

Battalion, had been dropped by helicopter next to the downed craft

which was on a sandy river bank. As the helicopter took off, enemy

fire crashed in on the men from snipers hidden in the nearby jungle.

For 30 minutes the crew crouched behind the battered helicopter,

returning fire, piling up sand for protection, and attempting to rig

the chopper for removal.

Aerial rocket artillery (ARA) helicopters arrived and the sniper

fire subsided long enough for Sandidge to race in front of the downed

craft and finish the rigging task.

A group of Marines, hearing the fire, appeared on the opposite

river bank and motioned the men to cross. As the ARA ship made a

sweeping pass, the three men ran across 100 feet of open riverbank and

splashed across the water. Sandidge pin-pointed the enemy positions

and they were silenced by artillery and Air Force strikes.

The downed chopper was later successfully removed.

13May67-VN Pulls Gunner From Fiery Craft

BAN ME THUOT, (1st AVN-IO) - A Vietnamese civilian helped save the

lives of four Americans from the burning wreckage of an Army

helicopter here recently.

The helicopter mishap occurred when a UH-1C gunship was attempting

a takeoff from Ban Me Thuot City Airfield. It lost power and crashed

in a sparsely populated area. No civilians were hurt.

Phan Van Ngong, an employee of Pacific Architects and Engineers,

was the first to arrive at the crash scene. A few moments later the

crash rescue unit from nearby Camp Coryell arrived and started to put

out the fire.

Ignoring the flames from the burning chopper, two members

of the

crash rescue team, Sp4 Douglas Ellis nad Sp4 Leonard Jones started to

pull the crew members to safety, Mr. Ngong joined them and rescued the

gunner just as the intense heat of the fire detonated the chopper's

ammunition.

Major Charlie P. Fleming, company commander of the 155th Assault

Helicopter Company, forwarded a letter of appreciation to Mr. Ngong

through the Pacific Architects and Engineers manager at Ban Me Thuot.

It read in part:

"I would like to take this opportunity to extend to you my deepest

gratitude for your heroic efforts on behalf of the crew of the

helicopter that crashed at Ban Me Thuot. Your valiant display of

courage while rescuing the crew members from the burning wreckage was

a source of admiration to myself and to the many friends of these

men."

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In civic actions, Chinook helicopters of the 213th Assault Support

Helicopter company became virtual Noah's Arks, lifting Vietnamese and

livestock from the enemy controlled area. Many had been trying for

years to escape domination by the VC. One old man said he had fought

with the French during the IndoChina War and had been trying to flee

VC control for many years.

In six days, the Chinooks evacuated 268 men, women, and children

along with 18 head of cattle, 15 pigs, 50 chickens, and several dogs

belonging to the villagers. The families were relocated at Dau Tieng