

Dev Black

EAGLE

DUSTOFF

Commanding Officer: Major Robert R. Cloke
Platoon Sergeant: SFC Thomas L. Ross, Jr.

1 March 1969
Air Ambulance Platoon
326th Medical Battalion
101st Airborne Division

Poor old Brian. When he finally came dragging into the office after the training session, he looked like he had gone through the mill. But in truth, he had gone through a Eucalyptus tree.

Now, that's easy to explain. He was playing patient, you see, riding the forest penetrator from the ground to the helicopter during a training session. We were training some new guys to pull or operate, a hoist. And since they were new, they did make a few mistakes, such as dragging Brian through the tree instead of the open space, and banging his shoulder on the helicopter skids just as he swung underneath the ship. Some days are like that, you know.

SO GO THE TRAINING SESSIONS, AND THE fellows do make a few mistakes before they learn the procedures well. But as in all training, that is what practice is for--to make the mistakes when they don't endanger anyone.

The training sessions, for both pilots and crew members, started in earnest about the middle of January, and progresses according to the availability of aircraft and people. These variables rely, of course, on both the weather and the tactical situation.

TRAINING IS DIVIDED INTO THREE BASIC facets--hood time for aviators, stick time for the crew chiefs, and training the full crew for hoist operations, teaching every crew member to operate a hoist with forest penetrator and a Stokes litter while maintaining the pilot's proficiency in hovering.

Hood time is flight time flying completely by instruments, simulating bad weather or nighttime conditions. The pilot's view is obstructed by material placed over the windshield so he can rely only on his instrument panel. During flight school, 50 hours of hood time is required, and USAFV suggests 3 hours hood time per month per pilot. Of course, war zones are not the best places for training.

The idea behind stick time for crew chiefs is to allow them to take over flight of an aircraft in the event the pilots are injured and unable to fly. This also stimulates interest in the training program and gives the crew chief a little better understanding of how his helicopter functions.

AND HOIST TRAINING IS VERY VITAL indeed. The terrain in the 101st Abn Div Area of Operations is, for a great part, thick jungle. And triple canopy jungle where trees grow from 100-200 feet high don't make ideal landing zones. Thus, the need for the hoist.

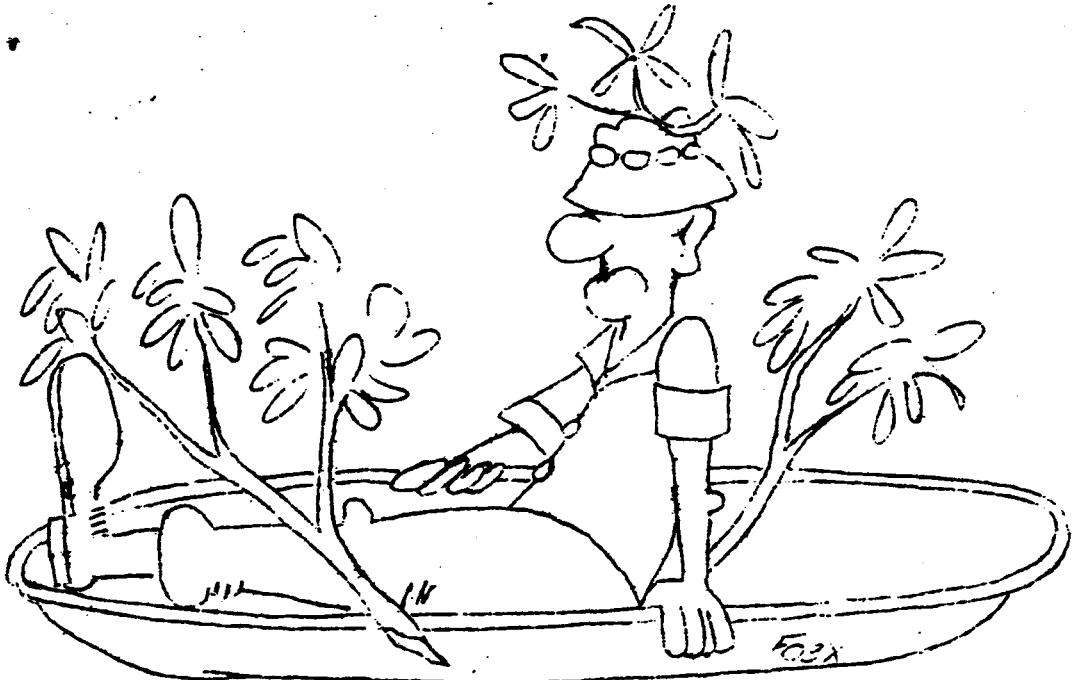
During hoist training, everyone, medics and crew chiefs alike, get to learn to operate the hoist. Both of them stand out on the skids and guide the penetrator down to the ground, then up again.

THE PILOTS GET PRACTICE HOVERING, FOR they have to keep the ship as still as possible. Many times on actual missions the helicopter is in a small opening in the canopy and the rotor blades are clipping leaves from the trees. Keeping the ship as still as possible is a necessity in such a situation.

WO John Shirley, the Aviation safety officer, is in charge of the training program, and helping him train the crew chiefs and medics on the hoist are SP5 Richard Oberg and SP5 Tom Rolls.

Finally, due to the grace of God and the US postal system, our unit patches arrived. And it was about time. What we got was 170 brightly colored patches for wear on the right shirt pocket.

They're circular, with a red cross against a white background, bounded by a maroon ring, and on the face of the cross is a green, medevac helicopter. The words Air Amb Plt are on top of the patch and 326th Med Bn is on the bottom.



HOIST EVACUATIONS AREN'T INTENDED TO BE CAMOUFLAGED BUT.....

A FEW WORDS FROM DUSTOFF 96

The Platoon's activities have spread even further from home base this month with Lt Evan's section taking a salvaged hooch at Camp Evans and turning it into a castle of warmth and hominess away from "home". The crews have decided the Camp Evans standby is not so bad after all, and are willing to pull permanent standby. FSB Los Banos at the southern end of the AO is running a close second, trying to induce the day standby crews with good chow, their own bunker, pre-built aircraft revetment, and Col Dyke's "No Slack" hospitality. According to these crews the view and sunshine are second only to Hawaii. Funny the same sun can't shine on Camp Eagle.

The fringe benefits of marginal weather flying and insecure hoists are now being endured by three new AC's: Cpt Jim Danby, Dustoff 903; 1LT George Miner, Dustoff 905, and WO John Blessing, Dustoff 999 or "Triple Niner."

Construction of the EM/MCO club has quickened to a snail's pace and the Officer's Lounge is rapidly catching up. Both are welcome additions to the area.

To top off a busy month, last Saturday the Platoon held an awards ceremony with LTC Mittermeyer presenting thirty-one awards to nineteen individuals.

If perfect timing gets you anywhere, 1LT Kerry Little is destined to go a long way. Why? Here's what happened:

One—it is very hard to connect with a phone call from Vietnam to the United States.

TWO—DOWN SOUTH ON TDY, LT LITTLE decided to call his wife, Carmen, and find out how she was getting along, being fully into her ninth month.

Three—when he made the connection, he caught Carmen on the way to the hospital. Because Carmen is a student nurse it didn't dawn on him at first that she was going for a personal reason, and not to take care of another patient. But she made it clear soon enough.

FOUR—AFTER HANGING UP, CARMEN WENT to the hospital and delivered a boy, 6 lb, 8 oz, named Mark Thornton, on the 30th of January. Talk about perfect timing.

* * *

Congratulations are in order for 5 people this month who earned promotions from SP4 to SP5:

Gregory A. Brown
Barth T. Cutler
James R. Johnson
Roy M. Mayberry
Kenneth D. Ramsey

A HERO STORY

This is not a technicolor war, with John Wayne leading the infantry on to greater glory. It is a tv war, with Huntley and Brinkley describing every punch.

Both men and machines are involved, and no man or machine is more important than Dustoff crews and helicopters who are on call 24 hours a day to save the lives of the wounded.

To help those of you who have never been to a war, or those who have never even been invited to one, understand what this war is like, we bring you the following true-to-life account of a typical Dustoff mission:

"My crew and I, which consisted of Cpt Turnip and Mr. Skabie and my medic, Sgt Goodbody, and myself, we took off with our usual cloud of dust and a Hi-Ho Silver (our heliport is still in bad need of pente prime, you see) on our way to an urgent hoist mission, which was insecure.

The mission was just called in a few minutes prior, and the ground unit had two men with multable wounds, both in bad condition, so we knew we had to get there in a hurry. That's our job. In a few minutes, we arrived to within seeing distance of the site, and stayed back watching the gunships pepper the area. It was a thick jungle.

We decided to call the ground unit and ask where they were. Mr. Skabie made the call. "Hello. Hey, how's it going down there? Is this Broken Skillet I'm talking to? Good. Say, I bet you can see us, but we can't see you—yes, you can? Good. We thought that we might take out your wounded if you'd like to have them evac'd, and we were wondering which way you'd recommend we come in, and just exactly where are you, anyway? Come in from the South? Okay. Be there in a jiff." Gee, that Mr. Skabie is All Right on the radio.

So when we went in Sgt Goodbody and I stood out on the skids so we could see how close we came to the trees, and scare the pilots a little, you know. Finally, we came to a halt. There we were, 200 feet above the junkie floor, huffering. Boy, did we huffer. We tried to think hard of our jobs.

(Continued on next page)

AWARDS

BRONZE STAR WITH "V"
SP5 Roger W. Goodwin

AIR MEDAL

15th OIC—SP5 David L. Woods
12, 14-15th OIC—SP5 Roger W. Goodwin
4, 5, 7-14th OIC—CPT Charles H. Lewis
BAM—1LT Thomas M. McCrary
BAM—1LT George L. Minor
BAM—1LT Gerald M. Torba
BAM—WO1 Richard W. Obrecht
BAM—WO1 John H. Shirley, Jr.
BAM—WO1 George J. Stapp
BAM—SP5 Barth T. Cutler
BAM—SP5 Stephen B. Francis
BAM—SP5 James R. Johnson
BAM—SP5 Daniel G. Pugh
BAM—SP5 Larry E. Wagoner
BAM—PFC Joseph H. Campbell

ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL, 1ST OLC
SFC Thomas L. Ross, Jr.

ARMY COMENDATION MEDAL

MAJ Robert R. Cloke
CPT James C. Danby
CPT Charles H. Lewis
CPT Ottis G. Turner
WO1 Michael L. McKenna
WO1 Max E. Tucker
SP5 Stephen B. Francis
SP5 Roger W. Goodwin
SP5 Michael P. McLane
SP5 Michael J. Outwater
SP5 Amador G. Sanchez
SP5 Edward T. Selander
SP5 David L. Woods
SP4 Anthony T. Burdo
SP4 Richard G. Runion
SP4 Mario A. Salvatore
SP4 Anthony R. Thompson

COMBAT MEDICAL BADGE

MAJ Robert R. Cloke
CPT James C. Danby
CPT Charles H. Lewis
CPT Robert D. Sawyer
1LT Otis D. Evans
1LT Kerry L. Little
1LT Thomas M. McCrary
1LT George L. Minor
1LT Gerald M. Torba
SP5 Roy M. Myberry
PFC Steven E. Arnold
PFC Joseph H. Campbell
PFC James A. Mergro

To understand this story, first off we must tell you that we have a mascot for the Air Ambulance Platoon. A dog, named Dusty (for Dust-off—see the connection?).

Dusty has been with us about three months now, which is as long as she's been on this earth, so we know as much about her as any one is likely to know about their dog.

OKAY, ONE OF THE INTERESTING ITEMS we've discovered about Dusty is her passion for shrimp. Dehydrated shrimp, which is the only kind available here.

There was a contest last week to see just how many shrimp Dusty could eat, and on successive days, in five minute time periods, Dusty gulped 56, then 81, then 86 shrimp.

Some of the meaner type people we have here couldn't see the shrimp being "wasted" feeding a dog, and they wanted to feed it to her before the shrimp was soaked in water, then to give her a drink—a big one.

THEY HAD VISIONS OF A ROUND, BALLOON-like dog, with flippers for feet, floating away towards the DMZ. But of course, we didn't let that happen to Dusty.

Normally, you'd think that a dog would be afraid of helicopters, with all the noise and commotion that they kick up every time they leave or land. But that's not the reaction of Dusty, who runs out to greet the ships and their crews, playfully barking. On occasion, Dusty has been known even to hitch a ride in the choppers, but that's been stopped. We have no harness for her to wear, and we've grown too attached to Dusty to have her suddenly become airborne during a right bank and a cyclic climb.

While we do believe in doing your thing, that's going a little too far.

EAGLE DUSTOFF
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326th Medical Battalion.

EDITOR

SP4 Karl T. White

CARTOONIST

SP4 Brian R. Fo3x



I GUESS I (EURP) MADE
A PIG OF MYSELF!

HERO STORY CONTINUED

We let the basket down, and they loaded it up, and we started drawing it back in with the hoist. About halfway up, we noticed the patient began to wave his arms and point to his leg. So we waved back. Friendly fellow. And then we got him inside the aircraft, and found out he was being shot at. And that meant we were being shot at, too. So we concentrated very hard on our jobs.

And then we hightailed it out of there.

But they shot at us on the way out, too, and a bullet nearly hit me. But it didn't, so I just kept thinking about doing my job.

That's about it, except I want to add a bit about my crew who all were calm and cool and collected while we were limping our wounded ship back home.

Maybe this story ain't pretty, but that's the way it was."

Thank God February only has twenty-eight days. We couldn't have taken a 31 day month. We started off with an Organization Day party, and ended up with a celebration for the departing Battalion Commander, LTC Bernhard T. Mittermeyer. And there could have been a lot of improvement with what went on in between.

Our four pilots who were flying TDY with the 45th Med Co (AA) and attached units arrived the 5th with tales about there actually being a "sun" down south. Shivering, clad in Irv shirt, we found it hard to be True Believers of those tales, for we were suffering the first really cold cold spell of the winter.

Some wise guys were wearing their Irv shirts backwards. But with the collars turned down, they did look much like turtleneck sweaters. Sort of nice.

Valentine's Day arrived on time even if the cards didn't. Our typical pony express mail service was late with most of the cards.

A few of our people were smart and weren't around for part of the month, like Cpt Robert D. Sawyer, who was in Hawaii on R&R over Tet, hoping to miss out on some of the fun here, no doubt. But nothing happened. It was so quiet, he could've waited an extra day here because Mrs. Sawyer, held up by bad weather in the States, showed up a day late.

SP4 Brian Fox spent a week in Australia and managed to miss the bad weather spell altogether, and Sgt. David Fritt spent a week in Singapore. Of course, he had planned on going to Taipei. Great, huh?

This month we lost five people and gained five. Losses were:
CPT Charles H. Lewis, to Germany
CW2 Loren P. Skarie, to Ft Rucker
WO1 Charles Dill, to 2 Sqdn, 17th Cav
SP5 Michael Outwater, to 2/501st Inf
PFC Richard Runion, to C Co, 326th Med

Joining us were:

CPT William Smith, in maintenance
WO1 Robert B. Black, a pilot
WO1 Edmond J. Mueller, a pilot
SSG Keith Forrester, section sergeant
SP5 Fritz C. Persijn, a medic

And finally, thanks to SFC Ross, we now have two horns in the area instead of the previous one, so our first and second up crews don't have to strain their ears so hard to hear their call anymore.

Monthly Statistics

PATIENTS EVACUATED:

US	437
VN Civ	77
MED CAP	19
ARVN	22
POW/SUSP	10
CANINE	0
TOTAL	565

DAY/NIGHT PATIENTS:

DAY	485
NIGHT	80
TOTAL	565

MISSIONS:

DAY	441
NIGHT	63
TOTAL	504

MEDICAL RESUPPLY TOTAL LBS. 700

HOIST UTILIZATION:

MISSIONS	44
PATIENTS	66
HOURS	35

FLIGHT TIME:

DAY	294
NIGHT	34
HOIST	35
TOTAL	328

AVIATOR FLIGHT TIME:

AVG NO AVIATORS PSNT FOR DUTY 18	
HIGH	43
LOW	5
AVG	17

ACFT AVAILABILITY % 83%