

196th Inf's Booby Trap Class A Real Blast

CHU LAI, (196th INF-10) — The line of new replacements moved quickly through the trees, following the path to their next class. Mines and Booby Traps. A loud explosion sent the men diving to the ground, all unsure of what was happening.

When the worried replacements looked up, they understood. In front of them a painted, wooden Viet Cong had swung into the trail with a message written across its chest. "Welcome to Mines and Booby Trap!"

The wooden VC is the brain-

child of SSgt. Edwin Beck, a 196th Light Infantry Brigade Charger Academy instructor, who teaches the replacements how to avoid death or injury from Charlie's various traps.

"Sure, the explosion scares the new men a bit," Beck said, "but that's the idea. It gets them in the right frame of mind for the class."

The replacements receive two hours of instruction covering every known enemy mine and booby trap, and are shown examples of many. The shock of the explosion greeting the class hardly wore off before the men

were jolted again. Picking up a coconut which had been lying on the ground, Beck set off another explosion, giving the men a graphic demonstration of one of Charlie's favorite tricks.

Starting with simple punji pits and foot traps, Beck covers everything, including the most sophisticated devices the VC are known to use. During his eight months with the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, the sergeant has seen many of these devices demonstrated in action, and is determined the new men will learn all they can about them before they get to the field.

Every soldier wants a souvenir of his tour in Vietnam, and what could be better than something of Charlie's? There is a VC flag on a pole to the side of the outdoor classroom. Beck makes another impression when he casually pulls the pole out of the ground, intending to capture the flag. There are 10 pounds of explosives planted about 100 feet to the side of the class, wired to the flag pole with an electrical detonator. It is the largest blast of the day.

The VC like to booby trap their villages and base camps if they think an American unit

is coming through. A gate of bamboo is located to the rear of the class area, and when Beck has one of the students push it open, everyone knows something is going to explode.

But when the blasting cap wired to the gate goes off, everyone still jumps. In a real VC village, the gate could have been wired to a hand grenade, claymore mine, or other type of explosive.

The men leave Beck's class walking lightly, and Beck hopes they will remember to do that while in the field.

Clerk Hops Chopper, But Not Right One

CU CHI, (25th INF-10)—Captain Roger Taylor, commander of the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, was flabbergasted when a nervous soldier crawled up to him in the middle of a heavy fire fight with a Viet Cong battalion and said, "Sir, I'm not supposed to be here."

The commander's amazement grew as he crouched down behind a rice paddy dike to hear the man's story.

While bullets snapped overhead, Sp4 Lyle Roush explained that he was a clerk sent from the 25th Infantry Division Finance Office to make an annual check of leave records.

When he arrived at the battalion's forward base, everyone

was loading up on helicopters. "So I figured the unit must be returning to the division's base camp, and hopped on," Roush said.

Instead of coming to the base camp here, the ships were heading for a combat assault 40 miles northwest of Saigon, along the Oriental River. Minutes after they touched down, the landing zone erupted with VC automatic weapons fire.

Roush found himself with a .45 cal. pistol, a flak jacket, and leave records. He loaded the pistol, wrapped the records up in the jacket, and began his crawl toward Taylor.

"There was nothing we could do," said Taylor, "but issue him more ammo and some grenades." Roush fought for the next four hours like the rest of the men and finally caught an ammunition resupply chopper out.

"They always told us in basic training that no matter what our job, we were always fighters," Roush said. "Now I believe it."

He returned to the quiet finance office with a real story to tell.

Light Can Be Scary

LE THANH, (4th INF-10)—A shocked and dazed North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troop was captured recently after one of his comrades walked into a trip flare and exposed him and 14 others.

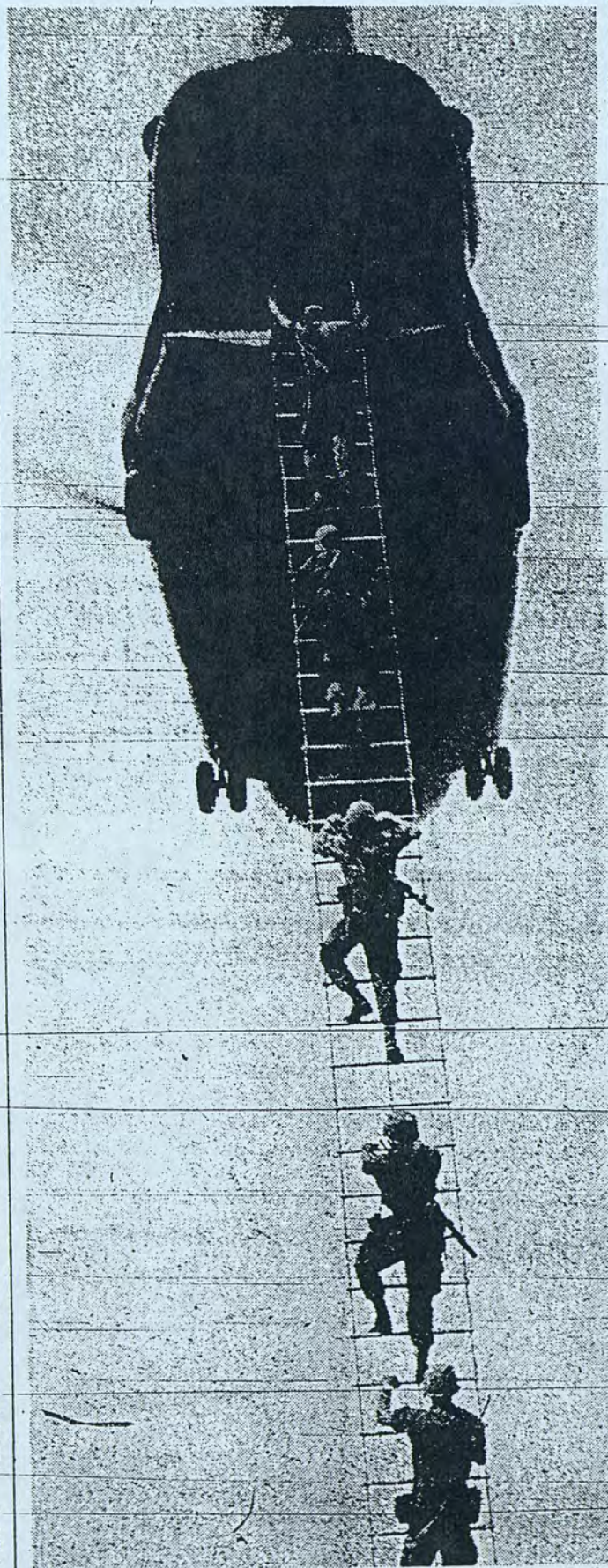
They were wandering through the jungle west of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division's headquarters at Jackson's Hole.

The NVA patrol walked into the flare just after sunset. Several of the enemy managed to avoid the flares before one of them ignited, illuminating the whole perimeter.

The patrol, realizing what it had done, immediately scattered into the darkness — all except one. When the flare ignited, he instantly fell to the ground and lay there until sunrise.

The next morning, a platoon from Company C, 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry, which had set up the flares, searched the perimeter for the enemy. The men found the stunned and dazed soldier, still hiding in the underbrush.

Apparently the flare had frightened him so much that he lay in a semi-state of shock until he was found.



Engineers of the 1st Inf. Div., packing full field gear and weapons, climb down a rope ladder from a hovering Chinook helicopter. It was a training exercise this time, aimed at showing new men of D Co., 1st Eng. Bn., one phase of their mission—descending into jungle to clear helicopter landing zones.

(USA Photo by Pfc. Robert J. Stevens)

Commo Support Is Quick

NUI DAT, (9th INF-10) — A fast working team from the 9th Signal Battalion attacked the communications problems of the elements of the 9th Infantry Division on Operation Paddington and provided immediate radio and telephone hook-up with the main division.

To provide communications rapidly, 9th Sig. dispatched 62 men and 20 vehicles from Bear Cat to here.

The vehicles carried very high frequency (VHF) multi-channel radios, teletype machines, FM radio receivers and transmitters, telephone switchboards, and radio teletype.

Within 24 hours of arriving at this 1st Australian Task Force headquarters, 9th Div. communications were flowing.

A VHF radio-relay van was airlifted to the 1st Brigade's area of operation to provide additional communications support, according to Maj. Charles F. Lindberg, battalion commander. This gave the brigade direct contact with division headquarters.

To insure that these communications continued, an additional VHF radio van and power supply were made available at the division tactical headquarters.

Wire repairmen are on round-the-clock to correct any wire deficiencies.

'Fireflies' Mash Enemy Fleet

CHU LAI, (TF 09-10) — A Firefly team from the 71st Aviation Company—Rattlers recently established a record for sampan and junk fleet kills north of here.

Supporting Task Force Oregon, Maj. William Arnik and Maj. Edward Johnson sighted more than 100 junks and sampans along the Truong Giang River.

As the men switched on their powerful lights, they observed many boats on the river bank being loaded. Many more, laden with ammunition boxes, were moving away from the shore.

Dropping down for a closer look, the Rattlers drew small arms and automatic weapons fire from the shore line and from the boats trying to escape.

Huey gunships, flown by Capt. Joe Corothers and WO's Ager Davis, Jerry Shirley, and Conrad Howard, directed rocket and machinegun fire into enemy positions, resulting in 148 junks and sampans destroyed and 14 VC killed.

Feline Defends 'Home'

LONG BINH, (USAFCV-10)—Sometimes things get so routine that it really takes a jolt to knock you out.

Private First Class Charles Daniels, Headquarters Company, 159th Engineer Group, Army Engineer Command Vietnam, had opened his filing cabinet to get out paper many, many times and had never thought anything about it.

But when he opened the door once recently, he thought about it. A fierce growl, followed by a long hiss, warned him of some danger. He recoiled backward.

Inching his way back to the cabinet, he peered inside and saw a cat. He wondered what a cat would be doing in a group headquarters, let alone his filing cabinet.

Getting over the shock of seeing a cat in his cabinet, he looked a little closer, disregarding the threatening growls and hisses. Daniels got another surprise when he saw a kitten.

Word quickly spread throughout the headquarters—and a crowd began to gather. The mother cat, being totally unaccustomed to such an audience, became more disturbed.

A box with some old clothing was hastily put together and taken to the frenzied mother, who had calmed down a bit because of some coaxing and a rub or two.

The mother and kitten were placed in the box and moved to the company grade officers' billet where they could have some privacy.