

borne Sergeant ceives "Big" Letter

Sept 17, 1966

HOA, (173rd ABN-10)—
oldier in Vietnam loves
mail and plenty of it, but
Kenneth Oekten of the
borne Brigade, is espe-
ckly. He just received a
m-La Mars, Iowa, which
ed by 455 people—that's a
tter.

a Mars Municipal Band
American Legion Post
jointly sponsored a series
rts dedicated to four men
ir area who are serving
am. Volunteers from the
n Legion Post collected
es on a letter for each
our soldiers.

nt Oekten, the mess ser-
r Company A (Admin) of
d, received the letter just
ays after he was awarded
y Commendation Medal
outstanding work while
to the 101st Airborne
at Ft. Campbell, Ken-

ther of nine children, he
n in Vietnam since May.
id to be over here, really
mething for my country,"

"That is my job and the
very soldier, doing what-
necessary."

ing the letter was a real
r the sergeant. "A sol-
y soldier, really appre-
when he knows that peo-
thinking of him and are
ed about him," he said.

I could personally thank
id every one of those 455
who were kind enough to

think of me."

Sergeant Oekten recognized
many of the signatures on the
letter from the small, mid-west-
ern town in which he grew up.
He found names of childhood
friends, neighbors and relatives.
"The only thing wrong with the
letter," said Sergeant Oekten, "is
that it makes me homesick."

Choppers Take Deadly Toll

TAN SON NHUT, (1st AVN-10)
— Army helicopters supporting
tactical operations in Vietnam
amassed a confirmed kill total
of 6386 Viet Cong while flying
combat sorties during a recent
six month period. Army choppers
also accounted for the destruc-
tion of 1083 enemy sanpans and
damage to 1500 more. The sup-
pressive fires of armed UH-1B
gunships also destroyed 4028 Viet
Cong structures and damaged at
least 3753 more.

The 6386 dead Viet Cong were
attributed to the aerial fire of
helicopters belonging to units of
various combat divisions and to
the 1st Aviation Brigade, com-
manded by Brig. Gen. G. P.
Seneff, Jr.

There is one instance on record
where Republic of Korea troops
credit two Army Huey gunships
with the destruction of an entire
30-man Viet Cong platoon in a
single engagement.

ry's platoon had s
defensive perimeter
matic fire started o
on my left flank,"
sergeant. "At first
in that direction, bu
pulls diversionary t
that, so I kept my
the trail in front of

"Without my
everything beyond



OPEN WIDE—Ca
villager from Tan

more personnel carriers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade move growth during a recent search and destroy mission. (Photo by Sp4 Berni Zawacki, 173rd ABN-IO)

Brush With Death Vith A Happy Smile

PS-IO) sergeant and his counterpart moved the platoon in pursuit for 500 yards through dense jungle brush. When it became evident that the Viet Cong had melted into the jungle, the platoon withdrew to a much-used trail they had crossed and began setting up their ambush for the night. "As soon as we had set up our defense positions, I looked up and saw five Viet Cong on the trail." Sergeant Rader immediately opened up with his M-16 and at the same time the 15 men he had with him in his element of the patrol began firing with carbines.

But things were getting hot for the little reconnaissance group. The interpreter told Rader he heard Viet Cong platoon leaders and company commanders shouting orders in the near-darkness. "It was obvious after a few minutes that we were being surrounded by two companies of VC," Rader said.

"All night long we could hear the enemy shouting and shooting all around us. I don't think any of us could sleep for more than a few minutes." But their posi-

tion remained undiscovered and at daybreak they moved to an opening in the thick jungle from which they could be lifted out by choppers.

Rader's eyes saddened as he related his only casualties—two members of the platoon missing. "There's a battalion of VC up there," the young sergeant said. "I hope those two make it."

No sooner had he said that than his interpreter ran into the room and reported excitedly that the two had found their way back. Rader turned toward where the interpreter was pointing and there stood two battered men with ear-to-ear grins.

In Six Hours

VUNG TAU, (1st LOG-IO) — Within a matter of six hours, 400 newly arrived U.S. Army soldiers of the Transportation, Signal and Military Intelligence corps were unloaded, fed and placed on airplanes for final transportation to their new "homes" in Vietnam by the 1st Logistical Command here.

Members of the 536th Transportation Company, the 519th Military Intelligence Company, and Headquarters Company of the 40th Signal Battalion unloaded from the USS Gen. Hugh N. Gaffey after a month-long voyage across the Pacific Ocean.

Upon their arrival here, the new arrivals were greeted by Col. C. R. Church, commanding officer of the Log's Vung Tau Sub Area Command. A group of Vietnamese girls with the traditional leis also welcomed the in-coming soldiers.

men, waiting above ground, and told them of his discovery. He then began to probe the tunnel.

Complete investigation of the tunnel was found to be impossible due to many cave-ins caused by a B-52 Air Strike a few days earlier. However, in one of the branch tunnels, Sergeant Sutton found a book which turned out to be a diary of one of the VC who had occupied the tunnel.

The men of C Company had moved into the area, a sector of Long Khanh Province, after a massive air strike on the suspected VC positions. The 173rd conducted search and destroy missions while on Operation Toledo, after receiving reports of a large Viet Cong force in the district. The aerial bombardment had caused the enemy to leave their hideout.

The many months of hard labor which the Viet Cong put into the building of the tunnel complex were all wasted. And, more important, the VC were on the run again.

Vietnam Communique

Action and friendly casualties were generally light during a week which saw two major operations come to an end. Enemy dead for Operation Paul Revere II and "Amarillo" totaled 911.

1st Cavalry Division—Operation Paul Revere II, carried out with the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry, has ended with 809 enemy dead and 104 captured. Seventy-eight suspects were detained and 198 weapons seized. Tactical sorties flown in support were 609. Friendly casualties were light.

25th Infantry Division—Operation Paul Revere III, which began Aug. 26, continues in Pleiku Province without significant contact. The 3rd Brigade is on this operation. The 2nd Brigade, in one airmobile search and destroy operation, killed nine enemy and captured 22 in two brief fire-fights 18 miles west-northwest of Saigon in Hau Nghia Province. There were no friendly casualties reported.

1st Infantry Division—The 1st Brigade has ended Operation Amarillo. The totals: 102 enemy dead, six captured, four individual and four crew-served weapons seized. The operation area was 28 miles north of Saigon in Binh Duong Province. Strike pilots flew 138 sorties in support. Overall friendly casualties were reported as light.

1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division—The enemy casualty toll in Operation John Paul Jones has climbed to 250 as fighting continues in the Phu Yen Province. Friendly casualties remain light. Strike pilots have flown 308 sorties in the operation's support. The paratroopers report capturing 49 enemy, questioning 379 suspects and seizing one

crew-served and 80 individual weapons.

173rd Airborne Brigade—Operation Toledo, a multi-battalion operation carried on by the brigade with ARVN Rangers continues 13 miles northwest of Binh Ba. Eight enemy have been

killed, nine captured, and 24 suspects detained. Friendly casualties are light. Strike pilots have flown 318 sorties since the operation began Aug. 10. Three B-52 strikes uncovered enemy trenches, foxholes, and bunkers in one day's action.

Prop Blast Saves Life

LAI KHE, (1st INF-IO) — Private First Class Richard K. Duhamel can thank the prop blast of a helicopter for saving his life.

During an operation, east of here, home of the Big Red One's 3rd Brigade, the reconnaissance platoon of the 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry, was digging in for the night. Duhamel had just finished setting up his poncho as a shelter when a re-supply helicopter swooped over his position: Swish! Away went his poncho. He was in the path of the incoming choppers. The irate private reconstructed his shelter only to have it blown down again by the next chopper.

Gathering his belongings, he moved about fifteen meters from his old position. As he settled down for the night, secretly laughing about his wise move, a grenade scored a direct hit on his old position.

"Glad I moved," mused Duhamel. "It would've made a sizeable hole in my poncho."



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