

HAWK

Summer 1972



SIX YEARS

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 1ST AVIATION BRIGADE
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96384

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 1ST AVIATION BRIGADE



From its inception on 25 May 1966 the 1st Aviation Brigade has unfurled countless pages in the saga of Army aviation in Vietnam--vivid documentation to its greatness as a unit. Birth of the brigade sprung from the challenges posed by a war having ill defined boundaries, from demands for the mobility required to ferry soldiers from base camps to jungles within minutes, and from the success experienced by pioneer aviation units in Vietnam.

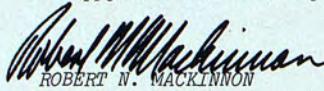
It grew into the largest Army aviation unit ever formed comprising an apex-sized force of 23,000 men and 2,000 aircraft. Providing tactical support for all Free World forces engaged in the conflict, the brigade's aircraft--both fixed- and rotary-wing--have filled the skies twenty-four hours a day throughout the four military regions. As an omnipresent force the brigade has provided troop lift, aerial weapons support, tactical fixed wing transportation, surveillance, reconnaissance and administrative support. The record reflects that the 1st Aviation Brigade has carried 37 million men into battle, evacuated thousands and has been credited with 92 thousand enemy killed.

Our machines have become the symbol of this war. But behind the finest fleet of Army aircraft ever assembled has stood a group of young, eager and well trained professional aviators and soldiers. From our pilots possessing courage, stamina and skill to our crew chiefs and doorgunners with their unlimited energy; from our talented mechanics working through the night to the countless many who kept our records and kept us fed--these men and women of the brigade form a fraternity of Americans that is without equal.

Although the lights have begun to flicker and extinguish where brigade units once made their home and filled the air with life, our departure as a unit from the Vietnam scene is living testimony to our achievements. We have succeeded in our combat mission and will continue to serve with pride and dignity until the brigade takes to the skies for the last time over Vietnam.

To command the "Golden Hawks" is a privilege not only because it is a great combat unit but because I am proud to have served with a group of people whom I respect and admire. The 1st Aviation Brigade has made its mark in the annals of military history. That revered heritage will remain a permanent part of Army aviation and the Golden Hawk story.

A Happy Sixth Anniversary,

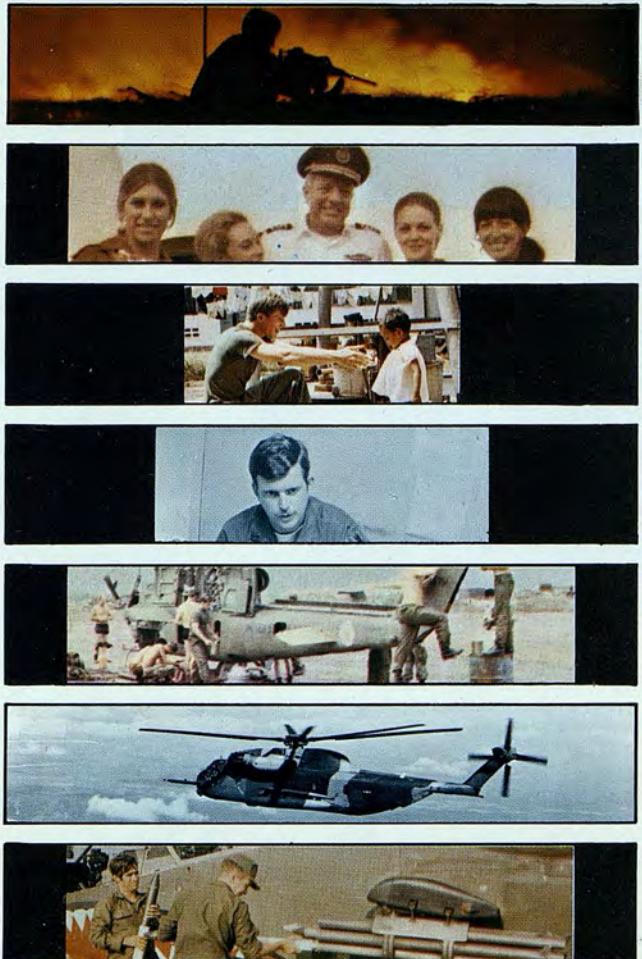

ROBERT N. MACKINNON
Major General, USA
Commanding General



1st Aviation Brigade
Summer 1972
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On the cover, HAWK artist SP5 Ralph S. Chabaud graphically portrays the structural growth, strength and aircraft assets of the 1st Aviation Brigade with his stone composite done in gesso acrylics.



On the back cover, the last rays of sunset ride with this 361st Aerial Weapons Company Cobra as it returns from a mission over Kontum. A prelude to this scene is recounted in "When a Snake Calls, Don't Answer!" beginning on page 26.

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Photos by USARV IO

The average GI assigned to the Vietnam War zone serves a one-year tour. A man who meets this challenge as a "Golden Hawk" of the 1st Aviation Brigade, therefore, is

ONE-SIXTH OF AN ERA

The affinity of men for machines has been epitomized in the 1st Aviation Brigade. Cementing the relationship are such factors as necessity, environment and effectiveness, so that one can appreciate the machines without losing sight of the efforts and sacrifices of the men. The first two factors may be taken almost as one; a hostile environment, marked by no distinct front-line combat, created a great need for a powerful, exceptionally mobile air capability. The ill-defined battle line grew sharper as the war was carried to the sky, and on May 25, 1966, the 1st Aviation Brigade joined the Army's official force structure.

The machines have changed since the beginning. The oldest companies in the brigade, the 117th and 120th (formerly the 8th and 57th Transportation Companies), arrived in Vietnam in 1961, establishing a place for Army aviation before the brigade was begun. The companies brought "Flying Bananas," aircraft which have since departed the combat zone.

This change required human intelligence and judgment, as did countless other decisions to renovate, expand and tailor the 1st Aviation Brigade to the face of the Vietnam War as it was unveiled at various times. The machines affected and were affected by the conflict, but it was people who analyzed the mercurian situation and devised the machines.

Presented below are the viewpoints of several individuals within the brigade. We feel they are responsible and, because of their differing positions within the organization, can present a history of the brigade as it relates to its most valuable asset.

The initial years of 1st Aviation Brigade are remembered as "a very dynamic period" by one of its charter members, COL R. Joe Rogers, brigade Chief of Staff. Speaking from his experience as 14th Combat Aviation Battalion commander and then I Corps aviation advisor in 1965-66, COL Rogers remembers, "We were constantly opening new installations. Units which were here when the build-up started sponsored new

certainly proven the air mobility concept and now it is a way of life for the Army," asserts COL Rogers.

In the early years of the war, the Army aviators were flying in support of ARVN, but by the time the brigade was organized, American involvement had mushroomed to the point that aviation units were flying mainly for American soldiers. "At that time, we did most of the flying," notes COL Rogers. "We were carrying by far

In the Beginning by SP5 D. E. Schwartz

units into the country. We procured real estate for them, we designed installations, we helped the units get on their feet." Although at present, entire installations are being dismantled, COL Rogers recalls, "at that time it was build, build, build."

The necessity of air mobility in Vietnam was obvious and aviation assets increased to meet the demand. "The number of companies kept multiplying to provide the tremendous amount of aviation support which was required," the colonel says. The 12th Combat Aviation Group had been formed in Saigon in 1965. The next year necessity called for another group and the 17th was born at Nha Trang. "Once we got two aviation groups, it was necessary to form an aviation headquarters to supervise them," explains COL Rogers, "and that's where 1st Aviation Brigade came in.

"I think everybody had a very optimistic attitude and the feeling that we were prepared for something very big," the charter member said, recalling the mood at the time 1st Aviation Brigade was officially launched in May, 1966. "Those of us who had spent a number of years in aviation were in a very significant period of our lives and in the life of the United States Army, especially that of aviation. We were getting the opportunity to prove the concepts which had been developed during the preceding years. The war has

the brunt of the war and ours was a very active program throughout the theater."

The deputy brigade commander for operations, COL John A. Todd, reviews the brigade from the vantage point of having served it at all levels of command; he was the commanding officer of the 145th and 210th Combat Aviation Battalions and the 17th Combat Aviation Group during his first Vietnam tour (July, 1967,

Tet, 1968: The defense of Bien Hoa



through March, 1969), and his mind reels with memories of those years.

"Most of the support in '67 through '68 and '69 was flown in support of the Americans. The name of the game then was support of U.S. troops," summarizes COL Todd, pointing out that the "Golden Hawks" also gave command-and-control and some combat assault support to the Vietnamese and Korean armies fighting in Vietnam.

Resupply and airlifts were flown in the Caribou; the Otter was used for general courier, special missions

When COL Rogers and his comrades sensed they were prepared for something big, they were right. As the war continued, air power was seen as the decisive blade which could cut away the muscle and sever the sinews of the enemy. Command lines were forged to ensure coordination and resilience. This planning and organization, taking into account the types and capabilities of every aircraft, paid generous dividends. Outlined below are four major actions—one defensive, three offensive—which, but for careful planning by the brigade's leaders, would have had different results.

Army aviation's involvement in the Vietnam War began on the warm morning of December 23, 1961, when the crews of the 57th Transportation Company, peering from the interiors of old H-21 "Flying Bananas," ferried a battalion of Vietnamese paratroopers into a Viet Cong infested area outside of Saigon. The doorgunners on that first mission, armed only with M-14 rifles, watched with intensity as the tall elephant grass and rice paddies passed, not knowing when the guerrillas would strike.

The Huey replaced the Flying Banana in 1964, and the doorgunners mentioned above would have felt a great deal safer had they manned miniguns or M-60 machineguns instead of M-14s. The aircraft and weaponry employed by the Allied forces have changed. The war itself remained the same in essence but grew in intensity, erupting into several major battles which underlined the necessity for Army aviation.

By 1966, the brigade was participating in the large, multibattalion sweeps of the war—Operations Paul Revere, Attleboro and Cedar Rapids, to name a few. It wasn't until the early morning hours of February 22, 1967, however, that the full capabilities of Army aviation were realized. The American choppers filled the skies in the region known as "War Zone C" near the Cambodian border, signaling the launching of Operation Junction City. In what was probably the largest operation of its kind, brigade units helilifted three com-

and light cargo; and the Huey—the versatile craft which became, more than anything else, the symbol of the Vietnam War—was flying the combat assaults.

The brigade reached its peak number of personnel in 1970—more than 23,000 men and women, which is larger than many Army divisions—but by that time the U.S. commitment of men was already declining. "The pendulum began to swing in '69 and by '71 many of our U.S. units were phasing out," COL Todd recalls. "But we retained our aviation and our support was swinging more to the ARVN again."

When COL Rogers and his comrades sensed they were prepared for something big, they were right. As the war continued, air power was seen as the decisive blade which could cut away the muscle and sever the sinews of the enemy. Command lines were forged to ensure coordination and resilience. This planning and organization, taking into account the types and capabilities of every aircraft, paid generous dividends. Outlined below are four major actions—one defensive, three offensive—which, but for careful planning by the brigade's leaders, would have had different results.

with every man acting to stop the Communist juggernaut hurtling throughout South Vietnam during the Tet holidays. On the night of January 31, 1968, enemy units throughout Vietnam launched a coordinated wave of attacks against Allied positions and installations. The 1st Aviation Brigade's reaction was speedy and certain. COL John A. Todd, deputy brigade commander for operations, was a participant in the battle, and he saw the situation as follows: "All of our units countrywide reacted quickly to the attacks during Tet. We were moving infantry to meet the enemy contacts, as well as resupplying beleaguered outposts." Many 1st Aviation units were credited with preventing installations from falling into enemy hands. In one major instance, COL Todd observed, the 334th Aerial Weapons Company was a major factor in the defense of Bien Hoa, which faced the serious threat of being overrun.

Redeployment of American troops began the next year, and it became increasingly evident that the aviation units would be the last to leave the war zone. What held the 1st Aviation Brigade to Vietnam was a new mission, that of supporting South Vietnamese military personnel as they took on larger and larger shares of their country's defense. In addition, there was the task of training Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) pilots to fly and maintain the various aircraft we had introduced.

But twice during these years of transition and rede-

Hot and Heavy by CPT James V. Soriano

plete infantry brigades of the 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions in less than eight hours.

Later that year, brigade supported the 4th Infantry Division during the fierce fighting around Dak To in the Central Highlands. The battle broke off on Thanksgiving Day, and the Chinooks of the 213th Assault Support Helicopter Company flew hot turkey dinners to the tired troopers during resupply missions.

The New Year brought total brigade commitment,

ployment the brigade found itself committed in large-scale operations. In the spring of 1970, 1st Aviation units flew American and Vietnamese ground forces into Cambodia in an attempt to delay enemy operations in that area. And again in early 1971, the brigade played a key role in Operation Lam Son 719, the South Vietnamese incursion into Laos.

These were big events, notches on the tree to mark 1st Aviation Brigade's growth.



The preceding views of 1st Aviation Brigade dealt with the organization—why it was put together and how it has served the Allied cause. But, again, an organization is a collection of people. Pasted together by an abstract concept though they may be, they retain their individuality and feel each experience differently. What, then, can be said of the experience of being a "Golden Hawk?" To partially answer this question, we have selected two men who have spent more than the customary one-year tour. The subject speaking in "Season Ticket" has served continuously with the brigade for four years; a senior NCO, he prefers not to be identified. MAJ Schrand, on the other hand, has alternated duty in Vietnam with stateside assignments and therefore had a chance to readily see differences in the brigade at the beginning of each tour.

In 1967, when I was first assigned as a PFC to the brigade, it was right after they moved up here from Tan Son Nhut. The headquarters was up in four

Season Ticket by CPT R. N. Appleby

of the wooden barracks that are now part of Headquarters Company. We must have been the first ones to live there, because we were the ones who had to build all the bunkers, latrines and showers.

"Things were a little more active then. We had a lot more alerts—mostly practice—and incoming every now and then. You didn't have to have someone call you up to tell you there was an alert or incoming. The post was smaller then, and when something was happening, you knew! We also worked a 12-hour day, from 6:30 in the morning to 6:30 at night. That's what it was supposed to be, anyway; actually, we always had to work until about 7:30 or 8 at night to get caught up with all of the paperwork.

"I was here for Tet of '68. Things really got started with a bang. On January 22 the VC blew up the ammo

dump, and that signaled the start. Long Binh was hit a week later. They hit the 90th Replacement Battalion, and Plantation was under siege for about three days. No one could get off post even if he wanted to. When the bodies started piling up in the road outside the perimeter, we just left them there. It must have been a good psychological deterrent for the VC to have to crawl over their buddies' decaying bodies to get to the wire.

"Tet of '69 wasn't quite so rough, mostly 122mm rockets and mortars. The general's and deputy brigade commander's aircraft used to be parked in the revetments on the Hawk Pad, and the VC kept trying to hit them with rockets. They never did hit them, but they did blow away a latrine that used to be in back of the motor pool.

"Things haven't really changed very much since the brigade started out. We have more units to look after now, so there is more paperwork, but we have more people to do it. That's the one thing that has been characteristic of the brigade: the constant changeover of personnel. New people all the time, and a lot of people, like me, have come back for two or three tours with the brigade."

On his first Vietnam tour (1963-64) MAJ Gregory



Round Trip by SP4 Henry Beutler

J. Schrand was with an aviation unit before the 1st Aviation Brigade was born. His second tour saw him with a brigade unit, the 180th Assault Support Helicopter Company, at that time part of the 17th Combat Aviation Group. He flew direct combat and combat support, as on his first tour. After his 1967-68 tour he returned to stateside duty until he received orders to come back a third time in September of 1971. On his present tour he is working in the aircraft systems branch at brigade headquarters.

"When I first got to Vietnam in 1963 Army aviation, even while not 1st Aviation Brigade, was much like

it is today," MAJ Schrand said. "There were about 50,000 Americans here. At that time we were doing about the same things we are today—supporting the ARVN. On my second tour, however, my first with the brigade, our mission was more in support of Korean and American troops.

"At the present time we are flying less than in 1963 because the ARVN are taking some of the load from us again. I guess we were at about our peak when I was here in 1967-68, though. I was on R and R during the Tet Offensive, so I only caught the last two weeks and missed most of that action.

"There's been an enormous change within the brigade since my first tour with it," the major said in conclusion. "We're still responsible for about 50 percent of the aviation in Vietnam, but we're flying only one-half as much as during my first tour with the brigade."

Men, machines and war. The machines made the war and the men made the machines. From assembly line to the Mekong Delta . . . Central Highlands . . . DMZ. Machineguns sang dirges and 40mm grenade launchers provided percussion as the brigade's not-quite-angelic forces winged in, bringing peace and security to this troubled land. The machines met the requirements, but memory belongs to men. They are the ones who will deliver, in various accents and manners, the history of the 1st Aviation Brigade, as they have done here.

I'm Your Captain

*I've been lost now days uncounted
And it's months since I've seen
home
Can you hear me
Can you hear me
Or am I all alone*

*If you return me to my home, boy
I will kiss you Mother Earth.
Take me back now
Take me back now
To the port of my birth*

*I'm getting closer to my world
I'm getting closer to my home
I'm getting closer to my home . . .*

—grand funk

The early morning air was occasionally shattered by the whine of a propeller-driven aircraft as it unlimbered for take-off. It was difficult to follow the ground traffic pattern in the paling greyness aside from blinking green and red lights

darted across the approach apron, heedfully avoiding the tiny service carts and vehicles moving with maximum efficiency about the flight line.

Through the terminal doors and into this jungle of noise and activity, carrying a headset, clipboard and envelope, moved an important man. His stride, conveying a knowledge of what lay ahead, carried him to his white Volkswagen square-back. The auto looked dwarfish beside the myriad of buildings and equipment.

He climbed behind the wheel and aimed the car towards the flight coordinator's shack, his first stop of the morning. Moments later he entered the base of the control tower, location of airport weather and operations and the heart of most airport activities, both on the ground and in the air. As the warmth of a day promising to be sultry became more evident, he moved methodically towards his final schedul-



Gail Simpson directs ground operations while speaking on the intercom with the Continental crew.

Tail Winds All the Way

that dotted the movement of taxiing planes. But it was something to do in the 6 o'clock darkness of the Tan Son Nhut civilian airport that Sunday morning.

Before long the obscurity of the predawn bustle turned into a more obvious array of airport activities once the sun stole from behind its 12-hour blanket. In the scene silhouetted against the long ribbon of hangars and warehouses, people

ed check point, the communications building, where he gathered up incoming messages addressed to him.

Nothing was unusual about these early-bird activities of R.G. (Gail) Simpson, the Saigon manager and representative for Continental Airlines. They are basically the same each time one of its MAC (Military Airlift Command) flights touches down at Tan Son Nhut. Since August of 1964, just one month prior to Continental's first transoceanic air-ferry of American GIs to Vietnam, as the airline's sole Vietnam agent he has run this preflight arrival circuit countless times in preparation for the landing of these aerial giants.

That day's flight—impersonally referred to as H2A2/27—was running late because of a forced return to Guam for repairs; a ruptured

hydraulic line had been discovered shortly after take-off. But at 7:56 it made its final approach over Saigon, slowed as the flaps were extended and carried its 116 travel-weary passengers to a runway surface on the fringe of the capital of what was to become their "home away from home" during the months to come.

As the graceful Boeing 707 taxied to a halt near the terminal building, the chalks were placed under the wheels, the boarding steps were rolled into position and the refueling began. At the same time, Gail Simpson was able to talk with the 27-year veteran pilot, CPT Gordon Nygren, by plugging his headset into an external intercom under the cone-shaped nose of the aircraft.

Four Army buses came deceptively wheeling around the corner

Story by MAJ Bill Smullen



Expressions vary as the servicemen descend the boarding steps at Tan Son Nhut.

and stopped at the base of the steps, ready to receive the GIs as they exited the aircraft. Once the forward hatch was opened, a MACV representative went aboard to deliver the customary "Gentlemen, welcome to the Republic of Vietnam" pitch, which was met with yawns, groans, frowns or knowing grins, depending on how many times a man had heard the same delivery.

Directions as to what to do and where to go were followed by shuffling into position along the narrow aisle that transformed a clear passageway into a cluttered mass of uniformed charges. But before the descent began, two attractive, shapely stewardesses positioned themselves near the exit to offer a smile, a good-bye or a brief wish of luck.

Their bright expressions never altered as the men passed by, some nodding, others silent, a few thanking them for their assistance.

Once the waiting buses were filled and their doors swung shut, the ship's crew busily readied the aircraft for the return trip. While the cockpit crew, consisting of the captain and the first and second officers, prepared their flight plan, the five stewardesses tidied the cabin by retrieving magazines and pillows. They busily worked in the forward galley preparing a hot meal to be served when once again they were airborne. A great deal of precision was evident during their brief 50-minute layover, and there was even time for them to rest a few minutes before the next group of passengers was shuttled from terminal to plane.

The brief interlude offered an opportunity to converse with the crew. Each member was a volunteer for the West Coast-to-Saigon-and-return route. Their reasons for having selected flight duty which brought American soldiers, sailors and airmen to Vietnam and home again varied, but one point was universal as they spoke: each enjoyed the clientele and a brief exposure to the type of man who serves that



Who says it's not fun to be an airline pilot? Captain Nygren appears to be enjoying his work.

tour of duty overseas.

First Officer Pete Ingwersen typified the attitude of the crew. The German-born American is a former Army aviator who as a captain flew Bird Dogs and Beavers for six years before leaving the service to join Continental. He said he simply likes flying for "his type of people." Whenever possible he actively searches out conversation with Army pilots aboard his flights. Swapping stories and discovering what is happening in Army aviation—even meeting an occasional officer he knew while on active duty—



There's always work to be done in preparing for the next group of passengers, but because of their efficiency, the stewardesses are able to take time out for a welcomed breather.





Happiness is stepping aboard a Freedom Bird and being greeted with a pretty smile.



makes his trips more interesting than the ordinarily impersonal relationship between those in the cockpit and the passengers.

Stewardesses swapping anecdotes turned out to be a genuine listening experience. It was as if a scenario had been worked up and they were but part of the verbal drama which unfolded in those few minutes they talked. For each young lady narrated stories which to them were special incidents aboard flights bound for The World.

Each had, at one time or another, collected her share of rank and unit insignia, of ribbons and badges, of patches and name tags, and each of these in turn was a treasure in its own right. There was the story of the plane load of Marines who danced in the aisles for a full five hours with the stewardesses. And the one of the Army chaplain who boarded his Freedom Bird sporting a hippie wig which helped set the appropriate tone for the flight home.

But one incident stood out above all the rest and was related by one

of the girls, Elaine Cocayne, who has been flying the route for four and one-half years: Aboard a flight destined for San Francisco, her crew was due to be replaced by another during a scheduled stop in Okinawa. As the passengers filed out for a few minutes to stretch their legs, a Marine walked up to Elaine, handed her a present neatly wrapped in plain paper and asked her not to open it until she left the airplane. Some time later when she opened the box, much to her sur-

prise, she found a diamond engagement ring. Having never seen the Marine again, she still doesn't know the whys and wherefores behind the gift.

This seemed a fitting conclusion to the conversation, for at that moment more Army buses pulled up with human cargo anxious to set an easterly course for home. The mood of the new group was significantly different from that of the men who left the aircraft shortly before. There was an expression of both

relief and anxiety built into almost every face as the men ascended the boarding stairs. Once again the stewardesses stood at the open hatch and greeted each man with a smile and a "hello."

Each man was made to feel important, and to this Continental flight crew that seemed a genuine expression of what they felt. The thousands of MAC flights, carrying tens of thousands of servicemen are perhaps, more often than not, taken for granted by those who ride as passengers. There are some truly devoted crews who with pride go about their job of serving the Saigon-and San Francisco-bound GIs.

As the forward hatch was closed by Mr. Simpson, the stairs were rolled away, and the strident noise of four huge jet engines rose to a familiar pitch. Intense heat filled the surrounding air as the impressive machine was guided into a taxiing position. It slowly picked up speed moving toward the runway and disappeared temporarily behind the structured landscape of buildings.

By the time Gail Simpson had dropped the flight plan at operations, the Boeing was cleared for



Each man is made to feel important.



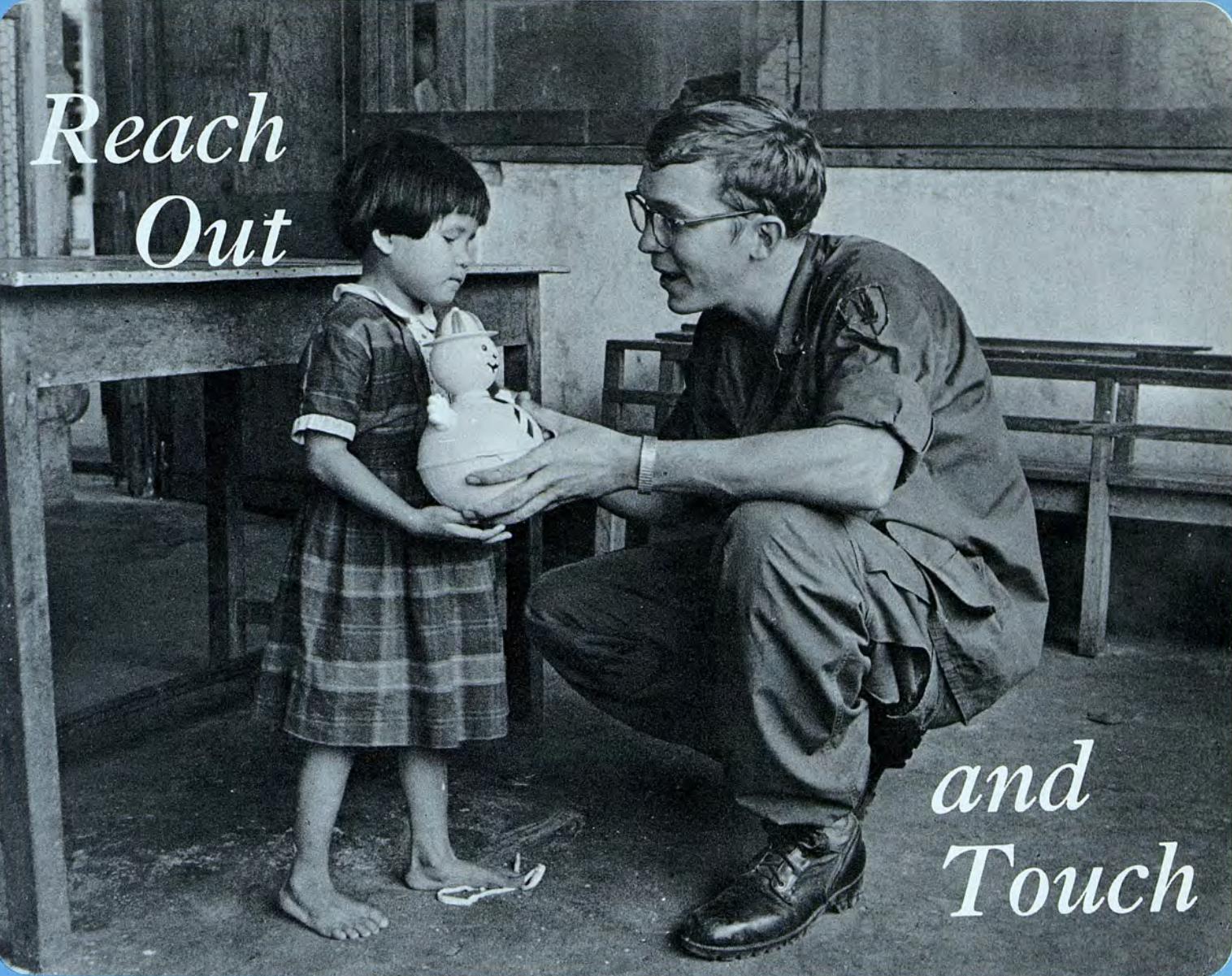
"Welcome aboard our flight to The World."

SMULLEN

Story and Photos
by SP5 D. E. Schwartz



Finding this child sad and alone under a table, SP4 Mike Hanson coaxes a smile from her by giving her a toy.



Whenever Americans have been called to participate in foreign wars, they have, in addition to their military duties, consistently dedicated themselves to the youngest victims of those campaigns—the war orphans. In Vietnam, 1st Aviation Brigade units are spending countless hours at charitable institutions. From Quang Tri to Can Tho, men and women are often foregoing a day of relaxation for a Sunday afternoon changing diapers and doing maintenance work.

Why do they do it? The answer is rooted in a love for people, especially the young and helpless. "You see so much need here," begins a specialist from brigade headquarters, where a typical group has been organized to help the children of Tan Mai Orphanage near Long Binh Post. "When we first started coming out here, the kids were running around in rags. The same war that had produced them was also denying them decent clothes. A lot of the kids

had sores on their bodies. Three- and four year-olds were still on the bottle, because there are just so many kids and not enough adults to teach them to eat. I've got a son of my own and he keeps both me and my wife busy." The orphanage, operated by Catholic nuns, is home for 150 children, about 30 of them infants. "I don't know how the Sisters can manage so many."

The orphanage is a model of discipline; the teenage girls help care for the younger children, freeing the nuns to go about the task of educating them. Also living at Tan Mai are several women, some of them orphans themselves as long as 60 years ago, who do the laundry (including over 600 diapers a day) and the cooking.

The Tan Mai project began last summer when several personnel specialists "just wanted to do something for some kids." Fighting the red tape of getting an offpost vehicle dispatch and clearance for

*and
Touch*

themselves, the men made Sunday visits as regularly as operational requirements permitted. "We couldn't get off Long Binh during the Vietnamese presidential elections or during Tet," noted one man, "and I really missed our visits." By last November, enthusiasm for the project had grown to the point where a board of governors was organized. Headed by MAJ H. M. Smith, assistant adjutant general, 10 men and women coordinated the orphanage efforts.

Visitors to the institution wrote to their friends and relatives about the needs of the orphanage, and soon drives for clothing, toys and other baby needs were underway at stateside Army posts, churches and schools. MAJ Smith had also contacted producers of baby products in the United States and has received a donation of formula from one firm. Tons of gifts have now been given to the orphanage through the efforts of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company group.

A donor deposit fund was also established to re-

ceive and administer monetary gifts. Contributions are coming from concerned individuals and organizations in the United States, and donations are being made regularly on paydays at headquarters.

Sanitation projects were high on the list of priorities as brigade members worked at the orphanage, and the GIs spent several Sundays scrubbing, mopping and painting. Some buildings were rewired and the institution's only washing machine is now operative again.

Five months after he began visiting Tan Mai Orphanage, one GI assessed the Americans' contributions. He mentioned the physical improvements and then emphasized, "But I think the most important thing we've done here is just loving these kids. I



"Make this a better world if you can."



Exchanging affection with the children has been the highlight of the Vietnam tour for some Americans. SP4 Randy Fairley greets a child dressed up in clothes from the United States while PFC Bruce Story plays with an orphan. Showing that someone does care, SPS Marlene Bowen cuddles an infant, and MAJ Smith strengthens his relationship with a young girl.



remember when we first came out here, the kids were pretty shy. They needed somebody to hug them and just play games with them, but we were strangers. But as the Sundays passed, the kids became more and more affectionate. Now they come running up to meet us when we're getting off the truck. It's an emotional experience we all get a lot out of."

Another man held a little girl on his lap, entertaining her with his ballpoint pen. He was surprised when a Sister told him the orphan is 3 years old. "I've got a daughter myself that age," he said and began comparing his own child to the one on his lap. "Mine's much taller and talks and smiles all the time. You see so few of them smiling around here. Compared to what we enjoy at home, these kids lead

pretty austere lives."

The beneficiaries of brigade orphanage projects throughout Vietnam are lauding the American soldiers. Half a year after the headquarters group began its regular visits, one of the Tan Mai officials, Sister Rosalie, reviewed the visitors' accomplishments and contributions to the institution. The orphanage receives very little support other than from private sources, so the soldiers' gifts of food, clothing, medicines and labor are helping Tan Mai survive a critical period of its history. Sister Rosalie also noted with a broad smile the GIs' emotional impact on the orphans. "The children love the Americans very much," she emphasized.

Looking forward to his return to the States, a brigade man declared, "I think helping at this orphanage is the most significant experience of my Vietnam tour. It's when you directly help people like this that you feel that maybe you really did help the Vietnamese."

As tour curtailments ordered men home months earlier than originally scheduled, concerned individuals at brigade units throughout the Republic took steps to insure future support of the Vietnamese orphans. Continuing individual contributions have been pledged, and plans are being formulated to insure continuing support of the orphanage. In this way, even after the peace these GIs helped win has allowed them to return home, the love expressed by the 1st Aviation Brigade for the orphans of this war will continue to be perpetuated.



Tons of gifts from stateside Army posts, churches and schools have been delivered to the institution.



As Aviation Medical Officer, CPT (Dr.) James Redenbaugh gives a thorough flight physical that keeps brigade aviators ready to fly.

On the Ground —Or in It?

Story by SP4 Henry Beutler

Photos by SP5 Christopher J. Pease

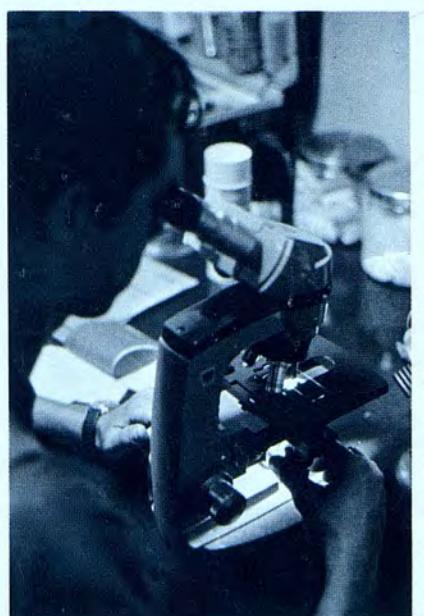
"I'm sorry, Sir, but you'll have to stay on the ground for a few days."

"But, really Doc, I feel fine. I just have a little head cold. It won't bother me."

"But the medication I gave you might. You know the rules. I'd let you fly if I could, you know that; but think what could happen if you made one mistake up there."

The above is a conversation that could very well take place—and

Taking blood counts and checking bacteriology stains are important facets of each flight physical.



probably has—in the 1st Aviation Brigade's 17 dispensaries. It sounds like harsh treatment to ground a pilot or a crew member because of a cold, but in aviation a minor ailment could result in injury and death for passengers and crew.

The job of the surgeons and medics is, of course, a lot more than just grounding flight crews. Their job covers everything from flight physicals to checking the safety equipment aboard all the aircraft. These men are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for any medical emergency that may arise.

"We consider the Army aviator the cream of the crop of Army personnel," says CPT (Dr.) William R. Stauffer, surgeon at the 431st Medical Detachment at Plantation. "Therefore, we see that they get the best care we can give them." This is the typical feeling of all the men in the 1st Aviation Brigade's medical detachments.

The flight surgeon is probably the Army's most qualified doctor. After finishing medical school and his internship he begins his Army career by taking a five-week course in Army medicine at Ft. Sam Houston, Tex., after which he is commissioned an officer. He then proceeds to Ft. Rucker, Ala., where he attends a seven-week training course in aviation medicine.

When his assignment comes in, it'll probably be for a 1st Aviation Brigade dispensary, where he'll supervise medical efforts to keep the fly boys flying.

The dispensary is always a busy place, with eight or nine people treating or examining more than 700 people per month and giving 35 to 40 flight physicals during the

same period. Their clientele is not limited to 1st Aviation Brigade personnel; on many posts they provide medical treatment for everyone stationed there. Even on the larger posts they provide flight physicals for the men who man and fly the aircraft, including the "dustoff" crews.

The surgeons don't do this by themselves; most of the detachments have eight Army personnel and one Vietnamese national assigned to them. There is an NCO who acts as First Sergeant of the detachment and, along with the medical records clerk, keeps the administrative duties functioning properly and the records up to date. There are also three medical specialists who examine and treat minor ailments. They are assisted by one clinical technician and one laboratory technician. The Vietnamese national works as an interpreter for the Vietnamese who work in the mess halls, snack bars and as hootch maids on the Army posts when they require medical attention. The surgeon is the man who has the bulk of the responsibility, however, clearing the pilots and crews for flying and giving the final decision to the patient for almost any illness.

A big part of each individual's job in the dispensary is getting to know his patients. He must know how each one reacts to certain med-

ications. He must also be able to spot nervousness or stress so that he can tell when a man is becoming fatigued. Fatigue is one of nature's deadliest weapons against the aviator. When altitude and fatigue are combined, it means almost certain trouble, and it strikes in many ways; pilots have gone into a trance-like condition, become overly excited or lost their sense of direction because of vertigo.

For most pilots and crewmen, this business of grounding is not something they enjoy. Their job is in the air, and they want to be at it. Yet a conscientious aviator will not ignore his health, realizing the



Miss Canh, a Vietnamese licensed practical nurse, acts as the 129th Medical Detachment interpreter and helps to make taking a physical more pleasant.



Filling prescriptions and handling the administrative functions is the job of the detachment NCOIC.

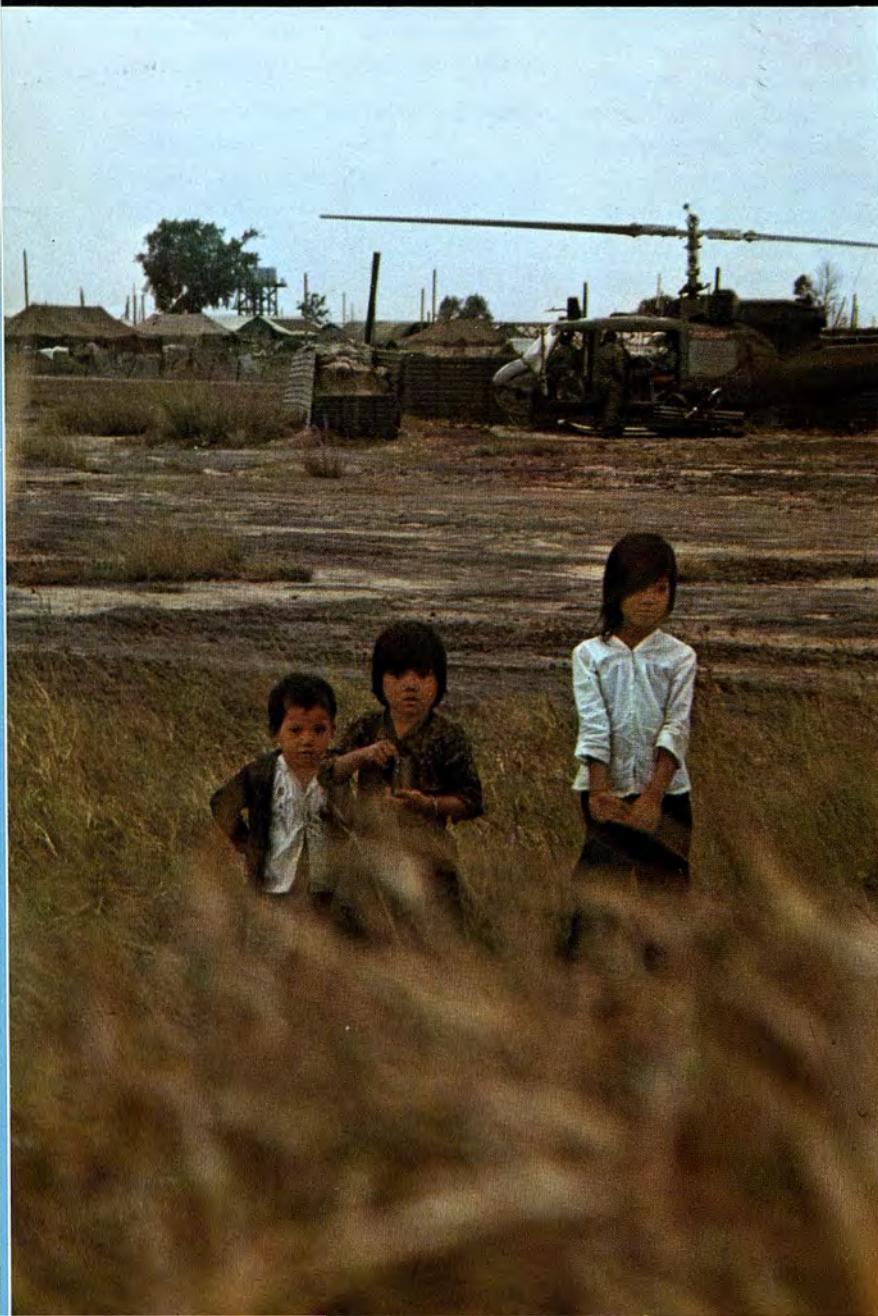
damage that could result from impaired faculties. At worst, he'll be temporarily grounded. But the aviator who thinks he can handle anything and refuses to check with the doctor will be grounded permanently, and he's likely to take his aircraft and passengers with him.

Battlefield, Playground:

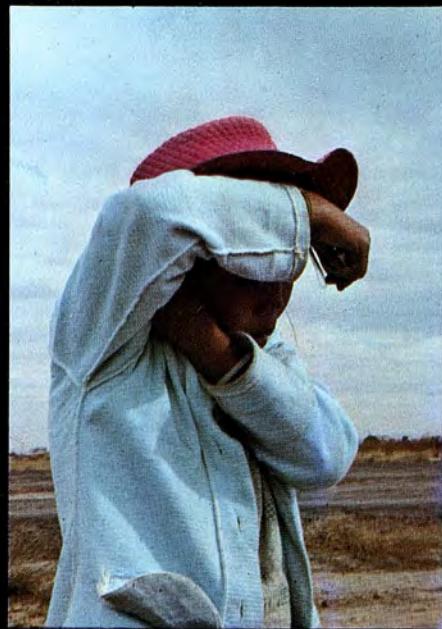
Same Same

Photos and Verse

by SP5 Joseph J. Kelley



**At every place and time,
War is
death on children.
They are the first to
feel
Pain, loneliness, suffering.**





**War is
DEATH
DESTRUCTION
HUNGER**

**And the begging.
You can see it in their faces.
The war is
from
Morning
to
Morning.**



**This is
the highest cost
of war.**

From the Chaplain

Chaplain (CPT) Francis P. Simeone
145th Combat Aviation Battalion

It is interesting to observe that our modern society is so little impressed and hardly influenced at all by fear tactics. Notice, for example, that cigarette smoking is supposed to be dangerous to one's health and yet relatively few have stopped smoking because of this threat. The horrible consequences of hard drug abuse has neither altered the consciences of pushers nor decreased the demand of users. The threats of authority have not weakened dissent nor has the fear of Hell seemed to be an effective deterrent of sin.

More important, though, than interesting, is the fact that even when fear, the fear of consequences or simply the fear of getting caught,

does deter one from certain behavior, usually it does not contribute to one's personality growth. And this is as it should be.

Personality growth, the building of character, reforming one's life—call it by any name you like—is only consistently and permanently effected when one tries to meet the challenge of what is the very best in the person. When human qualities such as personal integrity, sincerity, responsibility, fidelity to commitments and friendship determine one's behavior and construct a system of values, it is only then that life has been put in its proper perspective.

Yet even this is not enough. There is still something lacking.

The frosting on the cake of the human challenge is when one adds a spiritual dimension to his life. This spiritual dimension is called faith, which is both an awareness and a response to the reality and importance of God in one's individual and communal life. For the believer, this faith is an imperative, not merely the luxury of a good-natured person. For unless one adds the dimension of faith to his life, then he truly has something to fear. It is the worst kind of fear. It is the kind of fear that John Henry Newman spoke about when he said, "Fear not that your life will come to an end, fear rather it may never have a beginning."



Editorial: It's What You Make It

Vietnam.

Months of it. A year of it. Maybe more.

From assignment through countdown to "a wakeup" and soon Vietnam will be a series of memories.

And when we get back to The World, what will we find this tour means to us? How will our having been here affect us after our return home?

For the professional soldier, this tour will be one of the more significant of his career. For the rest of us, it helped fulfill a military obligation. And for all of us, regardless of the conditions under which we were brought here, our tour in Vietnam can be either a stumbling block or a building block. We can curse it and tell ourselves what great things we could have pursued on our own if only Vietnam hadn't come along; on the other hand, we can accept it as an opportunity for an invaluable learning experience.

Vietnam, if we were paying any attention, should have taught us many things; it offered us clues to everything from "Who am I?" to "What's going on in the World?" We met and worked with new people, we endured physical and mental discomforts, we put up with the frustrations typical of military life, and in the meantime, we had to adjust to being separated from family and friends. And if, at any time, we ever did forget, we were quickly reminded that there was, indeed, a war still going on. Our experiences and feelings in Vietnam were at times good enough to be called enjoyable; at other times, they were closer to traumatic. But throughout the tour, we were afforded countless lessons about war and peace and love and hate—on international, professional and personal levels

—and how these affect us. These discoveries can be invaluable if we remember them when we return to the States.

It has been noted that war brings out the worst and the best in people. We have to recognize that whatever we were here in Vietnam was because of what we are as individuals, moreso than what the Army is or what Vietnam is. If we did our best as GIs in Vietnam, regardless of our attitude toward the Army or toward this war, we will probably do our best in future ventures. If, however, we cultivated an I-don't-even-give-a-damn attitude and allowed ourselves to wallow in self-pity and mediocrity—existing only to get shorter—we will have to work harder to develop a positive attitude toward our work in the future, whether civilian or military.

We must remember that when we return home, we will not instantly be transformed into what we were before this tour, and we won't be able to "pick up where we left off." Our worlds did not stop while we were away; we have changed and so have those to whom we are returning. Our relationships have been shaken—some strengthened, some weakened—and this tour should have taught us just how important those relationships are.

As we prepare to go home, we must review our lives here to determine what our worst is and what our best is and make the necessary adjustments to those weaknesses and strengths. No matter what our tour may have been, we can use it to our advantage if we remember the lessons we learned in Vietnam.





Like an infant it passed through adolescence developing the strength necessary for adulthood. Like a chemist in quest of a scientific break-through it constantly refined techniques. And like a successful business structure always striving to become even better it proved itself a worthy and invaluable combat unit in Vietnam. The proud story of this brigade unit is significant for it is representative of many other units within 1st Aviation Brigade—units not conceived as groups of static performers but cast in the role of organizations pursuing achievement. After a decade of distinguished services, the U. S. Army in Vietnam says

Farewell to the First Guns

The Utility Tactical Transport Helicopter Company arrived in Vietnam with a new concept—the armed helicopter. That was July, 1962. Now, after almost 10 years of expanding and developing new concepts for use throughout the brigade and after several changes of unit designation, the first gun company, now the 334th Aerial Weapons Company, has gone home. The UTT was activated in July,

1961, on Okinawa. During that first year, before assuming its mission in Vietnam, it experimented with various jury-rigged armament systems for the first UH-1 helicopters. These early experiments, which included the use of automatic carbines, M-14 and M-16 rifles (usually scrounged from Special Forces units) and the M-60 machinegun suspended from the aircraft's ceiling by an elastic bungee

cord were the beginnings of the armament systems of the UTT Helicopter Company. After its arrival in Vietnam the unit continued experiments with larger weapons, such as adapting the 2.75 folding fin aerial rocket launcher for helicopter use.

Throughout its first years in the combat theater, the UTT served as the pilot unit in developing armed helicopter techniques and tactics

Story by CPT R.N. Appleby



APPLEBY *Giving a Cobra a steambath and rubdown requires team effort.*

that were later to become standard for aerial operations. One of these was the "Eagle Flight," which was designed to provide a combat force of gunships and helicopter-borne troops that could be deployed to a designated area on short notice. In its early days, the company was a pet project of BG Joseph Stilwell Jr., commander of the Vietnam Support Command, who flew many combat hours as a doorgunner with the UTT's "Saber" Fire Team. By June, 1963, the armed helicopter concept had proved so effective that several other units received armament systems and were assisted and trained by personnel of the UTT. In October of 1963, the Hughes Tool Company's Army Aviation Unit of the Year Award was presented to the UTT Helicopter Company in recognition of its trailblazing efforts.

The company was redesignated the 68th Aviation Company in August, 1964, and in March of the following year it became the 197th Aviation Company. The company had its finest hours under this latter name. For its actions at Duc Hoa in April, 1965, the 197th was awarded the first Presidential Unit Citation to be presented in Vietnam. In August, 1966, it received the Meritorious Unit Citation.

Following a move to Bien Hoa from Tan Son Nhut, the 197th sent its colors to Ft. Benning, Ga., to join the 197th Light Infantry Brigade. The officers and men, aircraft and their tradition remained at Bien Hoa as the new 334th Armed Helicopter Company to provide aviation support for counter-

insurgency operations in the III Corps area.

September, 1967, saw the beginning of an important change in the 334th when the 1st platoon "Playboys" were equipped with the new AH-1 "Cobra" gunships. With the inactivation of their lift platoon and the equipping of the "Raiders" and "Dragons" of the 2nd and 3rd Platoons with Cobras the following year, the 334th again became an all-gun company. In November, 1968, they were designated an aerial weapons company.

Continuing their tradition of experimentation and innovation, the 334th developed new techniques and tactics such as the "Firefly" light ship combining illumination and firepower to rob Charlie of his protective covering of darkness. Ships of the 334th were the first to test under combat conditions new equipment such as the starlight scope, the "people sniffer" and the XM-21 minigun system.

Until the day the 334th was notified to stand down, its Cobras continued to fly and fight, providing gun support and cover for troops in contact, for the resupply missions of the huge CH-47 Chinooks and for the recovery of downed aircraft and personnel. They played a significant role in supporting ARVN operations near Snoul and the Krek rubber plantation in Cambodia and in the fighting around Tay Ninh.

The heart of the 334th's mission was their scramble team, men and equipment on five-minute standby night and day to cover anyone in Military Region 3 who needed help. Two blasts on the air horn signaled the scramble and the finely honed

Sealed and sanitized, this "Snake" is ready for its long sea voyage to the States.

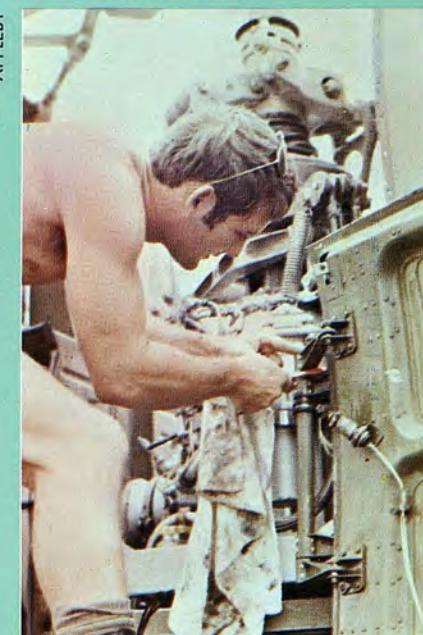


APPLEBY

team sprang into action: The mission sheet was picked up, the aircraft cranked, and they were on their way. "Our best time for a scramble was one minute and 52 seconds," said MAJ Ronald Sheffield, 334th commander.

The mission of the "First Guns" in Vietnam is ended, and they have been redeployed as a unit to Ft. Knox, Ky. However, unlike other units that have stood down, the 334th took most of its equipment with it rather than turning it in. The major part of this equipment was, of course, the fleet of AH-1 Cobra gunships, and the company

"Our fittings have 75 percent fewer cavities with clean toothbrushes."



prepared these for shipment itself. Cleaned of every speck of dirt, packaged and preserved, the "snakes" were loaded on a freighter at Vung Tau and started on the first long leg of their journey. At Corpus Christi, Tex., the helicopters were unloaded, unpacked, reassembled and flown to Ft. Knox. Now, after a decade of combat service in which they have helped expand the role of the helicopter from carrying troops and supplies to carrying destruction and death, the "First Guns" are home in the United States.



HAWK HONEY



Our HAWK HONEY is Miss D Marie Akins, who nicely rounds out either a Cobra gun crew or a bit of Long Binh scenery.

When the history of this war is finally written, I feel that the story of Air Rescue may well become one of the most outstanding human dramas in the entire history of the Air Force.

—Dr. Harold Brown
Former Secretary
USAF

MAYDAY
MAYDAY



World War II vintage A-1 Skyraiders, called Sandies, escort a Jolly Green on a rescue mission.

Story by CPT James V. Soriano

Photos by USAF

Whether flying a routine administrative mission, or participating in a combat assault, the pilots of the 1st Aviation Brigade are fully confident that there is "somebody up there watching over them" in the event they meet an in-flight emergency over enemy territory.

Standing watch over tactical aviation in Southeast Asia, as well as locating and recovering downed air crews, is the responsibility of the 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group (ARRG), headquartered at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. As a unique life-saving arm of the 7th Air Force, the 3rd ARRG is called into action in order to extract downed aviators from the dense jungles of Indochina, often under combat conditions.

Although search and rescue

(SAR) efforts are usually geared to the missions flown by the Air Force, the facilities of the 3rd ARRG are provided for the safety of all aviators flying in Vietnam.

Army aviation, of course, has played an indispensable role in the rescue of downed airmen throughout the Vietnam War, and it is generally conceded that Army helicopters have saved more than twice the number of downed airmen than the 3rd ARRG.

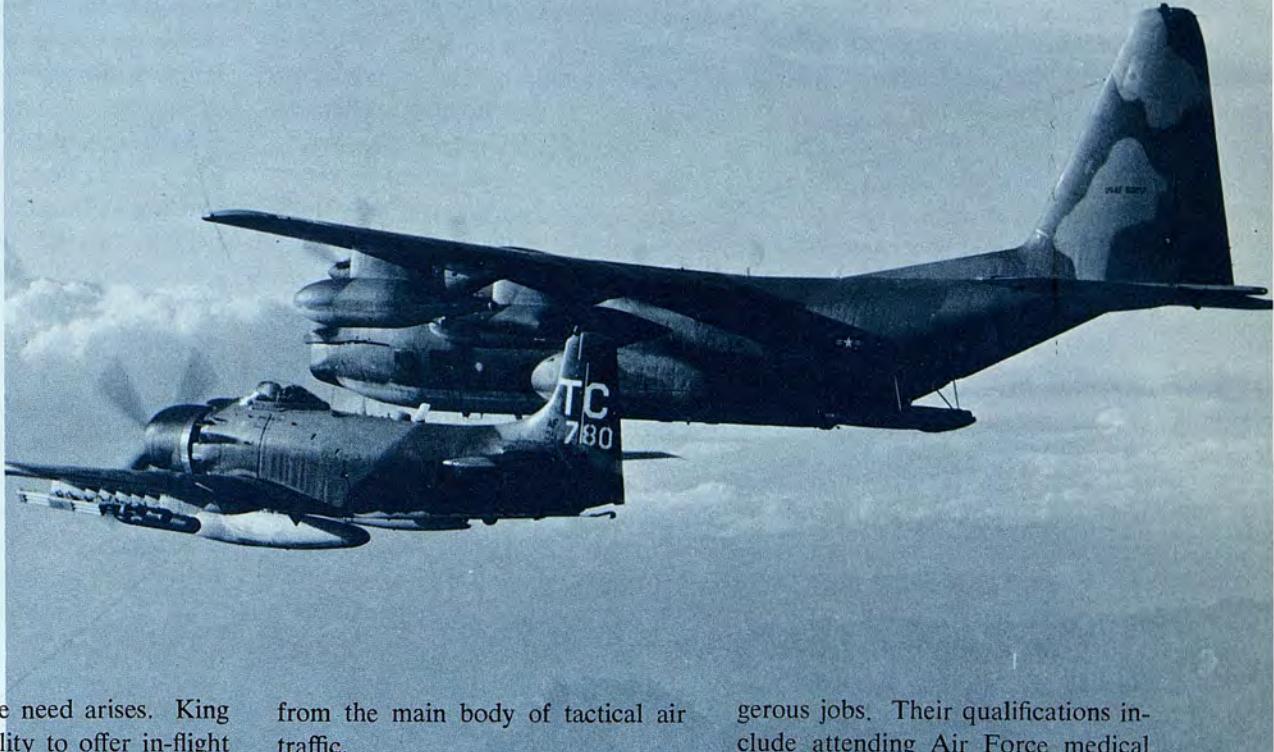
"Army aviation affects about 80 percent of all SAR missions in one way or another," reports MAJ Joseph Byrd Jr., Army liaison officer to the 3rd ARRG. "Throughout Vietnam, the concentration of Army air traffic is much heavier than that of the Air Force. Army choppers are usually on the scene

of an emergency to assist with rescue efforts, even before the Air Force arrives."

Nevertheless, it is the silent, omnipresent watching provided by the 3rd ARRG that insures every pilot flying in Vietnam that his distress call will be answered immediately.

In addition to its ground stations, the 3rd ARRG employs an air rescue team composed of three elements. The most evident member of the air team is King, an HC-130 "Hercules" which serves as an airborne command post. On board King are radio specialists who continually monitor "Guard," the emergency raid frequency for aviation, in case a pilot makes a Mayday call. Each day, the huge, radar-domed King flies a long race track pattern high over Vietnam, ready to jump

During a rescue mission, King acts as an airborne command post until the Sandies arrive to help with the extraction of the downed airman.



into action if the need arises. King also has the ability to offer in-flight refueling to the second member of the air rescue team, the HH-53 "Super Jolly Green Giant" helicopters.

The Jolly Greens are the primary SAR aircraft. Each helicopter is equipped with three miniguns and armor plating for protection. Although the crews maintain an alert ready room, many times the Jollies are prepositioned over a certain area, flying a holding pattern not far

from the main body of tactical air traffic.

The crews of the Jolly Greens are highly trained specialists and are all volunteers. In addition to the aircraft commander and the copilot, the flight engineer operates the jungle penetrator in the event a hoist is needed to recover a downed pilot. Also on board are two pararescue specialists, called PJs, who make the actual rescue itself.

Highly motivated, the PJs undergo specialized training for their dan-

gerous jobs. Their qualifications include attending Air Force medical school, Army paratrooper and ranger schools, and Navy scuba diving school. Each morning before the day's mission, the PJs traditionally flip a coin to see which man wins the right to first go down the jungle penetrator if the need arises during the rescue attempt.

The final member of the air rescue team is the A1-E "Sandy." Although these vintage propeller driven airplanes are much slower



The radar-domed King offers a drink to an HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant.

than the fast jet fighters flying in Southeast Asia, the Sandies are well-equipped for the mission they perform. Their slower speeds give them the advantage of seeing the situation on the ground before a pick-up is made. They also have the uncanny ability to carry their own weight in bombs and ordnance. Their stay-aloft time of nearly five hours enables them to keep on station during prolonged missions, and their system of redundant controls makes them highly invulnerable to becoming disabled because of hostile ground fire.

A typical search-and-rescue scenario runs like this:

An aircraft has encountered mechanical difficulties or has been hit by enemy ground fire. The pilot realizes that he cannot return to his base and makes a call on "Guard" that he is about to make a forced landing or bail-out. The wing man

of the pilot in distress is vital at this time and helps the disabled pilot make the emergency radio call, remaining over the area where his comrade goes down to assist in the rescue operations. King, maintaining a listening watch, is immediately aware of the situation and makes a call to launch the Jolly Greens and the Sandies to pick up the survivor.

On a rescue mission, the Jolly Greens and their Sandy escorts are launched in pairs, while King repositions himself over the area so that he can better control the rescue effort.

Once the survivor is located, one of the Sandies acts as a forward air controller and makes the area safe for a rescue attempt by dropping his ordnance on suspected or known enemy positions. The Sandy may also employ the fire power of other fighter aircraft or helicopter gunships which King has diverted to the

area for possible use.

With her sister ship flying high cover, one of the Jolly Greens moves into position over the survivor. If he has been injured or his position cannot be pinpointed, a PJ rides the jungle penetrator to the ground to assist him. After the injured survivor is aboard the Jolly Green, the PJs perform first aid while the pilot speeds to a hospital.

Since their arrival in Vietnam, the 3rd ARRG has been credited with more than 3,400 saves, and has twice been presented the Presidential Unit Citation. The daily selflessness and dedication shown by the men in the 3rd Rescue Group make their rescue operation unique in military history. Certainly the aerospace and recovery people have lived up to their motto as if it were a pledge: "That others may live." 

The pararescue team picks up a downed airman under the cover of a Sandy and the watchful guidance of King.

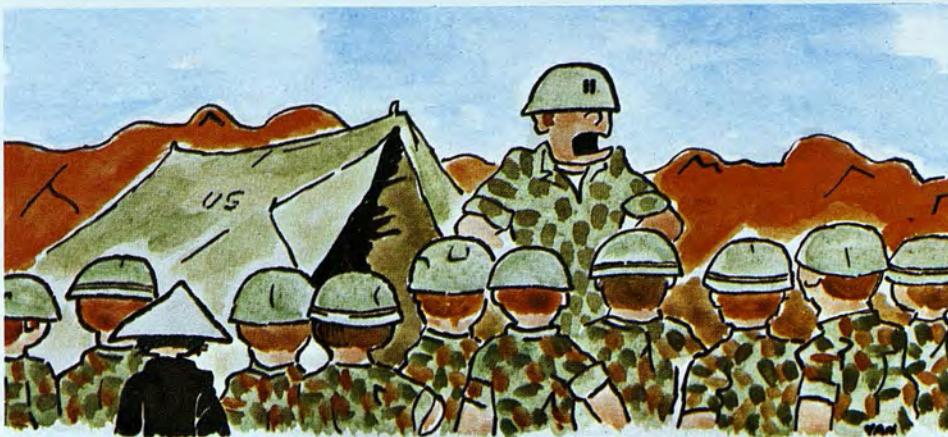


POLYMER WATER COLOR BY CPT R. N. APPLEBY

ON THE HIGH SIDE



"Now I know why they call it a HELicopter!"



"...And be on your toes, men. Intelligence indicates the enemy IS in the area."

HAWK HUMOR

by
SP4 Van D. Craddock



"...So due to recent cutbacks, there has been a minor change made in your Freedom Bird flight."

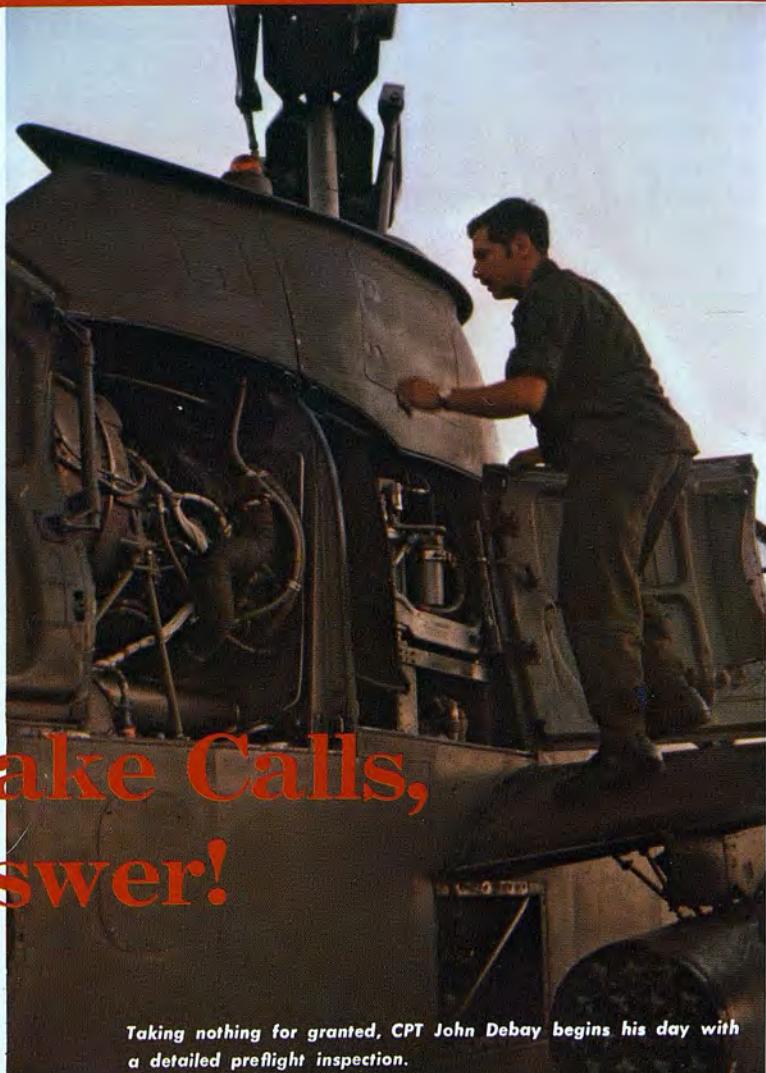
Picture yourself as an enemy soldier in Military Region 2. You'd learn some pretty amazing things: where each of the myriad paths and trails leads, how to get food from the land around you, the fine art of preparing and carrying out an ambush. Oh, yes, there's one other thing you'd know by memory, and that is

When a Snake Calls, Don't Answer!

Applying an almost surgical technique, he painstakingly conducted the preflight check of his aircraft. Though silent and stationary, the Cobra appeared almost menacing in its three-sided revetment bed. Dew formed by the moisture of the cold morning air shot beads of water down the glass canopy of the gunship as the sun eased out from behind a distant mountain drapery.

A 7:30 launch time was met on schedule by the pilot, CPT John Debay, and his team of four armed attack helicopters as they maneuvered from their berths and requested tower clearance. When it came, they hurtled forcibly and in sequence down the latticework of steel runway at Camp Holloway. Within minutes their home at Pleiku was seen as a miniature collection of tiny blocks thrown on the ground below as the birds climbed to 5,000 feet and set compass readings for Kontum.

Their first stop on the mission included a scheduled briefing at the forward operations base (FOB). Here CPT Debay and his fellow aviators of the 361st Aerial Weapons Company combined forces with aviators of another 1st Aviation Brigade unit, the 57th Assault Helicopter Company, which was to act as the lift element on the ensuing operation.



Taking nothing for granted, CPT John Debay begins his day with a detailed preflight inspection.

Together the aviators sat in an underground tactical operations center (TOC), where men of Task Force II Advisory Element provided a detailed update briefing to include suspected targets, intelligence of enemy activity and antiaircraft fire threats. The pilots jotted down pertinent data in notebooks, while several asked that the briefer elaborate on certain points.

Specifics of the day's mission were covered in more detail. Until this point the aviators had been uncertain as to what would be required of them; the sensitivity of the mission dictated a last-minute release of the operational plan to preclude chances of a security leak.

Their mission was by no means unusual in nature; it was a tactical plan performed on numerous occasions by the 361st. It called for insertion of a reconnaissance team composed of Americans and Vietnamese into an area northeast of Dak To, where reports indicated an NVA battalion made its base camp. The team was to remain on the ground for a five- to seven-day period—unless compromised—to determine the base camp's location, enemy strength and long-range area objective.

This particular area of operation (AO) had not been inundated by friendly ground forces since 1968. The aviators were told, however, that within the past month several aircraft operating over the AO had taken



Loading rockets at the FOB is accomplished in short order by 361st aviators CW2 "Lash" Larue Wisener and 1LT Forest Snyder.

enemy fire, including B-40 rocket rounds, resulting in the loss of one UH-1 "Huey."

Kickoff times and last-minute reminders were stressed before the briefing was concluded. Each aviator took time to move forward for a closer, more detailed look at the map which had the AO outlined in yellow. A few comments were exchanged before the crews moved to their ships, and the recon team climbed aboard one of the four Huey slicks. Besides the green camouflage paint covering the exposed skin of the infantrymen, a look of determination was glued to the faces of these men operating as part of a highly sophisticated amalgamate. Together they had run similar operations before, but each mission was unique in that the outcome was never predictable.

Once cranked, the eight ships—four Cobras and four Hueys—moved out like dragsters onto their aerial track. Flying in formation, they moved to the forward launch site for refueling and awaited word from the airborne controller that weather in the AO was acceptable for the insertion. The controller, already over the insertion site, was riding right seat with an Air Force forward air controller (FAC). The team, known collectively as "covey," was responsible for selecting the landing zone, marking targets and calling in VNAF tactical air strikes if needed.

A "mission go" was given by the controller which brought the aircraft to life again. CPT Debay, driving lead ship of the primary Cobra fire team, paved the way, followed by his wing ship. The second "snake" team trailed them. The Hueys rounded out the pattern.

Arriving on station, the primary Cobra team had the potential landing zone (LZ) marked by the covey, which sliced the air at a dangerously low altitude, dropping smoke grenades. Swirling orange clouds filtered through the trees, cueing the Cobras for a low-level pass over trails in the surrounding area. Their intent was to gain indications of enemy activity as well as to determine the likelihood of landing the commandos without their taking ground fire. Making several tree-top level passes, the Cobra lead advised that the LZ was acceptable. He called for an immediate insertion of the men in the lead Huey.

From its circling position overhead the slick moved into a spiral pattern behind the Cobras. As the two

While waiting at the forward launch site for a "mission go," the pilots and recon team huddle one last time.



The Air Force "covey" warms up for the key role it must play over the AO.



gunships charged violently toward the LZ from several thousand feet for one final pass to serve as a decoy and to draw fire, the lift ship quickly dropped down and came to a hover. Its passengers leaped for the safety of nearby trees. Just as rapidly, the ship pulled into a steep climb to join the orbiting ships above.

Within minutes the recon team leader notified the airborne controller by radio that he had already heard voices and sounds of enemy activity close to his position. Although no threat of compromise existed yet, a decision was made to keep a light Cobra fire team overhead at a two-kilometer distance from the AO. This was insurance for the team, which was limited in its ability to resist a numerically superior force for a sustained period.

Staying on station initially was the secondary Cobra fire team with ships piloted by ILT Forest Snyder and CW2 Larue Wisener of the 361st. They continued aerial surveillance until the patrol leader felt that he could move freely on course. Eventually the cover was lifted, and the ships also returned to the FOB. For the time being, at least, the team had settled, apparently undetected, deep within the central highlands along a supposed enemy infiltration route from the Cambodian border to the Vietnam coast.

Unsure as to what turns the course of the five-to-seven day operation would take on its first leg, all elements remained at the FOB on alert awaiting a scramble call should the team require quick extraction or gun support.

Meanwhile, the initial snake team was taxed with a secondary mission of escorting a Chinook from the 180th ASHC to a resupply point at a location deep within enemy-infested territory. The trip out was a leisurely one. The huge "hook," carrying a water trailer and rations, cruised along with an almost corpulent look about it while the Cobras, appearing dwarfish by comparison, flew bodyguard on either wing.

At the dropoff site, purple smoke was popped to mark the narrow and difficult landing pad that sat atop the vertex of a sheer mountain. The powerful twin-rotor bird set its payload down with a grace and finesse that belied the immense bulk of the craft.

Mission completed, the Cobras bid good-bye to the sister ship and struck off for visual reconnaissance of a nearby NVA infiltration route that ran into South Vietnam from Laos. At close range the Cobra crew members examined several fresh trails and marked their locations for future reference.

While making a low-level surveillance of one trail complex, CPT Debay was unexpectedly hailed by enemy fire. Enemy antiaircraft guns uncordially greeted him with two rounds of 37mm fire, both of which narrowly missed the Cobra. As it reeled over on its side and banked away from the dual puffs of smoke, his wingman simultaneously yelled, "You're taking fire!" into his radio. He too swerved away from the onrushing fire but not before taking a .30 caliber round through his main rotor blade. Fortunately, that was the limit of damage. And not having sufficient fuel to seek out and engage the well-camouflaged antiaircraft gun, the pilots wisely radioed their position to a friendly FAC

Once in the LZ, the insertion is carried out with speed and deftness.



who in turn called for a tactical air strike on the target.

Once topped off with a fresh load of fuel, the birds were airborne again as a call from the FAC bristled over the two radios, serving notice that he had sighted a target and was requesting engagement by the Cobra team. Automatically the pilots swung into action and headed their ships for the coordinate location.

From a heavily vegetated hillside shone a mirror-like reflection that bounced skyward from a single angle of detection. Sun rays refracted brightly off the shiny surface as the Cobras came in for a closer look at the obvious man-made object. Although not specifically identifiable because of the undergrowth of trees, the glittering object appeared to be part of a bunker complex undeniably inhabited by the enemy.

Wasting no time, the two snakes established a strike pattern and dove down to engage the target. Rockets spit from their pods and plummeted into the exploding hillside as the ships pulled up and grasped for altitude. The gravity force on their upswing placed a pressure on the pilots strong enough to flatten them hard against their seats. Making five runs each, the ships expended their 2.75-inch high explosive rockets and reduced the target to smoldering waste. Light no longer came from the hillside, and several low-level passes revealed no movement either.

Several hours had elapsed since the late morning commando insertion. The team's ground movement had remained undetected; however, the team leader reported hearing brush being cut and coming upon people talking. He had called for several sorties of "tac air" throughout the day. As a consequence, the air support allowed the team to further probe the enemy position.

Each time the team came within proximity of a suspected base camp, Cobra sorties were used to saturate the area within 400 to 500 meters of the friendly position. Their volume of fire provided a devastating effect.

Discovery of a command bunker resulted when the team came across a line of commo wire stretching from the forward crest of a hill downslope to the valley below. Two Cobras struck at the bunker complex with rockets while one of the patrcl members pulled on the wire finding at its end a Chinese-made field telephone, which confirmed the presence of an enemy command group.

Manning the bunker were at least two NVA soldiers, one of whom was killed in a Cobra sortie. CW2 Wisener's snake poured rockets and 7.62mm fire onto the enemy sanctuary resulting in the dead enemy. Another NVA soldier was known to be in the bunker, and an attempt was made to capture him. When it was determined that the recon team's position had been compromised the effort was abandoned.

An extraction was called for, putting the lift ships



Flying cover for the "Hook," the 361st wing ship provides an intimidating vigil.

into motion again. CPT Debay's fire team arrived to relieve the secondary team on station and took up the firing on the bunker. A virulent deluge of rockets and firepower placed on the target caused destruction of the complex and any would-be inhabitants.

Keeping obtrusive pressure on the surrounding area with Cobra fire enabled the recon team to move safely to a suitable pickup zone, which was marked by flashing a red panel. The lift ship arrived on station, spiraled in for the extraction and dropped ladders at the LZ to hoist the men safely aboard. All this while, CPT Debay's light fire team went into a low-level gun pattern, making several dry runs to lure any probable enemy fire away from the extraction.

Later CPT Debay likened the Cobra's 300-foot gun pattern and obvious attempt at exposure to enemy fire to a technique similarly employed by presidential bodyguards. While the lift ship was involved with the extraction the gunships simultaneously acted as decoys and shields, thereby taking risks to insure asylum for the withdrawing element.

Less than an hour of daylight remained when all aircraft settled into a flight pattern and set course for the FOB. As they were leaving the AO the covey declared the area cold and the ground mission terminated but noted that a tac-air strike would be placed on what remained of the enemy sanctuary.

Following a drop-off of the recon team, pilots of the 361st AWC were debriefed and complimented for the part they had played in the success of the mission. Spirits were high during the flight home to Pleiku. Although weary, these aviators of the "FOB Mob," as they call themselves, felt good with the knowledge they had participated well and had won the match this day. Not all operations concluded on such a sweet note, perhaps, but this one had a ring of success to it.

Nearly 12 hours had passed since the four sets of



The Cobras make the extraction work by serving as decoys over the LZ. Once a target is sighted the Snakes enter their low level gun pattern to engage the enemy with devastating potency. From the front seat of the Cobra, the rockets are seen pouring in on the bunker complex as they hammer into the hillside a short distance below.



crews had shoved off on this mission. As Camp Holloway stretched out beneath them, the four 361st Cobras leveled off at 5,000 feet and executed a steep right bank down and through a runway landing pattern. The unit commander, CPT John Barfield, and several other aviators of the FOB Mob were on hand to greet their colleagues. It was like watching a scene at the dugout following a team member's trip around the bases. Everyone shared in the fruition of the day's labor and in the talents of this unusual breed of man.

The day's success, along with the fluid manner in which the full contingent of men worked together in the AO, was perhaps best described by one of the pilots. Later, while commanding the efforts of the ground element, he referred to the alliance that had grown among these men. And he expressed a personal but truly significant force that had been brought to bear on the relationship. He reflected that the association offered him an exposure to human relationships and their corresponding experiences—even in the external form of being separated by thousands of feet—and that to him was one of the most meaningful aspects of life.





Freedom Bird

*Freedom Bird,
I've seen you coming
every day for many months now—
coming from the land I dream of,
coming down to take me with you,
take me up and take me over,
take me back to what I long for.*

*From a speck beyond a cloud
all these days I've seen you growing,
till your wings spread proud above me,
landing gear locked down and ready,
as you come on closer, singing,
"Here I come to take you home!"
But every time you've flown right over,
disappeared beneath the sun,
landing there to welcome others,
take them back, yet leave me here.*

*But I know you'll come for me, too,
when I'll finally be there waiting—
waiting for your glorious body
sleek and brilliant in the sun.
As you open wide to take me,
with ecstatic smile I'll enter,
and after some "eternal" moments
you'll be racing down the runway;
with a "thump" you'll leave the concrete,
rising up above the trials
to take me up, to take me home!*

*Freedom Bird,
I know you're coming—
coming from the land I dream of,
coming down to take me with you,
take me up and take me over,
take me back to what I long for!*



AT A GLANCE

You'll find him in the sky, manning a helicopter's minigun...getting his hands dirty putting a jeep together...frying your eggs at 5:30 a.m. or earlier...making sure your 201 file is straight...tending to the knee you injured playing football. His environment is the hanger, the mess hall, surgeon's office. He's a "Golden Hawk." Without him the 1st Aviation Brigade wouldn't have made it through six years of a demanding war. Whatever his job, it wasn't easy, if he cared. And he did; his efforts saw us through a war that was at first carried on by American soldiers but which now may be turned over with confidence to the Vietnamese, who will have firsthand knowledge of the freedom that will result. Whether his job involved door guns in the sky or disposition forms in a personnel section, he, the Golden Hawk, pushed the brigade onward.

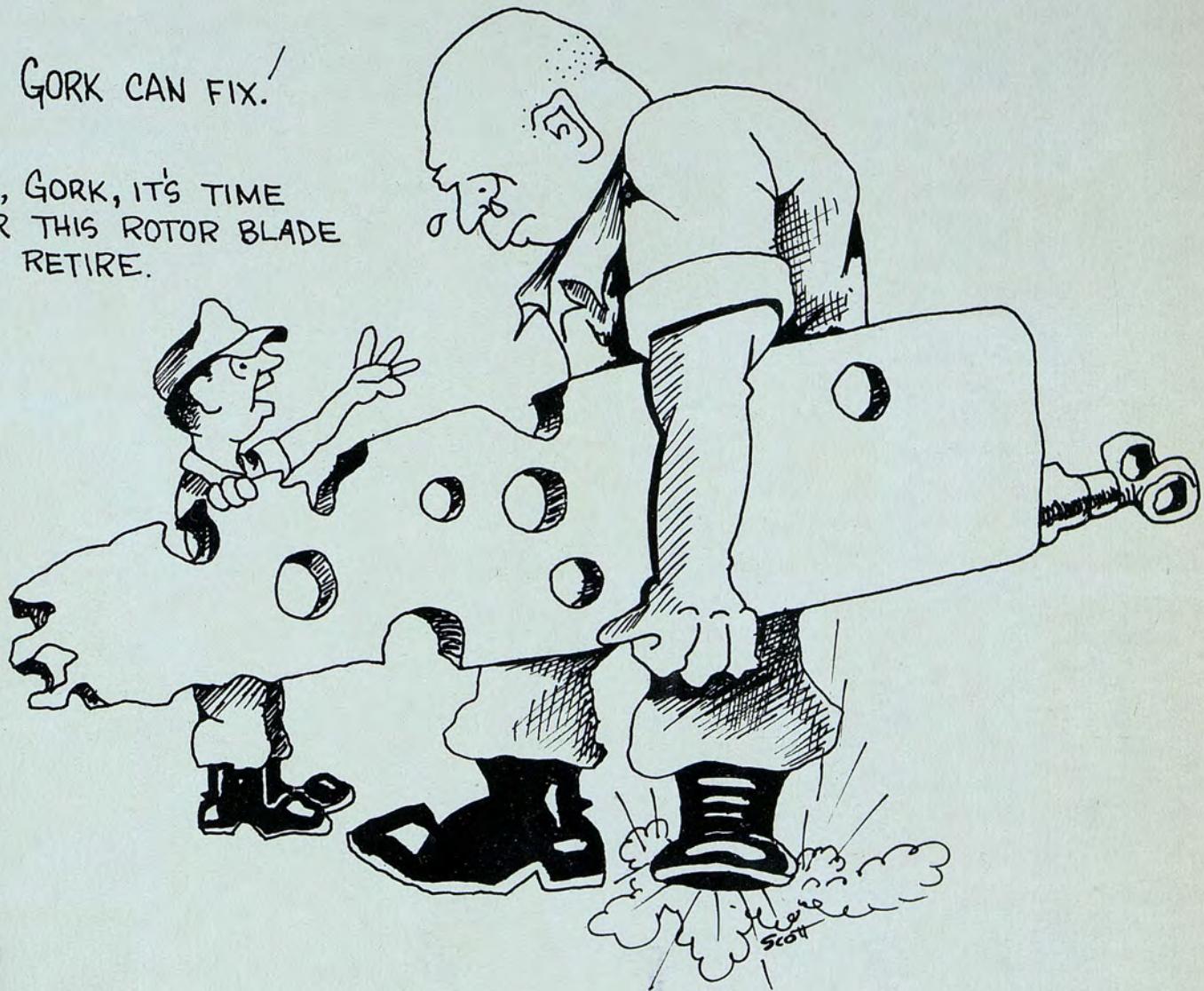


Photos by SP5 Joseph J. Kelley and SP5 Christopher J. Pease

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*Hello darkness my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seed while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains . . .
Within the sound of silence.*

simon and garfunkle