished products.

For his upholstery and finishing business, Nguyen journeys to Saigon every ten days to procure the necessary materials for his work. These include foam rubber, vinyl plastic, snap fasteners and lumber to be used for benches.

Upon his return, the family begins work on a variety of items including bicycle seats, cushions for worn chairs, custom refinishing on all types of vehicle seats and chairs, and related custom work involving their craft. Much use is made of

sewing machines (vintage 1910) but some stitching is done by hand.

When the final product is completed, some of the goods are sold directly to another villager who pays a "retail" price. Most goods are sold strictly on a bargaining basis. Other items are sold to bicycle and furniture shops for resale. Still others are taken to a Saigon distribution point and placed on sale to local residents.

Use of indigenous materials, minimal educational requirements, small capital investments, application of traditional skills, and inexpensive labor are all earmarks of cottage industry. They enable Mr. Nguyen, his family, and millions of other Vietnamese to derive a handsome profit from their efforts, supplement (in many cases) agricultural incomes, establish employment opportunities in the countryside and contribute to economic growth in the provinces.

The growth of cottage industry is most marked among provincial refugees in Vietnam. In no less than six permanent refugee resettlement areas, various types of handicrafts

Handcrafted vinyl and leatherwear, fine woodwork and beautiful brassware are only a small part of the array of cottage industries that largely support Vietnam's local economy.





provide the only source of income to the people. Also, instruction in crafts is an integral part of the indoctrination program given to Hoi Chanh at camps throughout South Vietnam. The ralliers are detained at the camps for periods of 45 to 60 days.

Each province in South Vietnam has its own specialty in the realm of handicrafts, but a trip through different villages shows that the residents' only limitation on what they make is their imagination. Overlapping is commonplace but certain geographical advantages and limitations confine some handicraft specialties to certain areas.

In Tay Ninh Province, brassware is made from spent artillery shells and wood carvings and furniture abound. Craftsmen in Vung Tau make fishing boats and nets in addition to other items useful to coastal living. Vase shops line the streets of Bien Hoa while quality ceramic wear and table items are found in Binh Duong Province. Charcoal is made in beehive-shaped kilns in Binh Tuy, while Phuoc Tuy and Phuoc Long residents specialize in mat weaving.

The local process of production and marketing often branches out in several directions and forms an entire economic structure within itself.

As an example, let us explore the process of manufacturing and selling wood products in Vietnam.

Forestry rights presently are contested by small loggers and large Saigon-based operations. A local wood cutter recently complained that high taxes levied against his business and others like it, combined with his antiquated methods of operation made it both expensive and difficult for him to compete with the larger, modern Saigon cutters. The central problem—and it is one common to many cottage industries—is that when the raw materials are transported immediately to Saigon, and the subsequent work performed there, workers in outlying areas realize none of the revenue. Only when each phase of the process is completed within the province do the small cottage industries benefit.

In a province sawmill, the cutter fills orders from makers of wood products, custom cutting the huge logs to the buyer's specifications. A

A craftsman fashions a wooden ornament for a coffin—one element of an effectively integrated production system.



Small manufacturers often work at home with family members providing necessary hand labor.

costly problem encountered by sawmills throughout the Republic of Vietnam is that a high percentage of the country's trees contain bullets or shrapnel fragments. These must be extracted from the trees prior to sawing. One splinter of metal in a log can ruin an expensive saw blade.

The sawmill sells the trimmed lumber to, perhaps, a coffin maker. Meanwhile, another craftsman on the other side of the village, a design cutter, purchases a quantity of wood from the same sawmill.

In Vietnam, it is customary for coffins to be embellished with brightly painted wooden symbols. A villager explained, "A coffin is the house of the dead, no less worthy of him than his home."

The coffin maker and the design cutter complete their work and deliver their goods into the hands of still another craftsman, a painter. When his work is completed, the symbols are attached to the coffin.

The finished product is the work of no less than four individuals, all of whom derive a profit from the coffin, clearly a more desirable arrangement in their eyes than if the lumber had been transported originally to Saigon, and all the labor

performed there.

In this regard, Fred W. Lenz, Tay Ninh Province agriculture adviser for Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) in III Corps remarked, "We must maintain the traditional cottage type industries which, in the past, have produced the great amount of consumer goods, but we must plan for systematic integration from the origin of the raw materials to the point of sale of the finished product in order that Vietnam can achieve the efficiency necessary for it to compete on the world market, as it soon will have to."

The efficiency factor in cottage industry seems to be of most concern to economists. As the decade began, industry sources predicted that Vietnamese handicrafts will become better in quality as a result of current development, credit and training programs, that marketing will become more efficient because of quality control and overseas trading contacts, and that domestic sales will drop gradually with the re-deployment of foreign troops. Experts believe the industry can expect steady if unspectacular growth after the postwar plateau is reached.

Handicraft exports, estimated at about \$250,000 annually are dwarfed by domestic sales, most of them unrecorded by statisticians. But these sales do include nearly \$70,000 worth of handicrafts annually sold by one Saigon outlet alone (the government sponsored Handicrafts Center) and an unconfirmed estimate of \$6 million worth sold annually in large military sales shops and gift shops.

The Vietnamese economy continues to be based primarily on an agrarian society which depends on related local manufacturing for needed implements and small luxuries. Agriculture and cottage industry also complement each other well as the capital realized from one can be invested in the other.

Large industry in Vietnam is likewise making strides in the direction of providing a better overall standard of living for the Vietnamese people. Despite the increase of heavy industry, however, small cottage industry will continue to be an integral part of the Vietnamese economy as long as traditional handicraft skills are retained and a market exists for the goods. ↑

The sudden beauty of a passing butterfly complements the subtle colors of a floral resting place.



JOERN

The central walkway through the Cao Dai Temple garden.

IN the Cao Dai religion, flowers symbolize the cosmic essence, the spark of life, that indefinable quality which distinguishes between the living and non-living.

A formal garden, located on the grounds of the Cao Dai Holy See in Tay Ninh City, is a pleasant haven of peaceful beauty for pilgrims and visitors to the expansive grounds.

The delights of the colorful blossoms, the sculptured shrubbery, and the fluttering butterflies can be only partially captured by the camera. The fragrance of the blooms and overwhelming serenity which permeate the grounds and garden must be experienced personally to be truly appreciated...



JOERN



JOERN

A study in red and yellow—bursts of color accent a pervading serenity.

GIVENS



*Sculptured
shrubbery
adds variety
to the Cao
Dai floral
array.*





*A garden well provides water
to sustain the garden's quiet
beauty.*

HURRICANE BRIEFS



Lieutenant McCrary on the job.

First Lieutenant Willie McCrary turned in his seat as the jeep continued to bounce and roll over the two ruts that cut through shrubs and elephant grass. "We fill the people's needs by using their own resources and channels," he said.

The East Orange, N. J., native is commander of the 19th Civil Affairs Platoon and assistant new life development officer for Phu Giao district in Northern Binh Duong Province.

He earned his masters degree in nutritional biochemistry at Tuskegee Institute, Ala. During the last eight months Lieutenant McCrary, with the help of four other team members, has attempted to counteract the effects of war, general lack of education, and sanitation by training and personal guidance. The emphasis has recently been placed on teaching the citizens of Phu Giao how to use the Republic of Vietnam's aid programs.

Civic action covers a broad spectrum of projects in the 465-square-kilometer district, and he feels the best results come from personal relationships.

"It's social work," stressed Lieutenant McCrary, "and each week we attempt to contact a different area so we can relate to the people and more importantly the hamlet chief."

The needs of each village, he explained, were determined by the hamlet chief in coordination with the district. The village is allotted self-development funds, according to population, by the Government. Lieutenant McCrary monitors these activities, obtains professional assistance, assists with paper work, and vouches for the types and quantity of material needed. Team members were chosen for their particular abilities, such as medical or agricultural training, and he hastily adds, "without them the job would be a heck of a lot tougher."

Vietnam's textile industry, dependent almost entirely on imported raw materials, cannot meet all of today's demand for finished goods and fabrics nor does it anticipate self-sufficiency in the near future.

"The industry is progressing steadily and is beginning to satisfy the minimum fabric needs of the domestic market," said Bui Thanh, chief of the textile branch of the Vietnamese Industrial Development Center, "but many finished materials, especially suiting fabrics, still must be imported," he added.

Except for a few steel mills and its naval shipyard, Vietnam has no heavy industry. Of its light industries, the one affecting the people's lives most is textiles, for South Vietnam's population of nearly 18 million must wear clothes or uniforms and use blankets, towels, bags, fish nets and other textile products.

Although the industry is still not yet independent, it shows steady progress. Textiles in Vietnam has mushroomed from nothing a dozen years ago to an industry that now turns out 65 percent of cotton yarn requirements plus a variety of basic products for the domestic market.

South Vietnam's textile industry also produces a variety of other products including cotton and rayon fabrics, synthetics, knitted wear, blankets and towels. There are more than 30 large mills with automatic spinning, weaving and knitting machinery, and these account for about 75 percent of all production.

The textile manufacturing industry first came to South Vietnam after the Geneva Agreement divided the nation in two. A 7,500-spindle spinning plant in North Vietnam, where there was a small industry at the time, was dismantled and brought by anti-communist refugees to the Saigon district of Khanh Hoi in 1955. The plant was reassembled and put back into operation by 1958. Today this pioneer plant is part of the four-plant operation of Sicovina, the only Government operated firm in the industry.

The 2nd Civil Affairs Company is taking a fresh Vietnamization tack—teaching the Vietnamese how to tread the corridors of bureaucracy.

A case in point is Bethany Orphanage near Bien Hoa, about 15 miles northeast of Saigon.

For more than a year the orphanage has received direct support in money, manpower and material from five different U.S. military units.

They include the 12th Aviation Group, the 5th Battalion, 2nd Artillery, the 199th Light Infantry Brigade, Long Binh Post and the 175th Radio Research Group.

The 12th Aviation Group alone contributed more than \$7,000 in money and materials during the last year.

Much of the support consisted of wet garbage and other feed for nearly 100 hogs raised at the orphanage to help support its 300 students.

First Lieutenant David G. Arkovich, assistant operations officer of the company, put the 2nd Civil Affairs Company's goal this way:

"We're trying to get them to help themselves. We're trying to coordinate, to get them to put their requests through Vietnamese channels."

A company platoon, under the command of Captain Charles G. Gilmer, has taken over coordination of aid to the orphanage.

Captain Gilmer said that materials and supplies also are available through the social welfare chief of Bien Hoa Province, and unless used, will be dropped from his allocations.

"In order for Vietnamization to work effectively, U.S. military assistance for civic action must be used only when needed," he said.

In the case of Bethany Orphanage, said Captain Gilmer, the social welfare chief was not fully aware of its needs because of all the support from the military.

Now, before receiving help from military units, the orphanage must go through the social welfare chief first.

"There's a lot more to this nation building than a physical structure," said Lieutenant Arkovich.

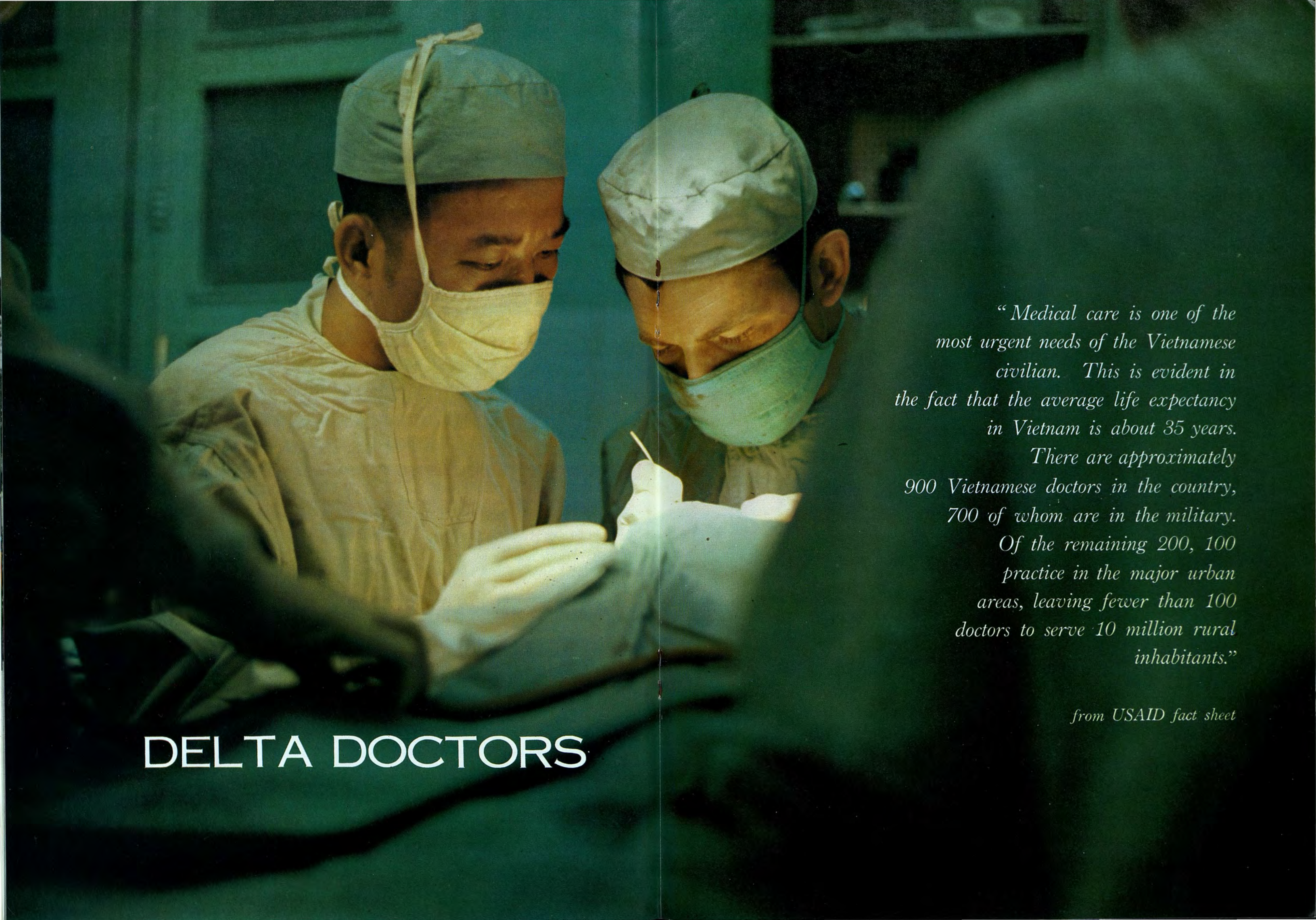
After an exhaustive survey of Jeep drivers in Vietnam, we have compiled an amazing mountain of facts and myths about driving in Vietnam.

Here is but a sampling of the nuggets of wisdom drawn from that vast legion of the most professional Jeep drivers in the world:

1. If you forget to unlock the chain on the steering wheel, there is a good chance you won't make the first turn.
2. If you are driving your first sergeant somewhere, and you run out of gas, he is likely to get mad.
3. If you put it in reverse, floor it, and pop the clutch, you will lay a patch.
4. If Top sees you do this, you will be taking the ankle express from now on.
5. During the monsoons, it will rain when the canvas top is down.
6. During the monsoons, it will rain when the canvas top is up.
7. During the monsoons, you are going to get wet.
8. MPs can appear from nowhere.
9. MPs will not go away if you ignore them.
10. You should always give tanks the right of way. Courtesy pays.
11. If you constantly drive on the left side of the road, and you are not in Australia, you are going to be surprised one of these days.
12. If you signal for a left turn in Saigon, there is a good chance you will lose your wristwatch.



A good driver is...



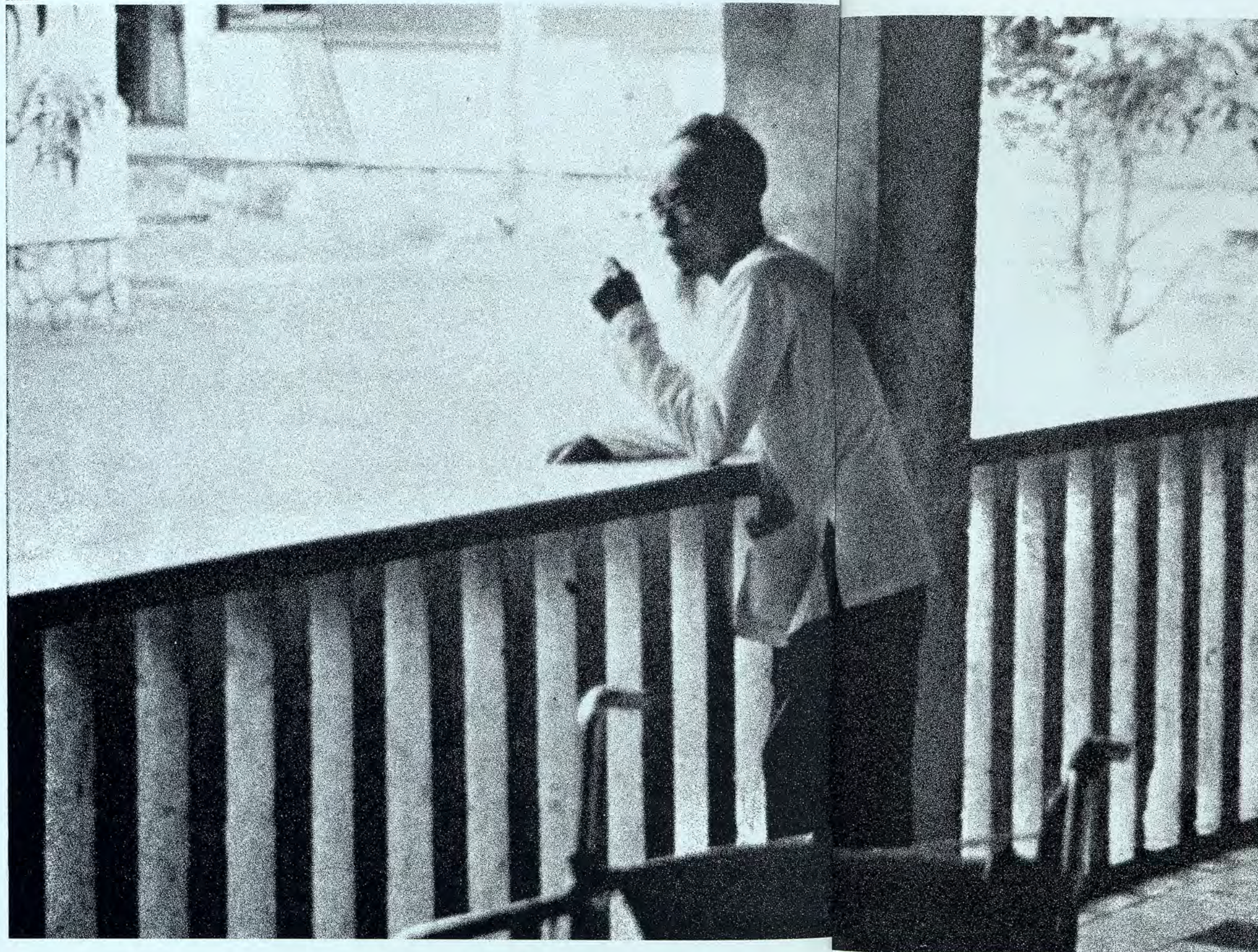
“Medical care is one of the most urgent needs of the Vietnamese civilian. This is evident in the fact that the average life expectancy in Vietnam is about 35 years.

There are approximately 900 Vietnamese doctors in the country, 700 of whom are in the military.

Of the remaining 200, 100 practice in the major urban areas, leaving fewer than 100 doctors to serve 10 million rural inhabitants.”

from USAID fact sheet

DELTA DOCTORS



by Lieutenant Pete Ginder

THE RAVAGES OF DISEASE AND INFECTION are an ever-present problem of the human condition, especially in underdeveloped nations or those struggling to attain peace. In view of this fact, the Military Public Health Assistance Program (MILPHAP) was created in 1965 to perform a dual function: first and foremost

they were to assist Vietnamese doctors located in the rural areas in alleviating the chronic shortage of adequate medical assistance; secondly, they were also to serve in an advisory capacity in an attempt to upgrade the general quality of the Republic's medical corps. MILPHAP Team N-6, serving in the Delta, is attempting to do both.

Team N-6 is based in Rach Gia, a pleasant city of 60,000 located on the west coast of Vietnam approx-

imately 60 miles southeast of Ha Tien and 130 miles southwest of Saigon. It is a city firmly tied to the sea, both economically and emotionally. A wide canal leads into the marketplace from the Gulf of Thailand, and thousands of fishermen and farmers utilize Rach Gia as a commercial and social center. It is the largest and most modern town many of them will ever see.

In the early morning and late afternoon the town hums with activity as boats are unloaded, stalls are set

Convalescent facilities at the Rach Gia hospital provide long-needed care for the elderly people of the area.

up and produce is sold. Fish, vegetables and rice are reasonably priced and readily available—the area's prosperity is very apparent. The city is clean, the people well-dressed, and the small stucco villas, left over from the port city's heyday as a French resort in the late 1940's, lend the city a lingering aura of European charm unique in the Delta.

One of Rach Gia's landmarks is the 17-building provincial hospital complex, which was built by French colonial authorities at the turn of the century to serve the needs of the local populace as well as the French residents. High-ceilinged and airy, the structure is built around a grassy courtyard and houses 450 beds, 250 of which are earmarked for surgical patients. It is also the home of MILPHAP Team N-6, one of 22 similar medical advisory teams scattered throughout the Republic of Vietnam.

The MILPHAP program was established by former president Lyndon Johnson in 1965, who felt that a program to aid the government of Vietnam in providing medical services to its people was a necessity. Though it works under the auspices of USAID, MILPHAP is present only in the Republic of Vietnam, and team members are recruited from all the major services. N-6, located at the Kien Giang Provincial Hospital in Rach Gia, is an all-Navy enterprise.

The team is headed by Lieutenant Michael Ribaud, a 27-year-old resident of Alexandria, La., a small town "200 miles north of New Orleans." Dr. Ribaud attended Louisiana State University as an undergraduate, then moved on to LSU's medical school in 1963. He rounded out his education with an internship at Emory University in Atlanta, Ga., and a one-year surgical residency at the prestigious Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans.

"There's no question about it—my surgical ability has progressed by leaps and bounds since I came to Vietnam," says the youthful Dr. Ribaud. "I find myself handling cases here that I never would have seen in the states, much less worked on. Although the medicine that we practice is, on occasion, somewhat primitive, we are now capable of treating close to 95% of the cases that arrive here at the hospital." Dr. Ribaud went on to explain that those of the remaining 5%, who are suffering from war-related wounds, are authorized medical evacuation to Can Tho, where more sophisticated equipment is available. Eighty percent of the hospital's case load is war-related.

Members of the MILPHAP team come equipped with a variety of skills; all are volunteers. Currently N-6 at Rach Gia consists of 3 officers and 6 enlisted men. Among its members are two physicians, a dental technician, lab technician, administrative officer and operating room assistant. They are currently awaiting the arrival of a qualified nurse who will supervise training in that area.

The team was first assembled as a unit at the Bethesda Naval Hospital in suburban Maryland in mid-summer, 1969, where they received a month-long orientation on tropical diseases and Vietnamese culture, as well as a small sampling of the language. They arrived in Rach Gia after in-processing at MACV on August 13. The team which they replaced had left some time before. Of their early experiences Dr. Ribaud says wryly that, "it was like jumping into cold water—breath-taking."

The initial period of culture shock passed rapidly as the team members plunged into their duties. "Although



The well-kept grounds of the Rach Gia hospital—fresh air, sunshine and the promise of better health for all.

this is hardly Massachusetts General, we feel some significant improvements have been made during our stay here," states Dr. Ribaud. "There is little doubt in my own mind that the people of the area have appreciated our assistance."

Some of the innovations brought to Kien Giang Provincial Hospital during the last nine months include a newly-built intensive-care unit, designed to provide round-the-clock care for critically-ill patients; an orthopedic cast room to centralize treatment of broken bones; a trauma center, which is stockpiled to handle large numbers of casualties; improved lighting in the operating room, and other material benefits in the same vein.

One of the most significant events affecting Vietnamese health care this year didn't cost anything and attracted little notice outside of medical circles. This was the advent of phase one of the "joint utilization" program, which was initiated by the Ministry of Health to combine military and civilian medical facilities and thereby streamline local health care. As a result of the reorganization, Dr. Thuan, the hospital's chief of medicine, has become the top medical officer in this province of 450,000. He reports directly to the Ministry and has as his deputy a physician on loan from the military. The program consists of several phases and is designed to pave the way for a gradual withdrawal of direct U.S. medical assistance on the local level. Before the implementation of joint utilization there was one Vietnamese surgeon to handle 250 surgical beds—there are now three.

At night, when things are "somewhat under control," the team's comfortable, rambling "hootch" becomes a gathering place for the small American community in Rach Gia. A mixed bag of agricultural advisers, JUS-PAO staffers, military personnel and Vietnamese hospital workers have found "bac-si house" to be a congenial place to relax. It is like a gathering anywhere else in Vietnam. Vietnamese children solemnly watch a scratchy motorcycle flick, cold beers are opened, and people talk. And talk. The people of MILPHAP N-6 are sensitive, articulate people, and they differ among themselves, often sharply, about the nature and goals of their mission.

"It is not enough," says HM2 Ed Skaggs, a supply and logistics specialist, "to provide good medical care to the people for a year and then leave behind a hospital staff which cannot maintain our standards. We are here to advise; although we often 'do', that is not the idea—our mission here is to slowly upgrade the quality of local medical care through our counterparts." Skaggs, an intense, redheaded native of Mason City, Illinois, went on to add that, "it is a constant temptation to do things yourself, rather than go through your counterpart. If we are to be successful, we can't give in to this temptation."

Dr. Ribaud also holds strong opinions on the nature of their advisory mission. "The MILPHAP program has brought the level of Vietnamese medical care farther, faster, than anything else could have. Essentially, our job is to involve our counterparts so thoroughly that we become superfluous; actually there comes a time in a relationship of this sort when an American unit's presence becomes a definite hindrance—when this level of self-sufficiency has been reached our mission here will be ended. Americans should definitely be taken out of the forefront and exercise their skills primarily in an advisory role."

The Peace Corps, in a famous nationally-distributed advertisement, placed two identical photographs of a small Peruvian village side-by-side, and indicated that the pictures spanned one year of Peace Corps assistance to the village. The message conveyed by the advertisement was clear; don't expect, in a year's time, to make spectacular changes in the life of an underdeveloped nation.

In the opinion of Ed Skaggs, "The best we can hope to do here is to slowly upgrade the general level of local medical care. Programs designed to 'revolutionize' a certain area of Vietnamese living usually have some impact for a year or so; how much impact will they have in ten years?"

Today, thousands of American civilians and military advisers are working and living in the countryside, doing their best to help create a safer and more prosperous Vietnam. MILPHAP is part of that effort.

The Hearts and Minds of Kien Giang Province

Progress in Pacification

by Lieutenant Pete Ginder

NUI DAI DUNG...it rises like an enormous gray tooth from the flat, lush rice lands of northwestern Kien Giang Province, only a few kilometers from the small port city of Ha Tien. Three hundred feet tall, its pockmarked slopes bear somber testimony to the war which has raged around its sides for the better part of two decades. Once it was a logistics base for the Viet Minh in their anti-colonial uprising of the early 1950's.

More recently it has been held by the Viet Cong, who found its proximity to the Cambodian border

and thick granite walls a welcome sanctuary from Allied troops and airpower. Although at one time it was controlled by the local Regional Force company, a determined VC force threw them off during Tet of 1968 and has held sway since. Intelligence sources estimated that over 100 hard core NVA were presently entrenched upon the mountain. That night it would be the job of the Regional Forces to assault and reclaim Nui Dai Dung.

"To say the least, Nui Dai Dung is a tough nut to crack, especially for the RF's," commented Lieutenant Colonel Edward P. Metzner, the Province Senior Advisor in Kien

Giang. His features were drawn, his mood preoccupied. A lean 24-year Army veteran, Colonel Metzner has spent over four years in Vietnam, including a tour in neighboring Choung Thien Province.

Soft-spoken, economical in speech and motion, he dictated instructions to the young artillery captain monitoring the radio while he discussed the situation confronting the government troops. "We couldn't move against Nui Dai Dung in the past because of its location along the border. Now that Allied forces are operating in Cambodia, we can seal the area and try to take the hill. The problem is that our men are tired, and the mountain is honey-combed with caves. Any point on the hill is accessible without ever going out of doors." He turned again to the radio and began running through a list of urgent supply needs, the most pressing of which included ammunition for the 106mm recoilless rifle and large smoke pots to cover the advancing troops.

Outside the dimly-lit command post the remainder of Kien Giang Province basked contentedly in the bright sun of another flawless morning. Farmers plodded behind mud-died water buffalo preparing the paddies for the coming months of rain; fishermen turned their beamy, colorful craft out to sea to begin reaping the day's marine harvest. Cyclists sped along the black as-



phalt road leading into Cambodia, pausing only to glance at the massive artillery pieces being brought

in to "soften up" the enemy-held hill.

Kien Giang is the largest province in the delta. It is shaped roughly like a boomerang along the west coast of Vietnam, stretching from the Cambodian border in the northwest to the middle of the U Minh Forest in the south. The vast majority of the province's 450,000 inhabitants are farmers and fishermen; the

prosperity of their land is evident to even the most casual observer.

"There is a tremendous potential here for growth," says Charles Rheingans, a career United States Agency for International Development (USAID) official in charge of the New Life program. "Port development, fish processing and canning, all manner of industry—Kien Giang can and will support them. In the agricultural area people are just beginning to reclaim lands abandoned years ago because of the VC. It is good, fertile land, and coupled with the new strains of 'miracle rice' it should really blossom."

The province agricultural adviser agrees, saying that "IR-8 has been something of a disappointment, as

the people don't care for the flavor. IR-22, however, comes much closer to the taste of the local product, and will enormously increase yields all over Vietnam."

The morning passed rapidly for Colonel Metzner as the preparations for the night assault continued. Three ARVN artillery pieces, 155mm howitzers, fired salvo after salvo into the mountain's weathered flanks, shattering the early-morning calm with thunderclaps of exploding ordnance. Dozens of local residents watched knowledgeably as the shells found their mark, sitting with a loose, half-alert posture reminiscent of Americans watching batting practice before a big game. Small, straight soldiers in threadbare fatigues scurried in the shadow of the big guns, uncrating equipment and ammunition, unloading trucks, policing up debris. Others dozed, unconcerned, scant yards away

from the thundering cannons waking only during the infrequent silences.

A light patch of granite uncovered by the shells was thought at first to be a white flag of surrender—hope was a palpable presence until a heavy-duty pair of field glasses revealed the cruel error. The firing was interrupted only one other time—a chopper carrying Major General Hal McCown, IV Corps Senior Adviser, landed in an adjacent rice paddy. After being briefed into the situation, he whirled away into a new area, a new battle. U.S. Air Force F-105 Thunderchiefs heralded his departure—wheeling in

low from the southeast they disgorged tons of napalm on the target, sending oily gouts of smoke and flame into the lazy blue sky. The assembled crowd cheered and slapped each other on the back.

"Perhaps the best way I can describe the situation existing here today is to say that we have come full-circle in the last two years," stated Colonel Metzner the next day in the provincial capital of Rach Gia. "Two years ago in the Delta,

A quiet afternoon in Kien Giang Province—surface indications of a deeper peace.

government troops enjoyed immunity only in certain areas; when they left these areas they were restricted to making brief stabs into the VC-controlled hamlets, and then had to withdraw. They were denied the proper base for taxation, recruiting and food.

"Today, however, all has changed. The VC have been thoroughly decimated and driven into the uninhabited areas. They are capable only, for the most part, of abbreviated raids and then must depart. They exist solely because the NVA have been used as filler to beef up their ranks, and seem completely incapable of replacing homegrown guerrillas." He went on to add that, "it is difficult to make any projections about the immediate future. The enemy could mass here," he stated, stabbing his index finger into the northern end of the U Minh, which was shown in green on the map, "and come out with a couple of battalions, and a lot of people would get hurt. But they would pay a heavy price."

Two maps are of special interest in his office. One shows the situation which existed in August, 1968—dozens of red dots freckle the map, indicating hamlets considered to be VC-controlled. Others, grey-green in color, were considered "contested." The adjoining chart, drawn from a recent hamlet evaluation survey, shows only a handful of red dots, and these widely-scattered outposts are engulfed in a sea of villages considered to be firmly in the hands of the government.

"A couple of years ago I hated to see the sun go down," remarked Colonel Metzner with a grin. "It meant another night in the Alamo." Today the position of the sun in the sky appears to make little difference to him.

The responsibility for providing security in the hamlets and villages of Kien Giang is divided among several different agencies. At the hamlet level, marauding terrorists are most likely to encounter elements of the People's Self Defense Force (PSDF). Generally quite young and in many areas haphazardly armed, they comprise the village's first line of defense. "The quality of the PSDF is totally dependent on the local leaders. If they are properly led they can generally keep the VC out of their villages and prevent a lot of harassment. Before the establishment of the PSDF, the enemy could walk into villages, propagandize, tax, and recruit."

"Today they are faced with a lot of question marks: will they walk



Lieutenant Colonel Edward P. Metzner, Kien Giang's Senior Province Adviser (left) and Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Van Tai, Province Chief, plan operations to attack Communist troops on Nui Dai Dung.

into an ambush, will they have to fight their way in—and out? If they do fight their way in, they know the people will not be particularly responsive to their requests." Another factor, according to Colonel Metzner, in the enemy's inability to move freely, is their knowledge of the artillery and air support which can be brought to bear as soon as their presence is charted. "It makes them think twice about coming out of hiding," he declared.

An optimistic viewpoint concerning the situation in Kien Giang is echoed at district level by Major Charles H. Kone, the 38-year old District Senior Adviser in Kien Binh, an inland agricultural center located due east of Rach Gia. It is a pastoral, scenic area. Meticulously-worked rice fields stretch to the horizon, broken only by narrow earthen dikes. Shallow canals, each with its quota of boats on their way to market, crisscross the alluvial plain. Simple homes, shaded by palm trees, dot the banks. "There are about 50,000 people currently in Kien Binh district, a significant number of them Cambodians," states Major Kone. "It's a rich area, no question about it. When we go on operations we don't take any food—it can be purchased almost anywhere we're likely to go."

Major Kone is something of an anomaly in the present-day Army structure. A tanned, weathered resident of Eagles Pass, Texas, he is the "only member of the Texas National Guard presently on active duty in Vietnam." When he leaves the Republic he will return to his

cattle ranch and duty with San Antonio's 36th Separate Infantry Brigade. He laughingly describes his career pattern as being, "in order: aboard ship, a cook, a cowboy, an infantry leader, a bank president and a cattle rancher."

In a more serious vein he comments on his activities at the district level. "The basis of our operations in the district lies in the principle of denying the enemy access to the population, thereby effectively cutting them off from their tax, food and recruiting base. The various hamlet evaluations indicate a significant improvement in this region. These are not empty statistics... we have made a lot of progress here."

Major Kone cited the downward spiral of enemy activity, the opening of 9 new government outposts, the "greatly increased" GVN recruiting. "Most of all," he says, "you can just plain feel it in the air. A year ago it was a common thing to take mortar rounds at night; we haven't been mortared since January. It's my opinion that without the infusion of NVA troops the VC would have been almost totally eliminated as a threat by this time."

Major Kone, who speaks "workable" Vietnamese and enjoys astounding rapport with the people, is keenly interested in the politics of the area, seeing it as the cornerstone of effective pacification. "To the villager, the government of Vietnam is represented by his local officials. Currently all eight of our hamlets have their own elected hamlet chiefs. They have proved to be honest and competent; for this rea-

son the people prefer the GVN—by giving us information and support they avoid VC recruiting and harassment.”

The afternoon passed slowly north of Ha Tien. By a tacit, unspoken agreement common in Vietnam both sides broke for lunch. Americans and Vietnamese in the command post shared C-rations and steamed rice, topped off with local produce and a warm beer. Several American infantry advisers, their faces and uniforms showing signs of twelve consecutive days in the field, talked in a subdued, almost perfunctory manner about home, the upcoming operation, the joys of an all-too-short Hawaii R&R.

Colonel Metzner returned from the crest of a neighboring mountain, sweat-soaked and reddened from the blazing sun, and briefed his men thoroughly and professionally. An American major put the finishing touches to the operations order which would guide the troops. Cigarettes were smoked, confidences shared, people dozed. The long, somnolent afternoon wore on.

The major portion of the fighting in Kien Giang Province is done by the Regional and Popular Forces, men who generally fight close to home in the small, vicious skirmishes so common to this particular conflict. They are assisted by a dozen American Mobile Advisory Teams (MATs), who accompany the RF/PF on operations and learn as well as teach. Elements of the main-force Army of the Republic of Vietnam operate in Kien Giang and

are available, if need be, to back up the local forces.

A major factor on the military side in the province is the role of the U.S. Navy and its Vietnamese counterpart. Based largely at Rach Soi, a diminutive port south of Rach Gia, the PBR's and "Swift boats" of the "brown water navy" patrol both the inland waterways and the shoreline to prevent infiltration into, or out of, VC strongholds.

Other naval forces are located at An Thoi, on Phu Quoc Island, which lies to the north and west of Rach Gia. Large, mountainous and heavily forested, Phu Quoc is considered part of Kien Giang Province, as are several smaller offshore islands. Phu Quoc is distinguished by a large prisoner of war camp and what is universally considered to be the finest nuoc mam made in all of Vietnam.

The pace had picked up considerably around Nui Dai Dung. The artillery was again active, alternating white phosphorous and high explosive shells under the watchful eye of the province chief. An "Early Word" broadcast ship from 10th Psyop at Binh Thuy made pass after pass over the mountain playing a taped message promising amnesty to its defenders if they would lay down their arms. It was met with silence, and the shelling resumed.

Late that afternoon the American advisers left the command post to return to their units, scooping up extra "C-rats" and cigarettes as they went out the door, promising each other cold beers "when this is all

over." Americans and Vietnamese alike mulled over the instructions printed on the squat, grey smoke-pots which had been piled outside ("Hit that striker once, Jerry, and then I'll kick it the hell out the door—hesitate a second too long and the bird will be just full of that stuff"). Two choppers were down and out of touch; the promised 106 ammunition was late and unaccounted for. Tension crept slowly through the command post like smoke filtering through a tunnel.

"It's hard to say what will happen here," mused Colonel Metzner as he took a break after dinner. He surveyed the gaudy orange seascape unfolding beneath us and shifted his position on the sandbagged mortar pit. "I've been here a long time and have become passionately involved with the land and the people. It will be a wonderful day when the people of Vietnam can bring this war to a close and throw away their rifles: But it must be a just peace, a lasting peace. Anything else would lead only to more suffering."

As if in counterpoint an automatic weapon clattered sharply on the valley floor far below. Colonel Metzner's look of concern softened as he saw a flight of what appeared to be geese scatter and then regroup. "Although it is a bit early to relate the Cambodian penetration to our own tactical situation, province-wide I think it will be a big assist. We've already started to see an upsurge in minor enemy incidents, which indicates to me that they are already starting to feel the pinch as far as supplies."

"What must be remembered is that pacification in the Delta has undoubtedly been a success. The focus of my job now is to push, and keep pushing, to consolidate our gains and secure our base. Complacency could hurt us badly and our gains have been so great, in such a short period of time, that it would be a natural tendency to let down." With one final look at the sky and the sea he returned to the command post.

That night, three companies of Regional Force soldiers assaulted across 300 yards of open fields and gained a toehold on the lower slopes of Nui Dai Dung. One man had been killed and eight wounded, including an American enlisted adviser, who now lay in a narrow cave on the mountain awaiting medevac. The difficult job of rooting the enemy out of the tunnels was just beginning, but an important step had been taken. No one had really thought they had a chance. 

Across the plains of Kien Giang, a view of Nui Dai Dung, last refuge for the enemy in the Delta province.





Sky Watch

Air Traffic Control

by Specialist 5 Mike Tharp

LIKE A HUGE DRAGONFLY, the double-rotored CH-47 Chinook helicopter hovered over the 8th Aerial Port terminal building at Cu Chi Basecamp.

As it descended, whirling columns of dust mounted to the humid sky. Two infantrymen standing outside the quonset shack paused in their gestures for a moment, transfixed by the swirling red soil sprayed on them by the wash of the twin blades. Suddenly both men sprinted inside the building. The dust cloud hung in a rust-colored canopy for several minutes.

Specialist Four Don Rofritz, an air traffic controller at Cu Chi Airfield, watched the dusty scene from several hundred meters away and about 20 meters up. Squinting into the morning sun, he spoke calmly into a microphone and, at his direction, the offending chopper lumbered to a less populated area to wreak its sandy havoc.

Stationed in a control tower above the Cu Chi airstrip, the Milwaukee native was doing what comes naturally to him and his fellow air traffic controllers in the Army: saving lives by coordinating aircraft in the air and getting them on or off the ground at the right place and time. The Chinook caper, although a relatively minor incident, could have involved other aircraft resulting in a serious accident.

Diverting the helicopter from the unauthorized area by the passenger terminal only started the day for the air traffic control team at Cu Chi. As in the United States and across the world, air traffic controllers in Vietnam perform a sensitive and sophisticated job, and a demanding one.

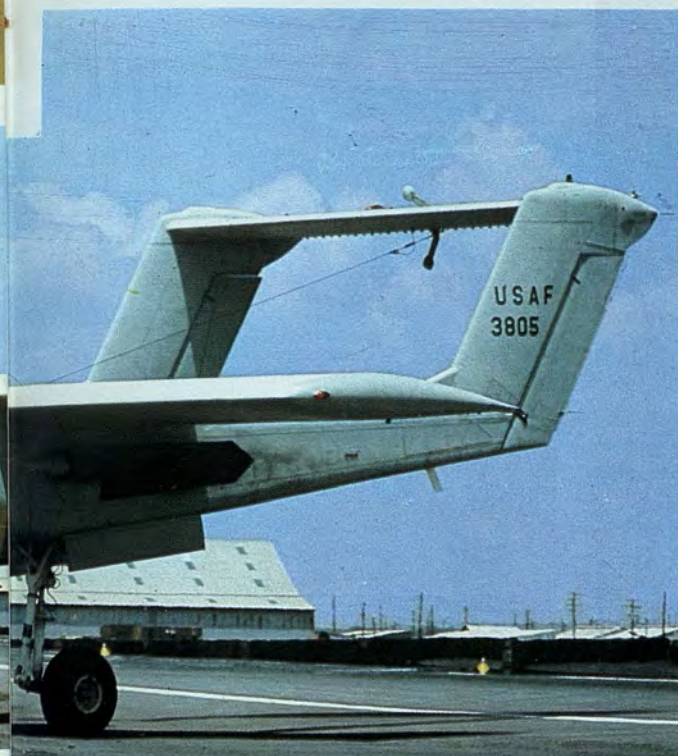
At Cu Chi, "the busiest strip in Vietnam," according to Rofritz, over 2,000 landing and takeoff operations occur daily. With only one tower to handle the load, and only one local controller on the job at a time, his claim seems justified.

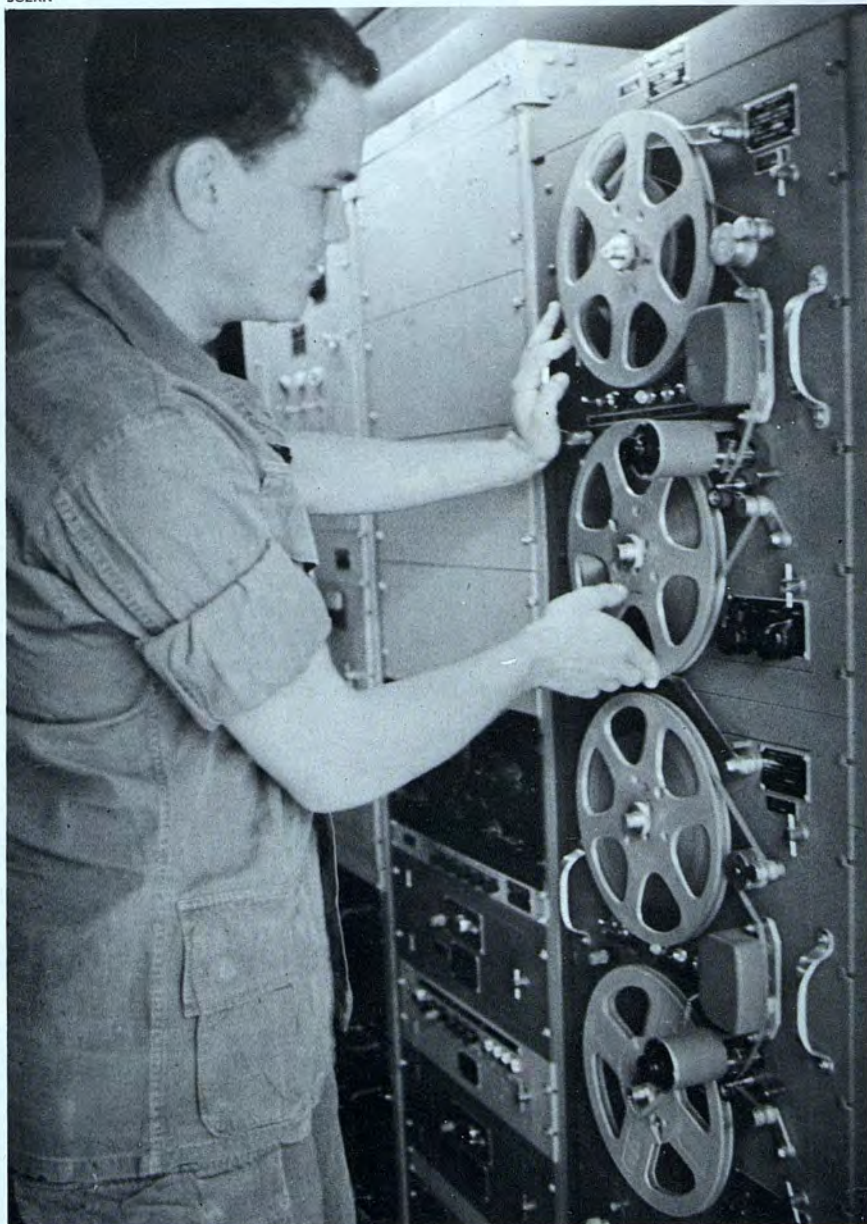
The facilities at Cu Chi are used by fixed and rotary-wing aircraft ranging from light observation helicopters to massive C-130 cargo planes. There are 27 landing pads for choppers and two runways for fixed-wing ships.

"Theoretically, 39 aircraft can land at one time here and not get in each other's way," said Specialist Five Art Rutherford, Kansas City, Mo., another air controller.

Cu Chi controllers handled nearly 700,000 operations in 1969 and 62,000 in April this year alone, according to Staff Sergeant William Weeden, Asbury Park, N.J., noncommissioned officer in charge of the tower set-up. "Our area of operations is within a five-mile radius of here and up to 2,000 feet altitude," he added.

In addition to the 15-man tower crew, the 65-man 341st Airfield Service Detachment also staffs a Ground Control Approach (GCA) station at Cu Chi and is responsible for rearming ships with rockets and mini-





Tape machines (left) maintain a monthly record of all transmissions from the Cu Chi tower.

guns and for POL (petroleum, oil and lubrication) duties.

Three three-man shifts comprise the control tower operation, an around-the-clock stint. The local controller, not necessarily the ranking man, bosses the show. His responsibility extends to the runways as well as to the air before landing and takeoff. The "B-man" logs aircraft in and out, while the third man's task is supervision of taxiing aircraft.

Although lacking the immense traffic loads of civilian control centers, the Cu Chi tower is plagued with unique problems such as incoming and outgoing artillery and the possibility of ground attacks. A 105mm artillery battery and two mortar batteries flank the airstrip.

"The battery informs the tower when they are going to fire; we must then tell the aircraft a different approach route," explained Rofritz.

Visual flight rules prevail for him and his crew—they must see an aircraft to land it. Such surveillance is good for 300 feet elevation and about one mile distance.

When the aircraft cannot be seen because of bad weather, the GCA center assumes supervision of aircraft in the vicinity of Cu Chi.

GCA men also practice throughout the day by taking

over from the tower to land and otherwise direct aircraft in the area. Ordinarily the tower handles planes in good weather, GCA in bad.

Pilots give GCA their grid coordinates, heading and altitude and are vectored in along a course line and glide path using only their instruments and radar. Electronic transponders in fixed-wing aircraft home in on a ground radar signal while the pilot is given a heading for a precision approach.

"That's the best way to get them down," said Specialist Five Richard Lemaster, Phoenix, Ariz., a veteran GCA controller.

Hunched in a metal structure smaller than a Conex container, the Cu Chi GCA crews continually scan their scopes. Their services are not used, except for practice runs, during good weather.

But like a mudrunner in football or horse racing, they are called on when clouds boil out of the north and the Vietnam gun-gray sky explodes with monsoon rain.

Often the rain or fog is so heavy a GCA controller cannot see the runway, only a few meters away, on which the plane he directs is landing.

"Fog is no sweat for the radar scopes," asserted

Lemaster. "We've saved a few pilots from trouble—it makes it all worthwhile and you feel pretty good after it's all over."

In the past year at Cu Chi there have been three accidents involving fixed-wing aircraft, including one in which a plane crashed into five hooches at the end of a runway. "There were no fatalities," said Rofritz, "and none of the accidents was the fault of the controllers."

Expectedly, the daylight shift promises the most business for the tower control team. The night shift sometimes goes two hours without an operation. But the "A" shift is in prime time and visibility and the men in the tower keep jumping.

They monitor six radios simultaneously while maintaining communication with all aircraft within their area of operations. All transmissions to and from the tower are recorded on tape and kept one month. "They'll either back us up or screw us up," said Specialist Four John Schultz, Pittsburgh, Pa., a ground controller.

While Rofritz engages in his daily electronic tete-a-tete, he points and gestures, although the other speaker is miles away. Pirouetting on the scarred wooden floor, he listens with his eyes. He senses instinctively where he is in relation to the aircraft, perceiving in three spatial

dimensions and time.

The bleeps, squelches and roars of the radios contrast to the Perry Como tones of the controller. Each incoming transmission elicits a response from the man with the mike. It is as if he is leashed to duty by the snaky coil of the cord. Nine amber lights blink each time he speaks.

As the clouds roll in from the north like an avalanche, Rofritz tries to tell a story about his dog running away from the MP's. He is continually interrupted by men in flying machines.

"Tower, what is the location of Cu Chi Basecamp?"

"Crossing you, 2,000 northwest to 4,000 northeast. Runway Four is occupied. Please use Runway Twenty-two."

"Roger, tower."

"Wind is eight miles north-northeast, altitude 2,000. Density altitude 2,500." (Although Cu Chi is only 39 feet above sea level, the air is as thin as at 2,500 feet.)

"Got you, tower. Thanks."

"Report downwind on Runway Twenty-two... Wheels down?"

"Wheels down."

"This is Cu Chi Tower. You are clear to land." ↑

Big Nguyen Won't You Please Go Home

A Short Story

by Specialist 4 Phil Schieber

THE DAY BEGAN shortly after midnight, Saigon time. Being asleep at that dismal hour, I could have cared less. It was not until 6:30 that morning when my waking service, a rather pompous alarm clock, struck the half hour with a sound reminiscent of the liberation of Paris and roused me with its reverberating gong.

Any other day I would have promptly dispatched the alarm clock to the floor with a quick, vicious slash of my hand, such are the instincts of a soldier. But this morning I spared the clock, because on this day of days I was leaving for R&R in lovely Sydney, Australia. With the prospect of a week of glorious days and fun-filled nights shining before me, it was tough to get mad at anything. So I thought at the time.

Climbing out of the sack, I trotted off to the shower, whistling "Waltzing Matilda" slightly off-key. After a vigorous shower in water which the Army had especially imported from the North Atlantic, I advanced to the mirror to be recognized.

"Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest one of all?" I chanted.

Have you ever had a mirror laugh at you?

Ignoring the mirror and its obvious attempts to distort reality, I shaved, then brushed by teeth, taking care to snarl at the mirror as much as possible. Applying a few dabs of "Bear Grease Pomade" to my hair, I combed it back, then went outside and sprinted about 25 yards in order

to obtain that wind-swept look. Re-entering the shower room, I looked again into the mirror, arching one eyebrow in the manner of James Bond.

"Who are you kidding, Rollo?" said the mirror.

Glaring at the mirror, I said: "I shall deal with you when I return from Sydney."

Reflecting a moment, the mirror replied: "Go ahead. Smash me. You're already in the Army, already in Vietnam. What's seven more years of bad luck after all that?"

In this case the mirror wasn't lying. Not that I am superstitious in this modern age, but why take any chances, especially just before R&R?

I went back to my room and prepared to pack. If nothing else, the Army has taught me to be methodic. I had prepared a detailed list of all the things I would be taking with me. I venture to say that if I had not misplaced that damned list, I would have been packed in 15 minutes. As it was, I found the list an hour later amidst a stack of rubber checks that I am planning to use for pillow stuffing one of these days.

With less than ten minutes to go before the list would self-destruct, and I would never know what I had forgotten, I hurriedly packed up my troubles in the old kit bag and threw it into the jeep.

"Are you sure you haven't forgotten anything?" asked Nelson Andrews, a former cigar maker from the Transvaal who now rolled his own.

"Let's see," I replied. "I've got my shot record, my statement that I'm free from communicable disease, beaucoup copies of my R&R orders, \$300 in cash, is there anything else?"

"Look," said Andrews, "it's your business, but we're going to have trouble getting on Ton San Nhut with you looking like that."

I had forgotten to dress.

"Well, I guess I better put on my khakis," I said, rapidly assessing the situation.

"You don't have to wear your khakis to Camp Alpha if you're going on R&R to Sydney," said Andrews. How Andrews knew that I'll never know, but then he was always doing silly things like reading the bulletin board.

"That being the case," I said, "I shall promptly enter the nearest phone booth and

slip into my fatigues." I dashed back to my room, and before you could recite the *Constitution*, I was dressed and sitting in the jeep.

"Are you ready to go?" I asked Andrews.

After Andrews had stopped banging his head against the steering wheel, all the time muttering unveiled threats, he started the jeep, and we hit the high road for Camp Alpha.

The drive from Long Binh to Saigon proved uneventful, with the exception of a slight dispute over right-of-way with a Sheridan tank. Although the tank driver definitely was in the wrong when he made a left turn right into our path, Andrews, always the gentleman, graciously slammed on the brakes and allowed the tank to make



the turn. Myself, I would have been tempted to smash into the tank and teach its driver a lesson. But then I figured, what good is a posthumous safe driving award?

Approximately one mile from the Newport Bridge, Andrews pulled the jeep off to the side of the road.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Making a pit stop," said Andrews. He opened the ammunition box between the driver's and front passenger's seats. Inside the box were a pair of what appeared to be Grand Prix driving gloves (or else leather-eating moths had gotten to them),

some type of helmet that was really hot stuff back when Barney Oafeld was still getting parking tickets, and a bottle of champagne.

"What," I asked, "is all this stuff for?"

"Must you be such a bumpkin?" snorted Andrews, as he ceremoniously fitted his hands into the gloves. He then applied to his upper lip an Errol Flynn moustache fashioned out of Tibetan Yak's hair, a souvenir, no doubt, from the days when he was stationed at the foot of Mount Everest, selling snow cones to foot-weary travelers. As he smoothed down his moustache, he explained: "You see *mon idiot*, the traffic in Saigon, she is the most dangerous in the world. The stretch of track from the Bridge Newport to Ton San Nhut is fraught, nay, smothered with almost insurmountable challenges to the driver. But if man and machine can function as one, as this sweet jeep and I intend to do, then the other competitors will eat our dust." With that he hammered his fingers still further into the gloves. He tied a screaming red scarf around his neck, put the helmet on his head, and adjusted the goggles over his eyes.

"What about the champagne?"

"It is for when the race she is finished," he said in exasperation. "But I'm thinking seriously about conking you on the head with it."

It took me several minutes and quite a few laps around the jeep before I could persuade Andrews that his idea would be a waste of good champagne.

The bottle once again safely in the ammunition box, Andrews slipped in behind the wheel. He started the engine, and off we roared.

By speed possessed, Andrews put our little four-cylinder jeep through maneuvers that would have made Stirling Moss look like he was driving for demolition derbies. On the Newport Bridge alone, he shifted gears 43 times, and yet he never exceeded the speed limit. That jeep couldn't have exceeded the speed limit on any road leading to ancient Rome, let alone the main drag leading into Saigon.

But I will say one thing for Andrews: he had imagination. Even when we stopped at the MP check point on the outskirts of the city, Andrew's red scarf was still ripping straight back from his neck.

The wheezing of our jeep and the somewhat bizarre appearance of Andrews in

his driving togs immediately made the military cops suspicious. One MP instinctively reached for his gun when he saw us pull in, but after a moment's reflection he probably decided that even bullets couldn't stop our olive green pleasure machine. Instead, though, he scratched his helmet, took off his sunglasses, wiped them, and put them on again. Andrews evokes reactions like that.

Addressing me, the MP said: "Okay, just where do you and Batman here think you're going?"

"We're on our way to Camp Alpha," I said.

"It looks to me like you're off to see the Wizard," he said somewhat sarcastically. "Where's Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion?"

Andrews was quiet. He was gnashing his teeth like a rock crusher, but he said nothing.

"What about your friend, the Red Baron, there?" he said, indicating Andrews. "Where'd you get that helmet? You look like you just fell out of a Sopwith Camel."

Andrews slowly raised the goggles from his eyes and fixed them on his helmet. "This," he said, pointing to his helmet, "belonged to my father. He was a blimp pilot for the Royal Air Force. But a lot of you would know about that, since you weren't even alive at the time."

"Sorry," said the MP. "I didn't realize it belonged to your father. Boy, I bet he saw a lot of action as a blimp pilot, huh?"

Andrews was calm now. "Well, yes, as a matter of fact he did. Once not far from the White Cliffs of Dover, he barely escaped with his life. He had to bail out."

The MP's and my eyes grew wide with excitement.

"Yeah?" the MP begged. "What happened?"

"Well," said Andrews, "he was returning from a mission over France. The air was extremely rough over the channel that day, but my father still had to fly low enough to escape detection, yet high enough to avoid any seagulls that might fly into the blimp and puncture it with their beaks."

"What happened then?" I asked.

"Well," said Andrews, "the White Cliffs of Dover were looming closer and closer, when suddenly the blimp crashed into them, and my father bailed out."

"Whadda ya mean?" the MP said. Like me, he felt cheated. "How could your old

man drive a blimp right into the side of the White Cliffs of Dover?"

"He was color blind," said Andrews.

"Let me see your trip ticket, wise guy," the MP growled.

We showed it to him.

He examined it and said: "Well, your trip ticket's in order. That's more than I can say for Snoopy here in the helmet. Go ahead, and don't take any wooden blimps."

"I can't," said Andrews. "I don't have a clearance." With that, we chugged out of the checkpoint.

At last things looked as if they were going to go smoothly. That was before we stopped for a traffic light.

A cyclo driver, who looked like Marlon Brando in "The Wild Ones," only with a sun helmet, pulled up beside us. "Hey Joe," he said to me. (How he knew my first name I'll never know.) "You go PX?"

"No," I said. "We're on our way to Ton San Nhut."

"No we're not," said Andrews. "We're on our way to see Big Nguyen."

The light changed, and we drove on, leaving the cyclo driver trembling in fear.

"Who's Big Nguyen?" I asked.

"You'll see in a few minutes," said Andrews.

A few minutes later, he stopped the jeep in front of a shop that appeared to be closed. He locked up the jeep, and we got out and went around to the side door.

Andrews knocked on the door two times, paused, then knocked twice again.

The door creaked open just a crack, and a single suspicious eye stared out at us from behind the door.

"Nuoc mam, no hands," said Andrews. Apparently that was the password.

The door opened wide. We entered and closed the door behind us.

The room resembled an ill-kept attic. It was obviously some kind of pawn shop. Whatever, it certainly was not honest.

Andrews calmly played with his fake moustache.

A gong sounded, and its deep, mellow tone echoed through the room, announcing the entrance of none other than Big Nguyen himself.

Physically, Big Nguyen didn't quite measure up to his name. He was quite short, like a sawed-off shotgun.

"Ah, Andrews," Big Nguyen said with a broad smile, "so good to see you. You are,

I take it, looking for something."

Even I could tell that Big Nguyen was nobody's fool. He knew Saigon like the back of his hand. In fact, he had a map of Saigon tatooed on the back of his hand. Major GI infiltration routes were marked with dollar signs. And when he made a fist, you could see the main arteries leading into Saigon. Here was someone who could have been perfectly happy smuggling gold in Beirut or leaping lizards with Little Orphan Annie, but here he was in Saigon, bilking soldiers.

But Andrews was no slouch, either. He had amassed a small fortune from various business ventures undertaken on our compound. On one occasion he was peddling three-minute egg timers, reputed to be filled with sand from the beaches at Iwo Jima. Another time he sold AK-47 slugs that could be used in juke boxes at the officers' clubs.

"Yes, that's right, Big Nguyen," said Andrews, loudly crinkling the paper change in his pocket. "We're looking for something."

"Well, here are the yellow pages," said Big Nguyen. "Find it fast."

Andrews' fingers walked through the yellow pages of Big Nguyen's catalogue. He stopped on page 326, under the listing of emperor's new clothes, crown jewels, and king's crosses.

"Umm," ummed Andrews. "Do you have anything in the way of an emerald from an idol's eye? You know, something green and flashy?"

"Well," said Big Nguyen, tugging on all five of his chins, "Mandrake the Magician materialized last week and fairly cleaned us out of idol's eyes, but I think I may have just the thing you're looking for."

He clapped his hands once, muttered something in Persian, and one of his coolies waltzed in with a plush velvet platter on which the green gems lay sparkling.

"Ah yes," Andrews said. "What are you asking for that one?" He pointed toward a five-sided beauty.

"This?" said Big Nguyen, picking up the stone and holding it up to the light. "Notice that when a ray of light strikes



the gem, it diffuses through every part of the rock. By the time the light ray passes through the stone, it's original characteristics have been changed. The light in no way resembles its former image. This kind of cut on an emerald is called a pentagonal one. So what will you give me for this excellent pentagonal emerald?"

"That emerald reminds me of something," I said.

"What's that?" Andrews snorted.

"Well, sir," said Big Nguyen impatiently.

"Are you interested or not?"

"How much do you want for it?" Andrews asked.

"3,000 piastres. 6,000 baht. 18,000 rupees. 850 shekels. Or if you don't happen to have any of those currencies, fifty bucks MPC."

"You won't take drachmas?" inquired Andrews.

"No. \$50 MPC."

Andrews reached for his wallet.

"Wait a minute," I protested. "You can't do that. It's against the law."

"Must you be so damn honest all the time?" Andrews asked me.

"It's not a question of honesty," I said, elevating my nose and chin to the proper plane. "It's a question of economics."

Big Nguyen wasn't appreciating my two bits worth, and Andrews was so annoyed that he drew me off to the side to talk.

"Look, you nitwit," he scowled, "if you keep talking like this you're going to blow this whole deal for me. You're not in the Boy Scouts, you're in the Army. So take off that silly halo. Say, you're not a spook, are you?"

"Don't tell me you believe in ghosts, too," I said. "I'm only trying to tell you that you shouldn't pay Big Nguyen in MPC. What do you think he's going to do with it once he gets it from you?"

"Who cares what he does with it? That's his business!"

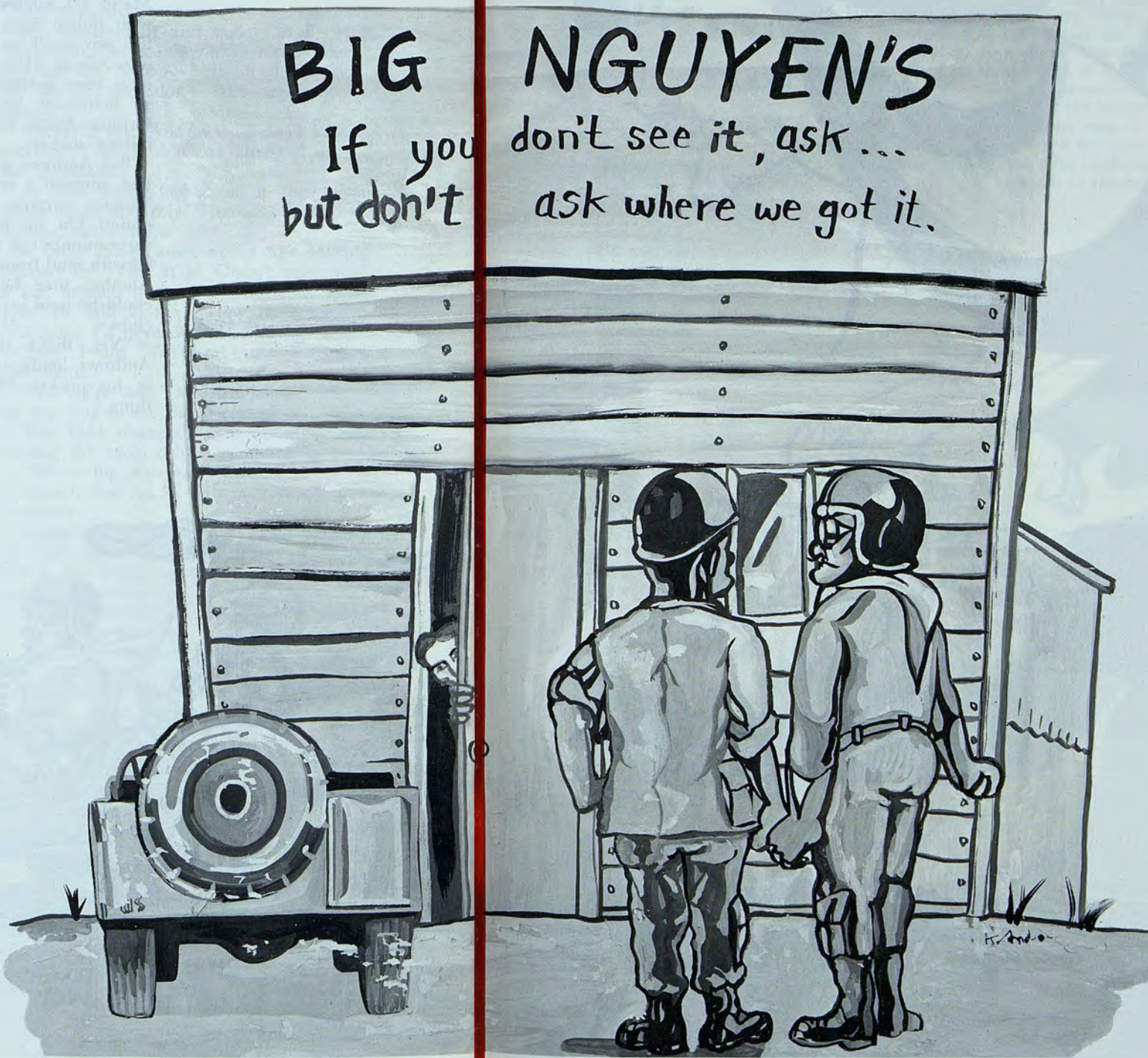
"Yes, but his *business*, the black market, can effect you and me."

"How can my giving this clown \$50 possibly be all that bad?"

"You see, Andrews," I said, adopting a fatherly tone, "if the black market operators don't use the MPC to get goods from the PX, they have several other uses for the funny money the Army pays us with."

"I know," said Andrews. "They play monopoly with it, right?"

"Ha ha. Very funny. Laugh about it next time you get shot at with a rifle that



your MPC bought."

"What do you mean?"

"You think Big Nguyen wants MPC because he likes to look at it? Why, he's going to make a lot of money from suckers like you. He'll get twice as much for your MPC at the next place he takes it to. Or maybe he gets the MPC changed to greenbacks. That happens, you know."

"Well, why should he do that?"

"Elementary, my dear Andrews, elementary." (I wished then that I smoked a pipe.) "The U.S. dollar is an international currency. Other countries will gladly accept dollars. Have you ever tried to buy a pizza in Hoboken with piastres? No. But, you know, you can buy a gun anywhere with greenbacks. So, how do you like those apples?"

"I never thought about that," said Andrews, sheepishly sucking his thumb. "Hey, Big Nguyen, forget about that MPC."

"Then you don't want this fabulous emerald?" asked Big Nguyen.

"I want it, but I'm not using MPC to buy it."

"Rat soup," said Big Nguyen. He tried to snap his fingers in disgust, but they were so sticky that he could not. "Another of my nefarious schemes has been thwarted."

"You're all washed up, Big Nguyen," I said smugly.

"Perhaps," he said. "But there will be others."

"Well, this case is closed," I said. "Let's be off."

"Wait a minute," said Big Nguyen. "Nobody ever walks away from Big Nguyen without a deal. What about that wristwatch you're wearing?"

"What? My Hopalong Cassidy wristwatch? Never," I replied.

"Yes, but you see," said Big Nguyen, "my son is a cowboy in Saigon, and he would love to have a watch like that."

"Any man would give quite a lot to own a Hop Cassidy watch," I said. "But the answer is still 'no'. Let's go, Andrews."

We left Big Nguyen standing there, scratching his head.

A week later upon my return from Australia, I found Andrews waiting for me outside Camp Alpha. He was wearing a Hopalong Cassidy wristwatch, just like mine. I was flattered. At last he had taken a turn for the better.

"Where'd you get the watch?" I asked him.

"Big Nguyen's," he replied.

THE CHILDREN OF THE DRAGON AND THE FAIRY

A Vietnamese Legend

Long ago, the country of China was divided into two parts. The southern half was ruled by a dragon king. When the dragon died, his eldest son ascended the throne under the name of Lac Long Quan. Soon afterward, Lac Long Quan married a fairy named Au Co. Au Co gave birth to 100 sons, now known as the "Bach Viet" (100 Vietnamese).

One day, Lac Long Quan said to Au Co, "I am a dragon, and you are a fairy. We are not compatible. Therefore, I want you to take 50 sons with you into the mountains. The other fifty sons will follow me down to the side of the sea. Lac Long Quan established a country (later to be known as Vietnam) by the side of the Nam Hai (South China) Sea. He chose his eldest son, Hung Vuong, to be its first king. The 100 sons of Lac Long Quan and Au Co are regarded as the ancestors of all the Vietnamese people. The highlanders are the descendants of the 50 sons who followed their fairy-mother into the mountains. Those in the plains and deltas descended from the 50 sons that followed their dragon-father to the edge of the Nam Hai Sea. King Hung Vuong is called the ancestral king. And the Vietnamese people often refer to themselves as the grandchildren of the dragon and the fairy.





Cao Dai Garden