



TIME FOR A FRIEND—Cavalryman comforts a wounded buddy during fire fight on Bong Son Plain. (Photo by Sp4 George Batchler)

Airmobile Squadron's Job Is To Find Them

You find 'em. We'll fight 'em.

That is the mission assigned to the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry by the division and the unit performs this mission in a way no other unit in the Army can.

The helicopters of the Cavalry squadron sweep across the countryside at tree-top level hunting for Charlie. The squadron's ground troops are landed by their helicopters wherever the recon ships spot the VC.

Maybe it's only a couple of VC stragglers, maybe it's an enemy courier with important VC documents or maybe

it's part of a major North Vietnamese unit. Whatever the situation is, the 1st of the 9th can react.

It will pick up the stragglers and turn them over for interrogation or turn the documents over to the intelligence section. If the contact turns out to be a major enemy force, the 1st of the 9th will call in infantry troops to engage it. At times, artillery is called in on enemy targets.

What gives the squadron the ability to stay out forward hunting Charlie? Helicopters.

Helicopters keep the 1st of the 9th out in front of the airmobile division. The squadron's helicopters enable the Cav to bring its full potential against the enemy.

Hard Work Breaks VC Food Chain

The chain that provides the Viet Cong of Binh Dinh Province with vital food supplies is being broken link-by-link by the soldiers of the Air Cavalry.

Breaking these links is not glamorous work.

But it is a job that must be done before the communist insurgency can be defeated and to the people who must do this job, war is not just hell. It is plain hard work.

One day during Operation Pershing, a platoon of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry assaulted into an area in the An Lao Valley believed to be a Viet Cong supply center.

The temperature was well in the 90s when the assault was made during the hottest part of the afternoon. Every

uniform was soaked with sweat and covered with dust. Canteens were quickly drained.

Scout helicopters had spotted enemy in the area several hours earlier and killed at least one.

The platoon searched the fields and hills in the area for about two hours without seeing any signs of life — just bomb craters, withered-up rice paddies and the rotting carcass of a water buffalo killed weeks earlier.

Unexpectedly, one of the troopers saw two men dart into a cave. He opened fire. A methodical search of the cave produced a 30-year-old woman and her two frightened children.

The men had apparently escaped through one of the

many secondary exits into heavy undergrowth.

Nearby, well hidden from overhead observation by vines and trees, was a small house containing cooking utensils, quantities of food and two bicycles.

Hidden rice paddies and banana orchards coupled with the woman's statements to the Vietnamese interpreter accompanying the U.S. troops strengthened suspicions that the area was indeed part of Viet Cong supply center.

One of the platoon sergeants, Sgt. John E. Bowker,

said that while he doesn't enjoy this kind of work, he understands its importance.

The platoon leader, Capt. Edward H. Skerrett, explained that the day's action was typical of what his platoon was doing.

"There are really few, heavy contacts in this war," he said. "It's a matter of hitting the communists again and again until their morale is broken and enthusiasm for posing their will on the people of South Vietnam is destroyed."

2/12th Finds Ammo Cache

Two tons of North Vietnamese Army ammunition were confiscated by Company D, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry north of the An Lao Valley During Operation Pershing.

The cache, one of the largest found during Pershing included seventy-five 55mm recoilless rifle rounds, ten 60mm mortar rounds, thirty cases of TNT, seven cases of unidentified ammunition, small arms rounds and blasting caps.



THE HEAT IS UNREAL—Sgt. trooper fights his own battle against the heat of the Bong Son Plain.



RARE MOMENT—Men of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry take a rare break in the An Lao Valley during a hot day's work. (Photo by Sp4 Patrick Christian)

Huey Rescue Is Swift, Routine

Belts of ammunition, glittering in the searing rays of sunlight, were draped over the twisted wreckage.

Pieces of helicopter lay about, a rocket pod here, half a rotor blade there and scraps of metal that only a

helicopter mechanic could possibly recognize.

The helicopter sat in two recognizable hunks — the severed tail hooked on a tree stump and the body crunched on its nose in a creek that carried away currents of

gasoline and blood.

Fifty caliber machinegun bullets had abruptly ended the life of this Huey gunship of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry.

Hit while flying above the An Lao Valley, the ship

descended rapidly in a sweeping arc, slammed into the ground and cracked in half.

The front section bounced in the air and bolted nose first into a small stream, mashing broken plexiglass and gnarled steel around the pilots. The other two occupants, door gunners, were tumbled under the wreck.

Seconds later, at squadron headquarters, a shrill siren sounded. A platoon of men appeared on the run, buttoning their shirts and strapping on web gear.

"Where're we going?" asked one Cavalryman as the four choppers lifted from the ground. He apparently did not expect an answer for he directed the question at no one in particular. He was primarily concerned with filling an empty magazine with shells.

"A chopper was shot down in the An Lao," came an answer from somewhere.

The choppers glided between the mountain ridges of the valley. Twenty miles later, the ships circled twice. Fingers pointed downward. The wreck sat in the center of a small-basin surrounded by steep hills.

An unsecure area. A medevac ship was already on the ground. The platoon would secure the area.

The helicopters simultaneously plummeted earthward. Cavalrymen slid from the seats to the floor, their feet on the skids.

Just before the ships touched ground, they leaped and with a surge of power the ships were gone.

Securing the area would be

a platoon effort. But there are perhaps 15 seconds in any air assault that belong to each individual. A soldier knows the direction to go when he hits the ground, but no one can tell him exactly where to go or what is in front of him. A man picks his position, runs to it in a crouch, and sprawls in the dirt. Organization takes some seconds.

Few minutes passed before the Cavalrymen dispersed and had the area secured. Even as the men crawled to strategic positions, a team had already set about the task of prying the pilots and doorgunners from the wreckage.

The gunners came easy. The pilots, doubled up in a crumpled heap, bleeding and half conscious, took time. A canteen was pressed to the lips of one pilot. Water trickled down his chin and mixed with blood.

Explosions echoed in the surrounding hills as Air Force jets bombed suspected enemy positions and aerial rocket artillery was launched.

The four men who had been shot down and pinned helplessly for twenty minutes in enemy territory, though seriously wounded, lived.

Shortly after their evacuation, the securing force was heli-lifted from the area.

Five minutes later, a pre-set charge exploded the last remnants of the crash. None of it could be salvaged.

There would be no medals or awards given. It was a routine mission. Just another day in a hot, sweaty war.

But there are four men who will remember the rescue actions in the valley.



Door gunner on medevac chopper looks sharp as his ship drops into An Lao Valley to crash scene.

Squad From 1st Brigade Breaks Up VC Meeting

Skytroopers of the 1st Brigade crashed what appeared to be a Viet Cong convention during Operation Pershing and found that they were definitely not welcome.

While conducting a night patrol, the troopers discovered

ed a political rally, accompanied by entertainment, in a Viet Cong controlled village named Luong Tho (1).

After deciding that the participants were indeed VC, the squad-size Cav force set up a machinegun adjacent to a rice paddy and moved two men into the village to flush out the communists.

The two troopers, SSgt. Alfred Z. Bohannon and Sp4 John Stubbs, put on Vietnamese style soft hats and proceeded to enter the village from the south side, presumably to join the party.

Two VC suddenly spotted the pair and raced into the rice paddy in an attempt to get away. The machinegun opened up, prematurely launching the attack.

Bohannon and Stubbs then managed to lob two hand grenades each into the building in which the meeting was in progress and sprayed the area with M-16 rifle fire, thoroughly disrupting the gathering.

Both men are assigned to Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry.

At dawn the following morning, another patrol, led by PSgt. John L. Sloat, made a thorough search of the abandoned village and seized a large supply of hand grenades and communist documents.

Defiance Is Capital Crime For Viet Cong

Twenty women were harvesting rice in the afternoon sun when ten heavily armed Viet Cong approached three of them and demanded they surrender the newly cut rice.

Nguyen Thi Gian stepped in front of her mother and defiantly refused to give the Viet Cong what they wanted.

Five carbines were raised. The Viet Cong again demanded the rice, this time looking down their barrels.

She again refused, and Nguyen Thi Gian, 22 years old, was shot through the head, inches below her left eye.

She died instantly.



BUDDIES — Cavalrymen help a wounded comrade to an evacuation helicopter during Operation Pershing. (Photo by Sp4 Marc Davies)