

EAGLE

DUST OFF

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

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



CPT Robert D. Sawyer just couldn't make up his mind where he wanted to go, so he just packed up and left. There are some people around here that wish they could do the same, but unfortunately can't.

At the first of the month, CPT Sawyer moved from the CP to Battalion HQ to become the S-3 officer since the former S-3 officer had DEROSed. So, CPT James C. Danby moved into CPT Sawyer's vacant slot.

Then, after a period of less than two weeks, CPT Sawyer himself got long awaited orders to be released from active duty. He was released more than 100 days prior to his actual DEROS on this, his second tour in Vietnam.

His departure from S-3 left that slot again vacant, so CPT Danby moved from the CP to take that post.

Sailors cheered. Nurses flashed big smiles.

All this happened for Dustoff 901, and crew, because he did it. He got a cake and a party for doing it.

Now, you may be wondering just what in the world happened. Okay, DO 901, WO John Shirley, CW2 Robert Black, SP5's Barth Cutler and John Friscia made the 6,999th helicopter landing on the USS Sanctuary, a Naval hospital ship. That's nothing special, you say.

However . . . they took off, having cleverly left something behind, and landed once more to pick it up, thereby making the 7,000th helicopter landing.

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Sometimes maxims do pay off, don't they?

(Editor's Note: In April this unit pulled a record total of 105 hoist missions, consuming 124 hours of flight time and evacuating 165 patients supporting Division Operations.)

Slowly we passed above the treecops, looking for any sign of smoke filtering from the jungle canopy just beneath our skids. We could hear the men on the radio, but good grief, who can see anyone in jungle like that? Trees, tall trees, with foliage grown together in layers above the jungle floor, hiding whatever was beneath, be it man or smoke, friend or foe.

"You're coming toward me now," said Voice excitedly, "you're just about to reach me now."

From the jungle floor it is much easier to see the helicopter, a larger target outlined against the sky and whooshing noisily, than it is to see someone on the jungle floor from the helicopter 100, maybe 200 feet above.

"Dustoff, you're right over me..... you just passed me."

Down below, with the Voice, two men were wounded, two US soldiers who needed evacuation. It is on the side of a mountain, and the growth is really hard to believe unless you've flown above it or walked through it.

The smoke had appeared, yellow wisps floating through the green leaves, but it had floated too far down the ridge line from the ground unit before appearing. It was little help.

Using the voice-activated homing device was about the only way to find the unit. One pass. Two passes. Three then four. Closer every time, but we were still passing over.

Fuel was a problem. So was Charlie if he was still in the area.

Finally, the ship stopped. "You're right over me, Dustoff, right over me."

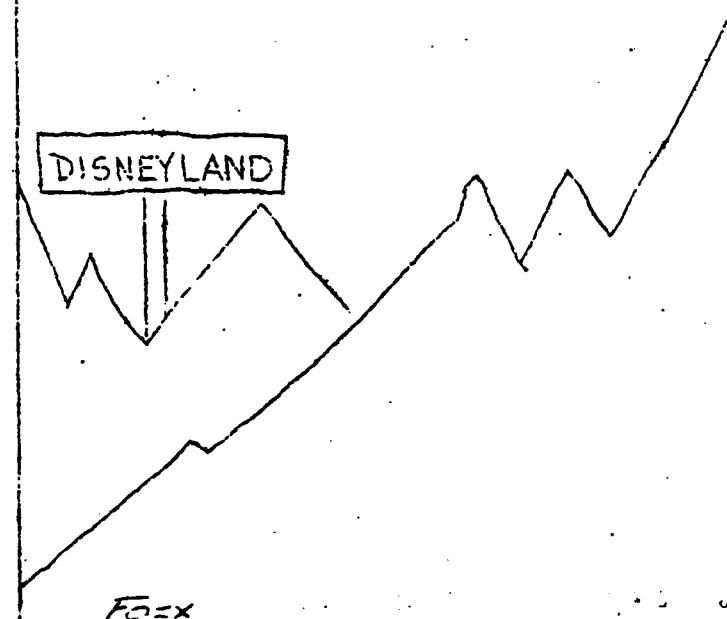
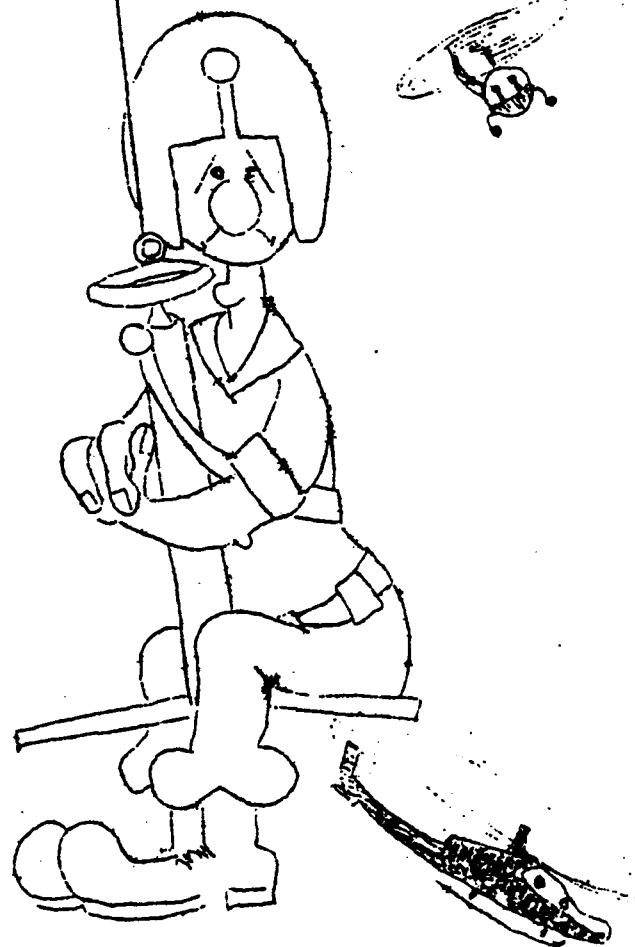
On both sides of the ship crewchief and medic leaned out, straining their eyes for any sign of life below. None.

"Dustoff, I'm sending a man right under you without a shirt on. He's going to wave his arms. See if you can see him.

Seconds pass, long seconds.

(Continued next page)

DUSTOFF CAN BE
A BIG LETDOWN.



HOIST MISSION CONTINUED

"Sir, I think I see some movement... down there. Come right about ten feet, sir," says the crewchief. "Yes, I've got him."

"You're right over us now, Dustoff," says the Voice on the ground.

"I'm lowering the penetrator now, sir," says the crew chief as he swings it out of the ship and starts lowering it.

The hole in the canopy is small to begin with, and its size and shape keep changing, due to the rotor wash blowing and spreading the foliage below.

Air turbulence, gusts of wind, fight the ship, making a hover, a good hover, hard to hold.

On both sides the crewmembers are watching the whip of the rotor blade, making sure it doesn't go too close to the nearby trees, talking to the pilot and directing him in the hover. "Swing your tail a little to the right, about three feet, sir. That's fine, sir. Hold her steady, now. You're looking good right there, sir."

"Penetrator's down, sir." As soon as it touches ground, the ground unit leads the two patients, yanks the slack on the cable, and the hoist moves up again. Only about thirty seconds, thirty long seconds, have passed.

"Coming up, sir." Now the problem becomes not dragging the patients up through the trees. The ship must be as steady as when the penetrator went down.

Sometimes the path is smooth. Other times the patient is brought up, stopped, moved left, brought up a few more feet, moved right, and thus until he reaches the aircraft. At that point, just below the skids, the crew chief stops outside the ship onto the skids and guides the patients inside by hand while the medic operates the hoist controls. Once inside, the ship heads them up and moves them out.

A sigh of relief. A thanks from the ground unit. A breath of fresh air blown in the ship at 120 knots. A hazardous job that's over.

AWARDS

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

1LT OTIS D. EVANS (1st OLC)
CW2 STANLEY R. PADEH
1LT GERALD M. TOREA

BRONZE STAR

MAJ ROBERT R. CLOKE (1st OLC)
CW2 MAX E. TUCKER
CW2 MICHAEL L. MCKENNA
SFC THOMAS L. ROSS, JR.
SF5 EDWARD T. SELANDER
SP5 DAVID L. WOODS

AIR MEDAL w "V"

CW2 MICHAEL L. MCKENNA

AIR MEDAL

37th OLC MAJ ROBERT R. CLOKE
12th-14th OLC SP5 DAVID L. WOODS
7th- 9th OLC SP5 AMADOR G. SANCHEZ
6th-10th OLC SP5 EDWARD T. SELANDER
5th OLC CW2 MICHAEL L. MCKENNA
3rd OLC SP5 THOMAS E. ROLLS
BAM 1LT Thomas M. McCrary
BAM WO1 JOHN H. SHIRLEY
BAM WO1 JOHN W. WINTAKER
BAM SP5 RICHARD L. OBERG
BAM SP5 JAMES A. MARGRO

ARMY COMENDATION MEDAL

1LT OTIS D. EVANS
WO1 JOHN E. BLESSING
WO1 FRANCIS H. D. MICHENS
SP5 STEPHEN P. BIBICH
SP5 BARTH T. CUTLER
SP5 JAMES JOHNSON
SP5 ERIC R. FOX
SP5 LARRY M. WAGNER
SP5 MARL T. WHITE
SF4 THOMAS E. COLLINS
SP4 LAWRENCE HARRIS, JR.

It should've happened on April Fool's Day, for that would have been far more appropriate timing, but it didn't.

Everyone thought They were kidding when They said, "No more Marasans." Good grief! That means shining shoes and washing clothes and sweeping floors and . . . and work.

They weren't kidding. Orders from Headquarters.

No more Marasans.

So, this month was like a period of adjustment, such as one encounters in many phases of life. Back to the bachelor life. The aid doesn't come in on Thursdays anymore.

It's rather funny to see grown men, attired in shorts or cutoffs, stomping sloshing the water in pans, with their feet while they "wash" their clothes in the pans. They're doing the Little Old Winemaker routine, not washing clothes. At least everyone has clean feet now.

No more Marasans.

Another era passes.

The war against dirt escalates.

EAGLE DUSTOFF is a monthly publication of the Air Ambulance Platoon, 326th Medical Battalion.

EDITOR: SP5 Karl T. White

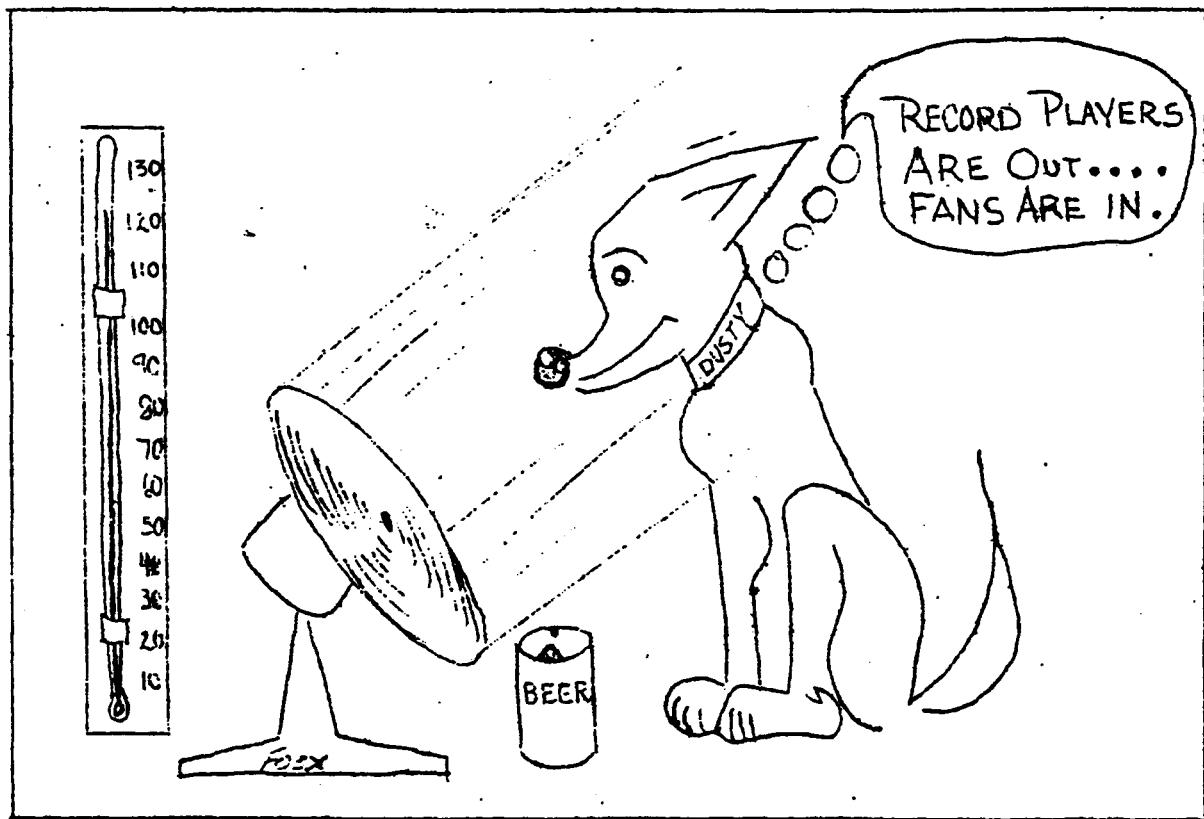
CARTOONIST: SP5 Brian R. Fo3x

A FEW WORDS FROM DUSTOFF 96

With the flurry of activity involved in supporting three major combat operations, platoon personnel have still found time to welcome our new faces and swap "war stories" with the many departing. Hard and honor ceremonies consumed time, but were welcome changes of pace.

Our Crash Rescue Specialists have been getting that "let down" feeling quite regularly as they ride the jungle penetrator into the site of downed aircrrews. These men are the first and only men into the area and must rely on their skill in rapidly evacuating the aircrrew before "Charlie" gets into the act. SP5 Brian Fox was presented the Air Medal with "V" device for his latest crew recovery in an impressive award ceremony conducted by Major General Zais, among the captured equipment from Operation Massachusetts Striker (in the A Shau Valley).

Two new aircraft commanders joined the ranks to help fill the gap of those leaving or promoted to other positions. Congratulations to CW2 Edmond Mueller, Dustoff 900, and WO1 George Stapp, Dustoff 902.



There can be no more ominous beginning to a month than May has—to start out with a day whose name is synonymous with disaster—MAIDAY! One trembles at the mere thought of disastrous possibilities.

We do have some comforts, mind you, such as the Guns of Mavarrone which are parked just on the next hill and always manage to serenade us to sleep.

Those 8 inchers are good for morale when they leave.

Speaking of leaving and who wouldn't like to, the following people left this month:

CPT Robert D. Sawyer, release from Active duty

SGT David N. Pritt, 30 day special Leave

SP5 Anthony T. Burdo, to a hospital in the States

SP5 Roy M. Mayberry, to Fort Campbell, Kentucky (Hospitalized)

SP5 Kenneth Ramsey, emergency leave

SP5 John Frisia, to 44th Med Bde

We also learned that SP5 Michael P. McLane was reassigned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

New personnel this month are as follows:

CW2 William A. Tiffany, a pilot from the 77th Artillery, who flew Dustoff on a previous Vietnam tour.

SP4 Ronald Crockett, medic, from C Co, 326th Med Bn

SP4 Fred Hughes and SP4 Barry Ploutz Crash rescue specialists, from the States.

SP4 Gary Runge, medic, from 2/506th Infantry

PFC David Reed, crash rescue man, from 523rd Engineers

Promoted this month were:

CW2's Robert B. Black, Michael L. McKenna, and Max E. Tucker

SP5's Anthony T. Burdo and Lawrence Harris, Jr.

Going on leave and R&R during April were:

Major Robert R. Cloke, Hong Kong

CW2 Michael L. McKenna, Sydney

SFC Thomas L. Ross, Jr., Tokyo

SP5 Gregory L. Brown, Hong Kong

SP5 Stephen B. Francis, Taipei

MONTHLY STATISTICS

Patients Evacuated:

US	823
VN Civ	161
MED CAP	23
ARVN	47
POW/SUSP	4
CANINE	3
OTHER	2
TOTAL	1063

DAY/NIGHT PATIENTS:

Day	962
Night	101
TOTAL	1063

MISSIONS:

Day	599
Night	73
TOTAL	672

HOIST UTILIZATION:

Missions	105
Patients	165
Hours	124

FLIGHT TIME:

Day	510
Night	56
TOTAL	566

Avg No Aviators PSNT FOR DUTY 20

CFT COMBAT DAMAGE 1