

Ride 'Em (Fly 'Em)

Cowboys Of 173rd Abn Bde

BIEN HOA, (173rd ABN-IO)—A landing zone near the abandoned rubber plantation of Cay Gao in War Zone D was recently turned into an improvised rodeo corral.

Elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade were on an operation in the area when they came across a Viet Cong force. While chasing them through the jungle, the paratroopers came across five bulls, gathered in a field near a VC base camp.

It was decided that the bulls would be captured and taken as a gift to the village of Bao Ham, which was celebrating its annual "Peace Festival."

That was when the fun began. The herd would have to be helilifted to the village, since it would be virtually impossible to drive a herd of cattle through 20 miles of thick jungle.

Everything was going smoothly until the helicopters arrived. As the first chopper made its slow approach, pandemonium broke loose. The bulls, terrified by the huge roaring creatures from the sky, bolted, and the stampede was on.

Realizing that if the bulls reached the jungle's edge, they would be lost, the paratroopers shed their heavy packs and began chasing frantically after them. The heli-

copter pilot, seeing what had happened, turned his craft around and zoomed down at the stampeding bulls, trying to turn them back toward the running paratroopers.

It worked, but then suddenly, the men were faced with five terrified bulls galloping toward them at full speed. In the true spirit of the Old West, the soldiers reacted to the situation.

One young cowboy tried out his old football techniques and brought one bull to the ground with a flying tackle. With the bull on the ground, everyone else piled on and the wildly thrashing legs were finally tied down.

Two other bulls were caught by makeshift lassoes. But, the remaining two bulls, seeing what had happened to their companions, wouldn't be caught that easily. For nearly a half-hour, the paratroopers on the ground and buzzing helicopters overhead chased the bulls from one end of the clearing to the other. Finally, the two remaining bulls were brought to the ground and hog tied, and all the captured bulls were strapped into harnesses and air-lifted to the village.

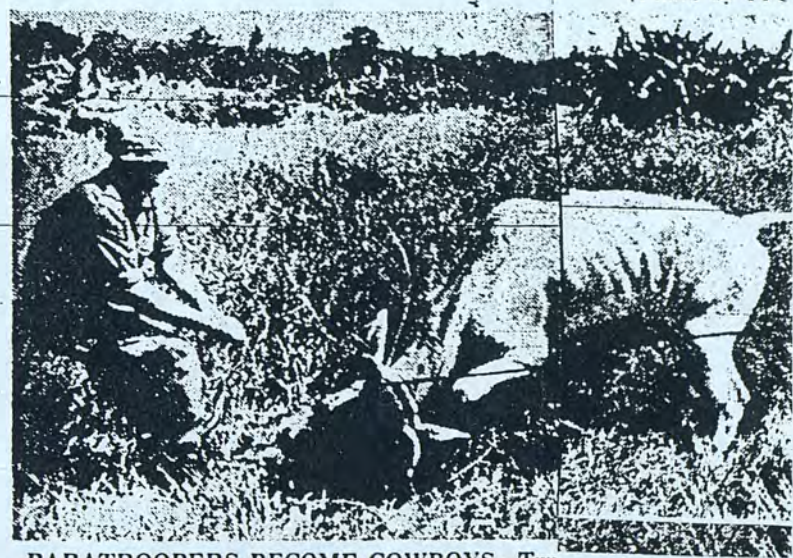
When the paratroopers-turned-cowboys returned to their base camp and told others about the day's activities, they were met with skepticism and one soldier was heard to comment, "That's a lot of Bull!"



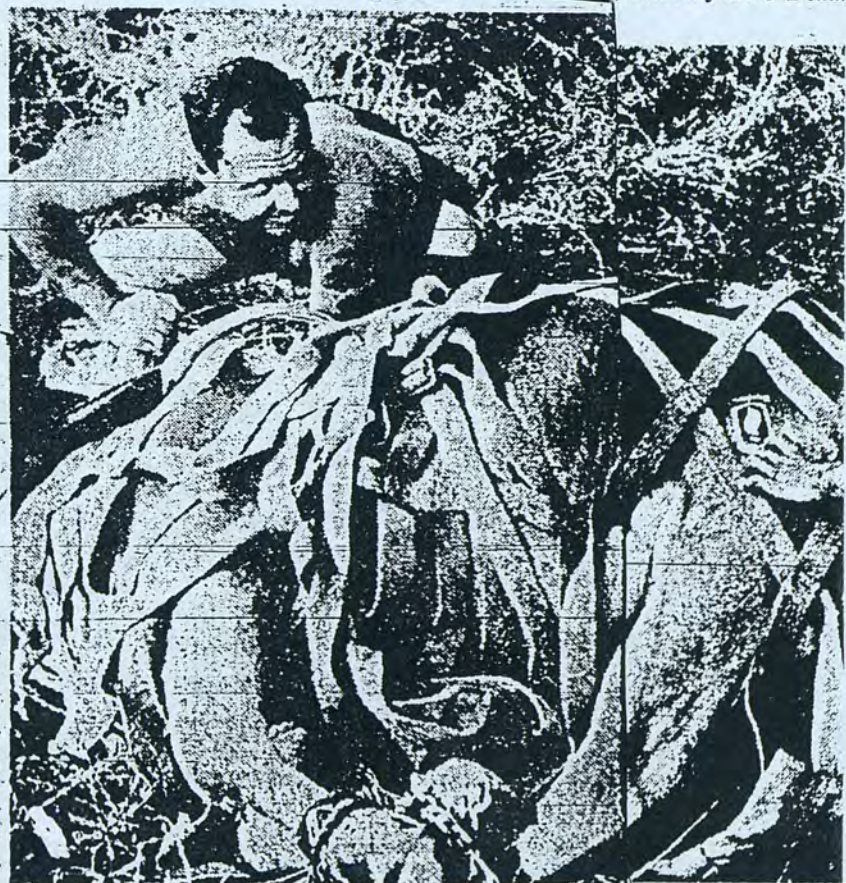
THIS WAY—Staff Sergeant Robert E. Cox (left) points out to PFC Clark A. Smith where a herd of cattle captured by the 173rd Airborne was ported to a rural village and given to Vietnamese farmers. (Photo by PFC)



BULL BY THE HORNS—Private First Class Ira J. Spittler keeps a firm hand on the horn of a cow captured from the Viet Cong during Operation Waco. Spittler is a radio-telephone operator with Company A, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade. (Photo by PFC Donald C. Hall, 173rd ABN-IO)



PARATROOPERS BECOME COWBOYS—Two members of Company A, 173rd Airborne Brigade, grip their ropes tightly as they work with a cow. The cow was one of a herd captured from the Viet Cong during Operation Waco. (Photo by PFC Donald C. Hall, 173rd ABN-IO)



BRANDED—A cow captured from the Viet Cong by members of the 173rd Airborne Brigade is being branded with a patch put on by Sgt. Alain J. Memblay. Holding the cow's head is Sgt. [Name]. (Photo by PFC Donald C. Hall, 173rd ABN-IO)