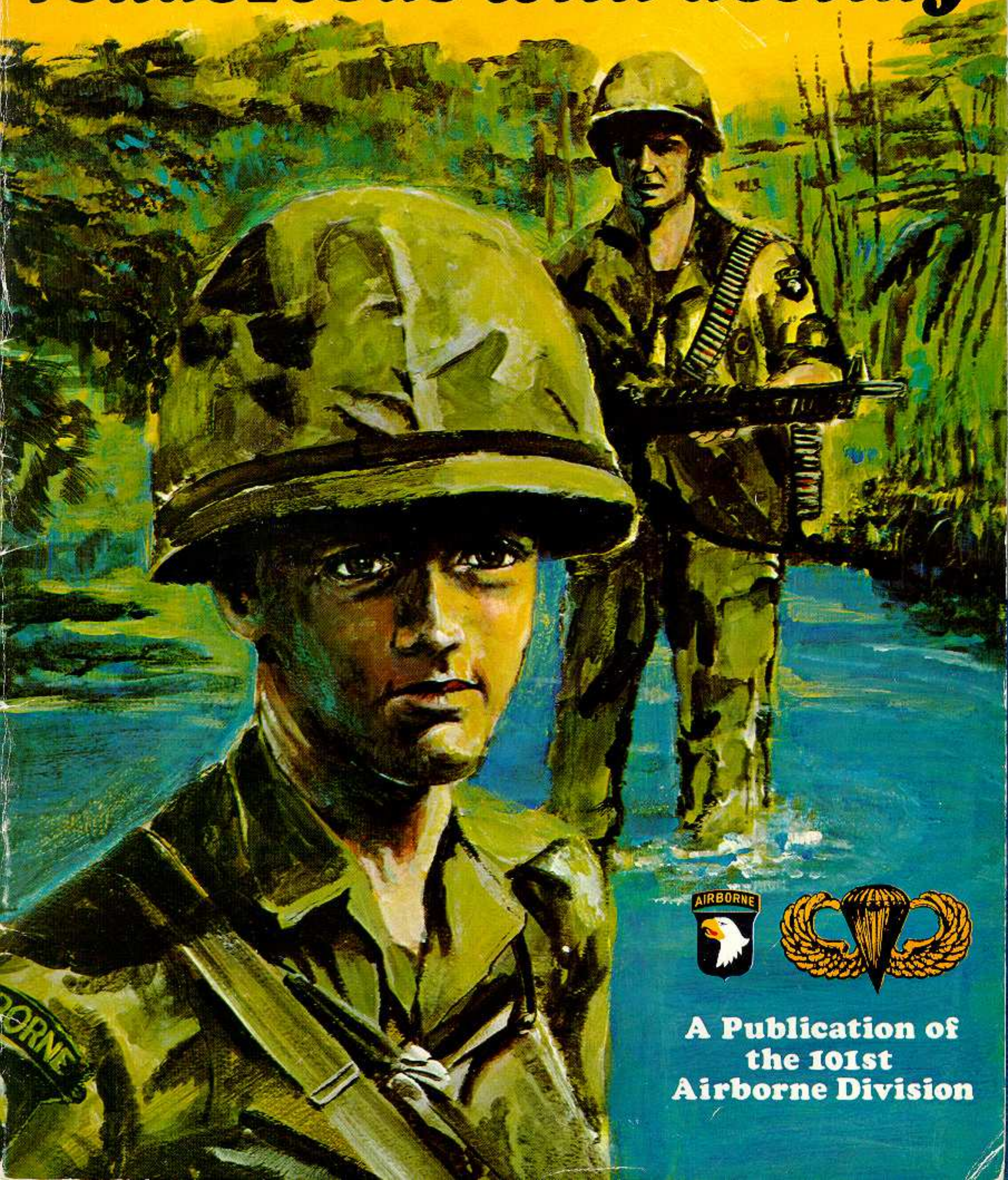


rendezvous with destiny



**A Publication of
the 101st
Airborne Division**



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OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL
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19 July 1968

To the Men of the 101st Airborne Division

Today, as I reminisce back over my year as Commander of the 101st Airborne Division, I ask myself, "what greater heights can a man reach?" The opportunity to command the famous "Screaming Eagles", and especially during battle, is one of the greatest honors that any one man can receive. I am doubly fortunate insofar as I brought the Division, minus the 1st Brigade, to Vietnam.

A little over one year ago, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, I took command knowing we would face difficult tasks ahead. In August, of last year, the official notification was received that the Division was to deploy to the Republic of Vietnam. Training cycles were established, personnel departed for off-post and out of state schooling, loading lists were updated, and the mountain of administrative planning began to rise.

When General Westmoreland requested our presence, at an earlier date than planned, it was necessary to accelerate our training program. This was accomplished and you were ready. We deployed 10,356 men over 10,000 miles from Fort Campbell in Operation Eagle Thrust. We closed the Division in 41 days, ready for our mission. Every man in this Division who participated in this historic move, is to be commended for a job well done.

On 13 December 1967, I arrived, with my staff, at Bien Hoa Air Base and reported to General Westmoreland, "The 101st Airborne Division reports for combat in Vietnam." After a short in-country training period, you were ready to meet and defeat the enemy. Uniting with our 1st Brigade, the Division once again became a balanced fighting force. You have written, with blood and sweat, your place in history, and continue to fulfill the Division's "Rendezvous With Destiny" - Bien Hoa, Phouc Vinh, Cu Chi, Song Be, Phan Rang, Phan Thiet, Bao Loc, Hue/Phu Bai, Phouc Yen, La Chu, Veghel, Pinky, Bastogne, Sally and Eagle are familiar names, recalling enduring memories to us all.

I have pushed hard and demanded much, always knowing what the results would be -- success and victory. I have talked to you in burning villages, sand-bagged bunkers, foxholes, wet jungles, and in the blazing sun on the coastal dunes. Your answer to my queries added much to my knowledge of the success of our tactics. The tactics used by this Division are not new, they are only the sound application of good principles of war. You came with a job to do -- defeat the enemy -- and you have done this job well. To accomplish this we have employed every resource in the command, day and night. My philosophy is simple; continuous attack with multiple-actions, always attack under an umbrella of friendly artillery, when a lucrative target is found, mass forces; and company size actions continuous around the clock on all fronts. You are experts at the art of night fighting and jungle fighting, you have learned well the valuable lesson of reacting violently to enemy fire, never break contact, and shoot low.

You are a well decorated distinguished unit. We have tried to decorate every deserving individual. This would be nearly every man in the Division. During the last six months you have established records that other units have not surpassed in much longer periods of time. This is a tribute to your dedication, "will to win", and discipline as an Airborne Division. The curtain now unfolds on an era that will bring new glory to this proud unit. Let your memories remain strong and keep your driving sense of competition, excellence, and aggressiveness AIRBORNE!

O. M. Barsanti
O. M. BARSANTI
Major General, USA
Commanding



rendezvous with destiny

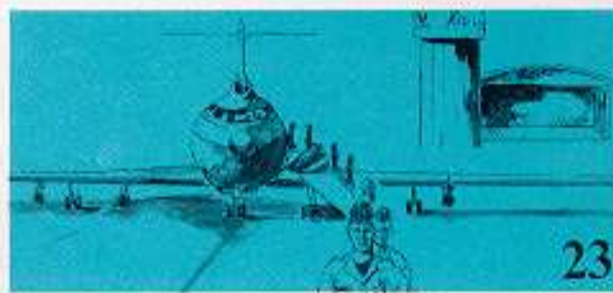


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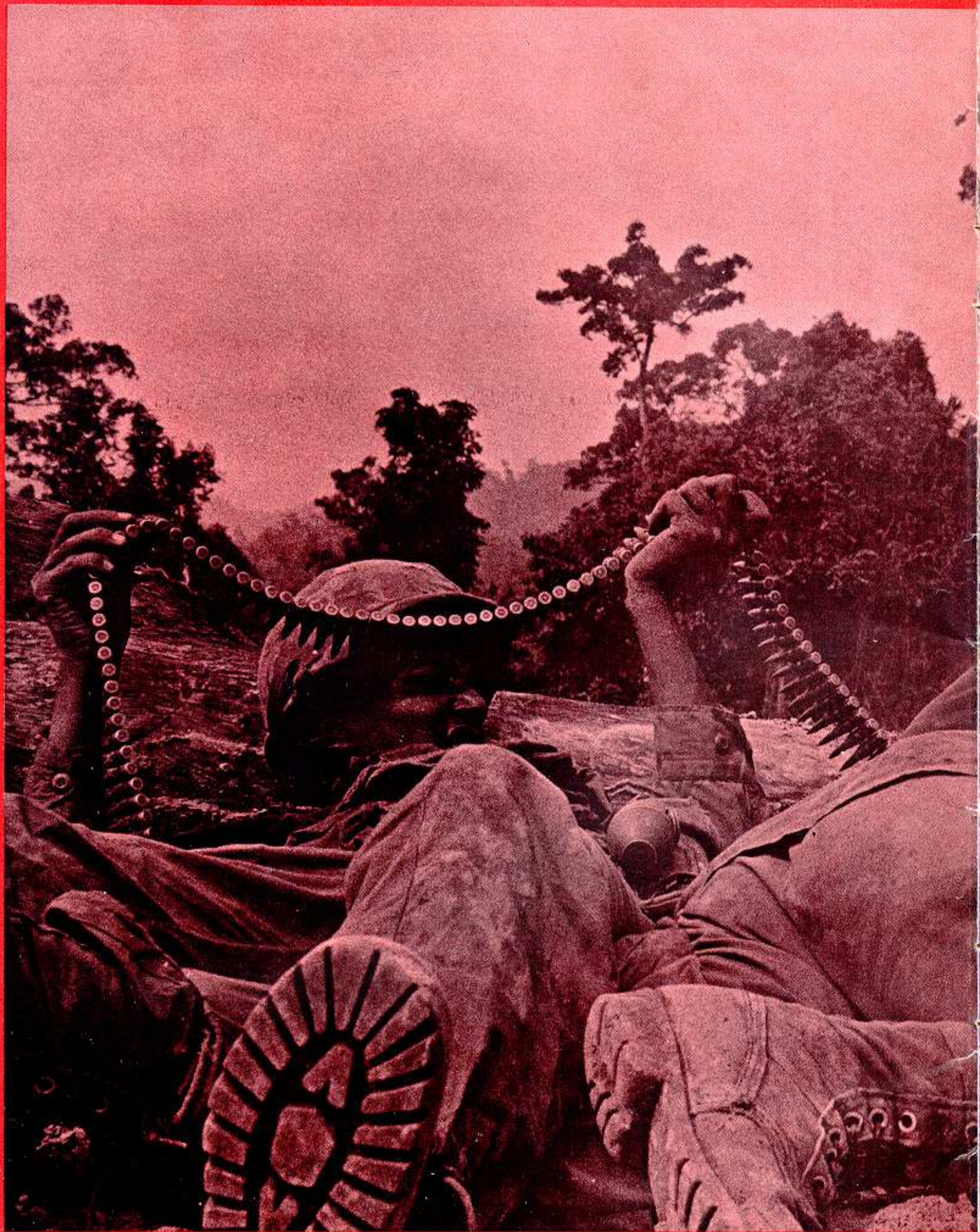
Editor's Note

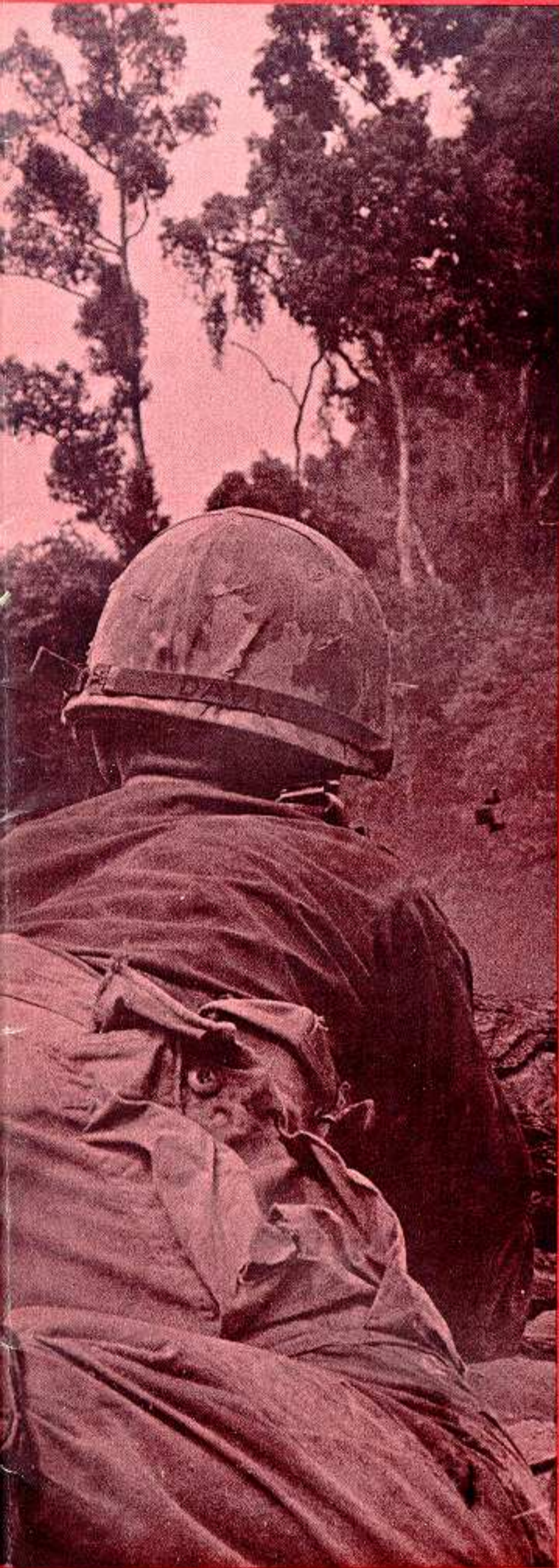
This special issue of *Rendezvous With Destiny* was published as a tribute to Maj. Gen. O. M. Barsanti, Division commander for the past year. The 101st's Vietnam record speaks for itself. A combat diary covering the last four months of heavy action appears on page 2.

As a change of pace from the emphasis placed on combat articles, a feature has been written about an experience everyone in the Division has gone through during their tour. See *Mixed Emotions*, page 23.

We hope you will keep this magazine as part of your Vietnam file when you return home. An envelope is attached so you can readily mail it to the U.S. for 60¢ airmail, 40¢ regular.

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Screaming Eagle Vietnam Diary

Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division deployed rapidly to South Vietnam's I Corps tactical zone following the Communist threat to Hue. The following is an account of the highlights of these campaigns.

March 8—The Division launched Operation Carentan with airborne infantrymen of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division in Thua Thien province, north of the new forward base camp, Camp Eagle, located southwest of Hue. Joining the "All-Americans" in the initial assault were members of B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav. and F Co., 58th Inf. Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP).

March 9—Screaming Eagles of the 2nd Brigade rejoined the Division after completing their phase of Operation Jeb Stuart near Quang Tri City with the 1st Air Cavalry Division. They killed 1,011 enemy during their phase of the operation.

March 10—A large weapons cache was discovered by A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. It included 16 rockets of 122mm, 321 rounds of 60mm mortars,

1st Brigade machine-gun team blasts away at NVA bunker position during Operation Carentan II.

170 rounds of 82mm mortars, 107 RPG-7 rounds, 228 RPG-2 rounds, 24,000 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, 2,800 blasting caps and 28 cases of TNT. Paratroopers of C Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. killed 25 enemy during a contact with an NVA company. Meanwhile, Screaming Eagles of A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. captured a weapons cache containing 16 assault rifles, 10 rounds of 60mm mortars and 15 rounds of 82mm mortars after a bitter battle resulting in seven NVA killed. During the same period, other Division forces captured 22,700 pounds of rice along the banks of the Song Bo. It was found mostly in caves.

March 11—Members of C Co., 326th Engineer Bn. (Abn), clearing Highway 1 north of Hue with the 1st Bn (Abn), 502nd Inf., discovered and dismantled an NVA booby trap of 11 rounds of 105mm shells buried in the road and wired for command detonation. Staff Sgt. Ronald Henn, Clarksville, Tenn., had to take the wires out and remove the shells because exploding them in place would have blown too large a hole in the road.

March 12—Paratroopers from C Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. killed

41 NVA at the close of a two-day battle three miles north of Hue.

March 18—Screaming Eagles from 1st Brigade's 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. were given the mission of clearing Route 547 leading out of Hue toward Fire Support Base Bastogne. They encountered extensive NVA bunker positions along the road. In one two-hour battle, 25 enemy soldiers were killed.

March 20—Members of the 82nd's 1st Bn. (Abn), 505th Inf. encountered an NVA company four and one-half miles east of Hue along the coastal plains. An all-day battle resulted in 26 enemy killed and two detained.

March 21—Late in the evening, the North Vietnamese made a daring attack on the night defensive perimeter of the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., using B-40 rockets as covering fire. Using small arms, automatic weapons and direct artillery fire, the paratroopers drove the enemy force off, killing 22.

March 22—Five miles west of Hue, gunships of B Co., 101st Aviation Bn. caught a company of NVA in an open field, killing 34. Later three sampans were destroyed by a Light Fire Team (LFT) from the battalion, resulting in nine more enemy deaths.

March 28—Rifle companies of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. made contact with elements of the 803rd NVA Regiment. D Co. paratroopers swept an area two and one-half miles north of Hue. Stiff enemy resistance indicated a sizable force in the area. The battalion sweep, aided by Naval gun fire, artillery and air strikes, netted 24 NVA killed, 10 AK-47's and eight SKS carbines captured.

March 29—The 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. conducted a cordon operation four and one-half miles northwest of Hue. When an NVA platoon located in the village began to fire on them, air strikes and supporting artillery fire were called in. By early afternoon, the NVA broke contact and the paratroopers began a sweep of the village. Thirty-three bodies were found as well as 20 weapons.

March 30—Seven and one-half miles east of Hue, D Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. found 31 NVA killed in the previous day's action in their area of operation (AO).

1st Brigade riflemen engage enemy snipers in jungle southwest of Hue.

McLaughlin





2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalrymen sweep the coastal plains in search of NVA strongholds northeast of Hue. Sugar

March 31—The last day of Operation Carentan saw no let-up in the relentless search for enemy soldiers and local Viet Cong in the Hue area. Fifteen miles northwest of the imperial city, airborne artillerymen from the 1st Bn. (Abn), 321st Arty. were called by an aerial observer and immediately trapped 85-100 NVA soldiers in an open field with accurate fire. Thirty of the NVA were killed. Six and one-half miles west of Hue, members of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. encountered a well-positioned enemy company. They called in air strikes that resulted in several secondary explosions. A quick search of the area uncovered 18 enemy dead. During the operation, 861 enemy were killed. The total weapons and munitions captured included 186 individual and crew-served weapons, while 1,027 rocket, mortar, and artillery rounds were kept from the enemy. More than 41,000 rounds of small arms ammunition and 45 hand grenades were captured, along with nearly 17 tons of rice and grain.

April 1—Paratroopers of the 1st and 2nd Brigades and the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division launched Operation

Carentan II in the same AO as Carentan I.

April 5—A platoon of NVA were spotted in an open field north of Hue by an FO of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and blasted by the guns of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 321st Arty. Twenty-two enemy soldiers were killed. Airborne infantrymen from C Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., engaged the enemy on two successful ambush attempts and fought a two-hour battle north of Hue resulting in 21 enemy killed for the day's action.

April 6—In a village 10 miles southwest of Hue, members of A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. engaged an NVA company located in bunkers. After supporting fires were lifted, paratroopers from the 1st Brigade's B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. moved in to ring the village with a night perimeter. An NVA attempt to break through the small cordon proved unsuccessful and resulted in two enemy killed. At first light, A Co. paratroopers swept through the village and uncovered 27 NVA bodies while they captured six weapons. That same day, members of B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. scored 27

enemy kills and captured eight weapons in a battle 10 miles southwest of the imperial city. In other action, riflemen from A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. accounted for 17 dead NVA 35 miles northwest of Hue. Division paratroopers recorded 71 enemy kills for the day's action.

April 8—In an action 19 miles west of Hue, B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav, engaged an estimated NVA platoon during a five-hour period. After supporting air strikes were lifted, a sweep of the area revealed 19 dead while the remaining enemy fled the area.

April 9—An apparent rocket attack of the 1st Air Cav. Division headquarters at Camp Evans was prevented by Maj. Brad Telshaw, Clovis, N. Mex., an alert FAC pilot attached to the 2nd Brigade. He directed two air strikes on the target which resulted in many secondary explosions. A platoon from C Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. was helilifted into the area. They found nine 122mm rockets elevated on bamboo logs and pointing in the direction of Evans.

April 11—Two days of fighting by

A, B and D Co.'s, 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. was conducted as another village full of NVA was cordoned 10 miles northeast of Hue along the "Street Without Joy." A sweep of Phong Dien village following a night of constant bombardment resulted in 66 enemy dead and 26 weapons captured. Meanwhile paratroopers of A and C Co.'s, 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and A, B, and C. Co.'s of the 82nd's 1st Bn. (Abn), 505th Inf. ended a week-long search and destroy mission along the Song Bo, three miles northwest of Hue. Army aviation, artillery, tactical air and the airborne troopers combined to kill 200 enemy and capture 44 weapons.

April 12—While investigating digging sounds in action 20 miles southwest of Hue, airborne infantrymen from B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. detected six NVA and took them under fire. Elements of the 9th Division's 3rd Bn., 5th Cav. swept the suspected enemy area with the paratroopers. B Co. riflemen engaged the NVA company, using organic weapons, and swept over the enemy bunker positions. The NVA force broke contact, leaving 20 dead behind.

April 16—Eighteen miles north of Hue, elements from the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. discovered an enemy base camp containing 20 underground tunnels and bunkers. Stored in the tunnels were 1,000 AK-47 rounds, 20 rounds of 60 mm mortars and various medical supplies. In the 1st Brigade AO, A and B Co.'s, 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. killed 12 NVA and captured five weapons during a fierce battle 12 miles southwest of Hue.

April 17—A battalion-size cordon was conducted by paratroopers of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. around the fortified village of Dong Xuyen three miles north of Hue. Following Army aviation, artillery and tactical air strikes, the "Geronimo" troopers entered the village, killing 53 enemy in three days. Eight more kills were recorded by the "No Slack" paratroopers of B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf.

April 19—In what was termed "one of the 101st's toughest missions in

Vietnam," Screaming Eagles of the 1st Brigade and the 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. began Operation Delaware in an attempt to block off enemy supply routes along Highway 547 leading out of the A Shau valley toward Hue. During their phase of the operation, the 101st paratroopers were joined by the 3rd ARVN Airborne Task Force. During a reconnaissance-in-force operation nine miles northwest of Hue, paratroopers from B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav. killed 33 NVA and captured 19 weapons. They were supported by an armor platoon from



1st Brigade infantrymen contact NVA force north of Phu Bai during Operation Carentan II.

the 3rd Bn., 5th Cav. Eighty-six NVA were killed in all 1 Corps actions.

April 20—In continued heavy action four miles northwest of Hue, members of B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav. engaged a company of NVA and local Viet Cong at Cao Bang village. The enemy returned their fire with automatic weapons and began using rocket-propelled grenades (RPG'S against the cavalrymen's Armored Personnel Carriers (APC's). By afternoon, the enemy resistance slowed down to sporadic rifle fire. As the cavalry paratroopers crossed over the rugged terrain, 33 enemy bodies were discovered and 19 weapons, including an RPG launcher, were captured.

April 21—Near Thon Kim Doi

village, five miles north of Hue, C Co. paratroopers from the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. spotted and killed two Viet Cong. The fleeing enemy led the airborne riflemen to the village, where an enemy company was waiting. Early that evening, paratroopers from A and B Co.'s air assaulted into blocking positions, completing the cordon of the village. The enemy body count at the end of the day rose to 21. Illumination continued throughout the night as the enemy employed heavy volumes of automatic weapons and RPG fire in an unsuccessful attempt to exfiltrate the

village.

April 22—At first light, the multi-company paratrooper force poured suppressing automatic weapons fire on the enemy location while calling for more artillery and air strikes. At the close of the night's action the Screaming Eagles were credited with 47 NVA kills and seven weapons captured.

April 23—In the 1st Brigade area of operations, airborne infantrymen of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. continued their clearing operations at landing zone Veghel, six miles east of the A Shau valley. Scattered resistance was met as the paratroopers prepared the LZ for the insertion of heavy engineer equipment and artillery pieces. The cordon of Thon Kim Doi was completed as the



Sugar

Early morning infantry sweep following a night of firefights.

Eagles' Photo Diary

Onn



2nd Brigade machine-gunner takes aim at NVA positions at Phuoc Yen.

Onn



McLaughlin

1st Brigade troopers fight jungle heat to save buddy's life.

Trooper takes aim at enemy position during firefight.



Onn

Pointman steadies himself while crossing fragile bamboo bridge.





2nd Brigade paratroopers debark Chinook helicopter to assault enemy hilltop positions north of Hue.

Bailey

2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. scored 27 more kills and took four more weapons.

April 25—Paratroopers from the 82nd's A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 508th Inf. decimated an enemy platoon with 106 mm recoilless rifle fire and artillery support. Ready reaction gunships of the Division's B Co., 101st Aviation Bn. added their deadly firepower in the assault. Within 30 minutes, 28 NVA regulars were dead. The same afternoon during Operation Delaware, C Co. 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. engaged two NVA companies along Route 547, 15 miles southwest of Hue. The "No Slack" Battalion's A Co. moved in while C Co. maintained contact. The surprised NVA finally left their positions, leaving 32 dead and seven weapons behind.

April 26—The day was marked with major contacts along Route 547 in the Delaware AO near the newly constructed Fire Support Base Veghel at the edge of the A Chau valley. Early in the afternoon, paratroopers from B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. were patrolling the southern ridges along the highway. They quickly engaged an NVA company occupying well-fortified bunker positions. The B Co. riflemen reacted with heavy volumes of small arms and automatic weapons fire while C

Co. moved in from the north. The two companies linked up and overran the enemy positions, killing 16 and capturing 12 weapons. Later that afternoon, airborne infantrymen from B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. assaulted an enemy anti-aircraft position that was harassing Division helicopters heading to FSB Bastogne from Veghel. The paratrooper unit took the enemy soldiers by surprise, killing 10 and capturing two Soviet 12.7 heavy machine-guns mounted on wheels.

April 27—Paratroopers from B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav., received automatic weapons and small arms fire from an estimated NVA battalion, 17 miles northwest of Hue. The enemy soldiers were positioned in bunkers near Ap Phu An hamlet, situated on the rich coastal plain bordering the Tonkin Gulf. A platoon from B Troop immediately returned the fire, fixing the NVA as two more platoons of cavalrymen maneuvered to flank the enemy's fortifications. Helicopter gunships and artillery rained down a steady hail of deadly fire as the platoons linked up and waited for a final attack. The relentless pressure from the massed firepower and the final sweep of the hamlet resulted in 44 NVA dead and 15 weapons cap-

tured. At the same time, members of the 3rd ARVN Airborne Bn. spotted two platoons of NVA troops moving out across a valley floor two miles east of Veghel, along the northern edge of the highway. Division Artillery batteries stationed at Bastogne were notified and immediately engaged the enemy with 105 mm Howitzers, resulting in 23 NVA killed.

April 28—The day marked the beginning of the five-day battle at Phuoc Yen (See story page 29). The airborne infantrymen of A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. attacked an enemy base camp deep in the jungles east of Veghel following the completion of preparatory fire missions. A search of the bunkers resulted in the capture of the following munitions: 17 rockets of 122 mm, 80 B-40 rockets, eight rounds of 75 mm Howitzer shells, besides numerous fuses, grenades, small arms ammunition and cases of explosives.

April 30—Strike paratroopers of the 1st Brigade continued reconnaissance-in-force missions near Veghel, contacting the enemy three times, killing 21 and capturing three weapons. At 4:25 that afternoon, one mile east of Bastogne, the CG's command and control helicopter received hits from ground automatic weapons fire, slightly wound-

ing Maj. Gen. O. M. Barsanti in the left leg. After directing artillery to be fired into the enemy location, Barsanti was evacuated to the 22nd Surgical Hospital, treated, and returned to duty at 5:15 the same day.

May 1—Highlight of the day's action was the Ap Cao Xa attack by members of the 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav., who killed 83 NVA during the battle which took place four miles northwest of Hue. In further action, A and C Co.'s, 1st Bn. (Abn), 505th Inf. immediately engaged an enemy battalion near Bon Tri village, three miles west of Hue. The two-day battle resulted in 121 enemy killed and 17 weapons captured.

May 2—The sixth large ammunition cache since Delaware started April 19th was captured by paratroopers from C Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf., one mile northeast of FSB Veghel. The week's total munitions captured by the 1st Brigade paratroopers included: 442 rounds of 75 mm shells, 415 rounds of 76 mm tank ammunition, 112 B-40 rockets, 29 rockets of 122 mm, 30,000 rounds of 23 mm antiaircraft shells, 100 rounds of 85 mm shells, and 225 rounds of 12.7 anti-aircraft shells. The captured ammunition represented an important loss to the enemy, thereby weakening his potential capabilities to operate in the Hue area, according to Division officials.

May 3—Paratroopers of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division completed their assault on Bon Tri village, killing 18 more NVA and bringing the total for their cordon to 139 enemy dead.

May 5—Early in the morning, Division headquarters at Camp Eagle received more than 50 enemy mortar rounds. Counter battery fire from Division Artillery units was immediately placed on the suspected mortar positions.

May 7—A three-day cordon of La Chu village, three miles northwest of Hue, was completed by elements of A and B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav., C Troop, 2nd Squadron,

Croxtan



1st Brigade reconnaissance unit searches for enemy supply points close to the A Shau valley during Operation Delaware.



Paratrooper comforts wounded friend following heavy firefight.

McLaughlin

34th Armored Cav., B and D Co.'s, 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf, and A and C Co.'s, 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. Fifty-five NVA were killed, five prisoners were taken and 30 weapons were captured in the cordon.

May 8—In the jungle four miles north of Hue, paratroopers from B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. established an early morning ambush position and killed 17 NVA after two squads of enemy soldiers walked right into the position. There were no paratrooper casualties. Continuing application of their highly successful cordon tactics, airborne infantrymen from the 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. trapped a re-inforced NVA company in Phu Luong A village, six miles northwest of Hue. Fifteen enemy were killed in the initial contact. In Delaware action, the paratroopers of C Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. captured the ninth enemy ammunition cache of the operation. Less than two miles east of Veghel, they found more than 2,000 rounds of 76mm high explosive ammunition, 200 rounds of 76mm smoke ammunition, and 6,300 rounds of 23mm anti-aircraft shells. The cache was stored in bunkers built into a hillside and protected from aerial

observation by triple canopy jungle.

May 10—In action five miles north of Hue along Pha Tam Giang inlet, airborne riflemen from C Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. trapped an NVA platoon inside a horseshoe cordon and drove the enemy toward the water. The fierce paratrooper attack drove the enemy force from its position and the NVA left 21 dead behind.

May 11—Sixteen NVA were killed by air attacks from Army aviators in action 10 miles southwest of Hue after a Division reconnaissance unit observed the enemy preparing a rocket launching site. The "Lancers" of the 308th Aviation Bn. engaged the enemy with 2.75-inch rockets and mini-guns, and quickly scattered the NVA force. Secondary explosions were observed by the pilots as they made passes over the target area.

May 13—Paratroopers of A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and D Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. completed a successful cordon of Co Thap village, eight miles northwest of Hue. The infantrymen surrounded an NVA battalion suspected of protecting a nearby enemy regimental headquarters and were joined by members of A Troop,

2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav. The two-day battle resulted in 38 NVA killed and 11 weapons captured.

May 17—Screaming Eagles of the 101st and paratroopers of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division under their operational control, terminated Operation Carentan II at noon. The combined paratrooper force killed 2,100 NVA, captured 157 prisoners and 581 enemy weapons during the 47-day operation near Hue. "Relieve the pressure from the area around Hue," was their standing order and the paratroopers did just that as their highly mobile fighting units continually maintained pressure on the enemy. The same day, 1st Strike paratroopers of the 1st Brigade completed their phase of Operation Delaware, designed to block the main enemy supply route leading out of the A Shau valley toward Hue. The airborne infantrymen from the 1st Brigade battalions killed 318 NVA, captured three prisoners and 121 weapons during the 28-day operation. Delaware was characterized by the capture of several large caliber ammunition caches, the loss of which further limited enemy capabilities in providing fire support for large scale operations, according to Division intelligence sources. The interdiction of Route 547 was also realized during this operation, completely cutting off its use by enemy forces as a resupply route.

May 18—Paratroopers of the 1st and 2nd Brigades and 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division initiated Operation Nevada Eagle in northern I Corps. It was designed to deny all NVA and Viet Cong forces operating in the area the ability to capture the ripening rice crop growing in the rich coastal plain north and south of Hue.

May 20—Nevada Eagle action intensified as Division paratroopers killed 103 NVA and captured 34 weapons. Exploiting intelligence information, members of B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. trapped an enemy force in Dong Gi Tay village northeast of Hue. Rapidly massing forces, three more rifle companies and one Popular Forces (PF) platoon cordoned the village. The action continued throughout the night

as early reports showed 57 enemy killed and 20 weapons captured. A second major action occurred when airborne infantrymen from A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. received a mortar attack and ground probe at their night defensive perimeter. Artillery and organic fires were immediately placed on the enemy force. A sweep of the area the next morning revealed 31 enemy dead and 12 weapons captured.

May 21—At 12:30 a.m., an NVA battalion augmented by personnel from a sapper demolition team, launched a daring ground attack against Camp Eagle, following the firing of more than 400 rounds of 122 mm rockets, 82mm mortars, B-40, and B-41 ammunition into the Division headquarters area.

The ground attack was staged at the southwest edge of the perimeter and was beaten back by headquarters troops of the 1st Brigade, members of the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. and helicopter gunships. Fast thinking gunners from the 320th Artillery rolled in a 105mm Howitzer without sighting devices and killed 12 enemy at the edge of the wire with four anti-personnel rounds. At first dawn, a sweep of the area revealed 54 enemy bodies and 16 individual weapons captured. Additional ordinance uncovered included 40 satchel charges, 30 bangalore torpedoes, and 50 RPG rounds. Damage to the base area was termed light.

May 22—The day's action brought the enemy body count for Operation

Nevada Eagle to 255 killed in six days. Airborne infantrymen of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. captured three light artillery pieces, two anti-aircraft guns and one truck in the area north of FSB Veghel. The paratroopers also captured seven boxes of 85mm ammunition, two boxes of delay fuses and 10 cases of 23 mm ammunition.

May 25—Members of A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. uncovered the largest arms cache of Nevada Eagle along Route 547, 12 miles southwest of Hue. The airborne riflemen discovered several 5' by 8' bunkers with three feet of overhead cover nestled in the triple canopy jungle. Closer investigation revealed a cache of 238 individual and crew-served enemy weapons. They included 167 SKS rifles and 32 cases of new AK-47's.

May 27—The second major arms cache of Nevada Eagle was captured by A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. in a bunkered enemy base camp four miles east of the A Shau valley. The weapons included 12 complete 60mm mortars, 150 bolt-action Chicom rifles (K-44), four Communist light machine-guns, 80 rifle grenades and 40 B-40 rockets.

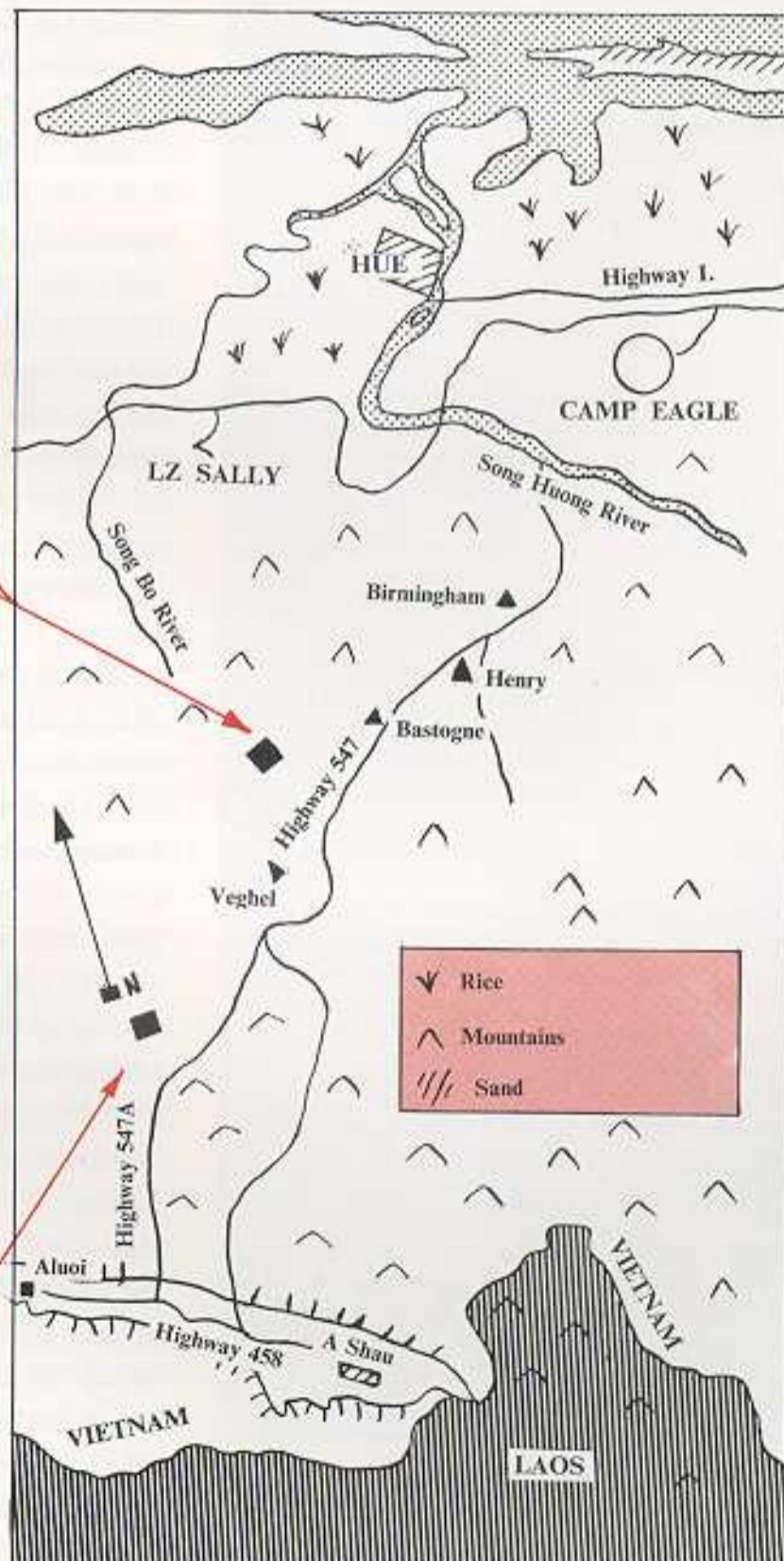
May 28—Forty-nine enemy trucks were captured by elements of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. They were found along a road 15 miles southwest of Hue without their engines, but closer investigation revealed the engines buried 5 to 10 meters on either side of the trucks. The paratroopers also captured four 23mm anti-aircraft guns with 2,100 rounds of ammunition.

May 29—Continuing extensive search operations were conducted by riflemen from A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. Included in a third major weapons cache were: 107 SKS rifles, 59 K-44 rifles, four AK-47's, 102 rounds of 75mm shells, 5,660 rounds of small arms ammunition, 3,300 grenade fuses, 26 B-41 rockets and 24 rounds of 60mm mortar.

May 31—A two-day cordon operation seven miles east of Hue near Le Xa Dong hamlet was conducted by A Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav.; B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and elements of the 1st ARVN Divi-

SUMMARY OF LARGE WEAPON CACHES

- Cache of 25 May, 1968
2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf.
- 1 82mm Mortar Round
- 31 60mm Mortar Rounds
- 3 122mm Rocket Launchers
- 168 SKS Rifles
- 16 Machine-guns
- 11 AK-47's
- 1 K-44 Rifle
- 2 RPG-2
- 8 RPG-8
- 12,100 Rounds Small Arms Ammo
- 317 Grenades
- 106 Rounds Mortar Ammo
- 279 B-41 Rockets
- Cache of 27 May, 1968
2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf.
- 12 60mm Mortar Rounds
- 150 K-44 Rifles
- 4 Light Machine-guns
- 1 AK-47
- 40 B-40 Rockets
- 80 Rifle Sights
- 5 Sights and Optics
- Caches of 19, 27-28
May, 1968
1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf.
- 2 12.7mm Machine-guns
- 10 122mm Rockets
- 8 23mm AA Guns
- 5 85mm Light Artillery Pieces
- 54 Trucks
- 56 85mm Rounds Ammo
- 3,000 23mm Rounds Ammo



sion, resulting in 91 NVA killed, 19 prisoners taken and 34 weapons captured.

June 3—Division paratroopers and units under their control in I Corps tactical zone killed 81 enemy, captured 50 prisoners and gathered 661 individual and crew-served weapons from the NVA. The seizure of a fourth major weapons cache by elements of the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. in the coastal plains area highlighted the day's action. At the end of a two-day cordon around Trung Phuong hamlet, three miles southeast of Hue, a multi-company airborne task force of 17th Cavalry, 2nd Brigade and ARVN airborne troopers killed 66 enemy, took 51 prisoners and captured 55 weapons.

June 4—Paratroopers of A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. continued to uncover large quantities of weapons as they continued an extensive search of the complex found June 3rd. Added to the previous total were 87 AK-47's, 174 AK-47 magazines with 1,500 rounds of ammunition and more than 300 rounds of 82mm mortar.

June 10—Division forces seized two rice caches totaling more than 37,000 pounds in two locations. The first was captured by B Troop, 2nd Squadron (Abn), 17th Cav., 12 miles southeast of Hue. The nine tons of rice were bagged and evacuated to Phu Tu District headquarters. Paratroopers from C Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. took a second cache of 9½ tons from

an area 6½ miles northwest of Hue.

June 12—Four rice caches totaling 55,500 pounds were found throughout the 2nd Brigade's AO. All of the rice was given to various district chiefs throughout Thua Thien province.

June 13—Fifteen-and-a-half more tons of rice were captured by Division infantry and cavalry units. The total rice recaptured in the rice denial program of Nevada Eagle rose to more than 156 tons.

June 17—Continuing psychological operations throughout the Division AO resulted in the rallying of a Viet Cong village chief to the South Vietnamese government. The rallier stated he deserted because all of his soldiers were captured in a recent battle fought with paratroopers of B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., where 58 suspects were taken from a village nine miles east of Hue.

June 20—In Hue, South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu presented Col. John H. Cushman and the paratroopers of the 2nd Brigade Task Force with the country's Presidential Unit Citation for their combat record since deploying to I Corps in early February. From then until this date, the task force paratroopers killed 2,382 enemy, detained 257 suspects, and captured 724 enemy weapons.

Operation Nevada Eagle, continuing in I Corps when this magazine went to press, carried all indications of being the fourth major Screaming Eagle campaign victory since the remainder of the Division arrived in Vietnam in December, 1967. Since the initiation of combat operations on January 17, the airborne troopers have continuously pressed the enemy, forced him to fight, restricted his night movement with extensive night operations, and through mobility and heavy supporting fires, defeated the enemy in every major battle. The success of the airborne operations can be most adequately measured by the operational totals scored by Division infantry and cavalry units. In six months, they have killed more than 8,000 enemy soldiers, taken more than 350 prisoners and captured more than 2,650 individual and crew-served weapons in Vietnam.



Bishop

Captured enemy weapons displayed by 1st Brigade infantrymen during Operation Nevada Eagle.

LIBERATION OF QUANG DIEN

2nd Brigade paratroopers fought bravely for four months so 50,000 South Vietnamese people would not have to choose between death and slavery as a way of life.

By Spec. 4 Robert P. Johnston

The story of Quang Dien District is a story of South Vietnamese people who learned that life without freedom is no life at all. It also concerns a brigade of American airborne soldiers who gave their strength and some of their lives so that the district's 50,000 people would not have to choose between death and slavery.

Early in February, during the stormy weeks surrounding the Communist Tet offensive, this patchwork of flat, coastal ricelands only an afternoon's walk from Hue's Citadel was the undisputed home of two North Vietnamese Army regiments and a strong infrastructure of local Viet Cong.

Feeding like giant leeches from the lifeblood of the cone-hatted farmers, fishermen and small merchants, the enemy soldiers and Viet Cong ruled absolutely. The people did not have to build bunkers and give up their rice; but the alternative was always a bullet in the head.

The only American presence then was a five-man MACV advisory team, holed up like prisoners at the district headquarters with only a small contingent of district Popular Force (PF) soldiers for protection.

"They could have overrun us any time they wanted," said the team's commander, Capt. Robert A. Selzer, Merritt Island, Fla. "We asked a captured prisoner why the NVA didn't come and massacre us, and he said it was because nobody told them to."

On March 1, the 2nd Brigade moved south from Quang Tri and pushed the NVA off an abandoned French airstrip along Route 1 a few kilometers west of Quang Dien. Springing up there almost overnight, the brigade's base camp was dubbed Landing Zone Sally, the new home of the "Ready To Go" paratroopers.

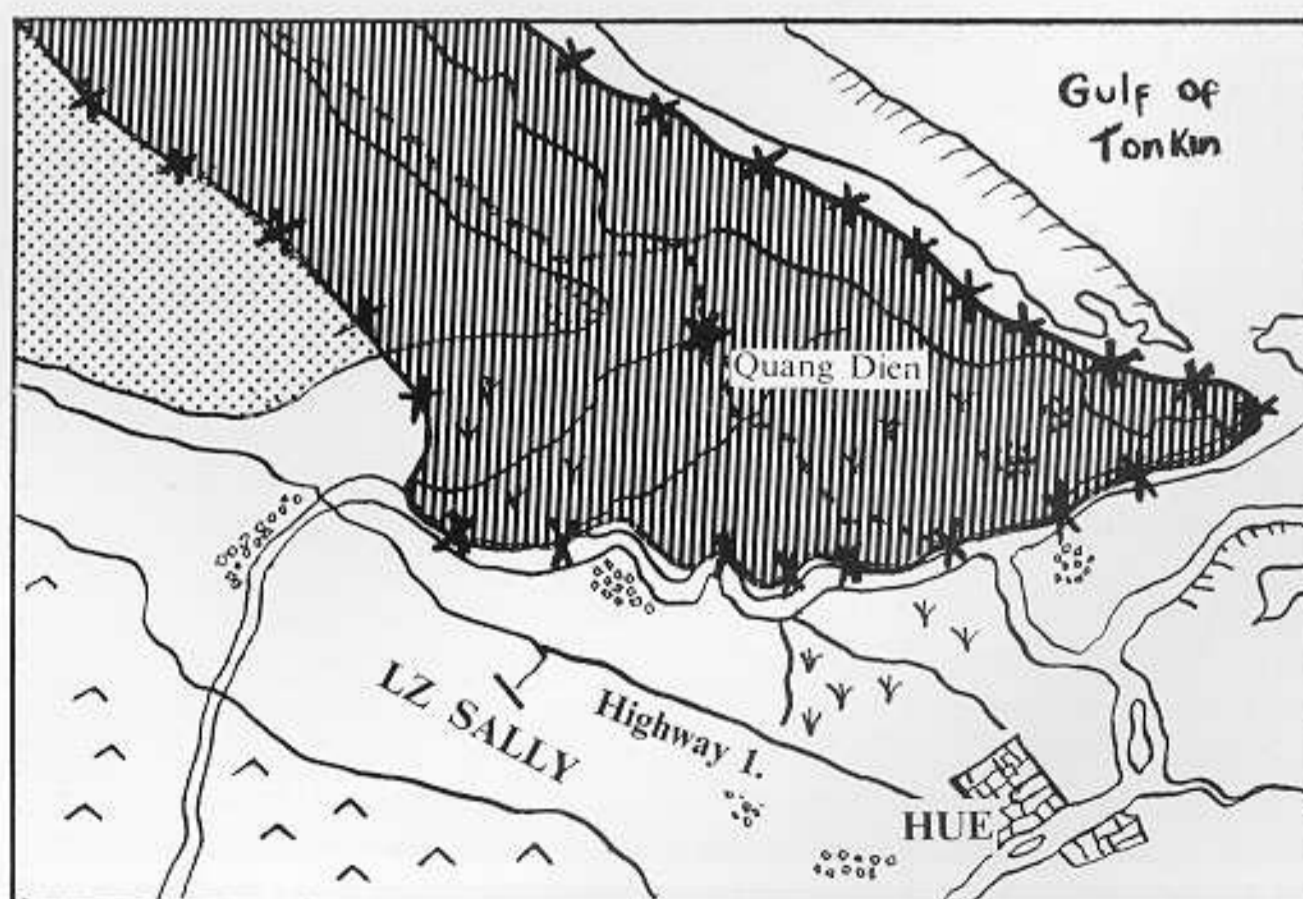
For the liberation of the district, brigade commander Col. John H. Cushman, Lexington, Mass., chose the 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf., commanded by Lt. Col. Bertram J. Bishop, Springfield, Va.

The first thing Col. Bishop noticed

was the steady, silent streams of villagers leaving his new turf. Sensing a fight, many of the people hastily migrated to the homes of friends and relatives farther south.

Then began some of the most bitter and bloody fighting of the Vietnam Conflict as the "First Strike" Battalion mounted a war of attrition against the wily and well-dug-in NVA and VC. Every village and hamlet meant another prolonged battle; every hedgerow meant another fight. A single error or misjudgment could have cost an entire company of paratroopers.

With the Airborne providing the



Quang Dien District north of Hue.



2nd Brigade paratroopers invade rich rice basin of Quang Dien district in search of harassing NVA soldiers.

Higgs

muscle and mobility, and the PF's furnishing the intelligence reports, detainee interrogation, and scouting knowhow, the allies hounded the NVA in every known sanctuary in the district.

"Col. Bishop used the PF's just as they should be used," Capt. Selzer said, "and he treated them with the same consideration and respect as his men."

It was the PF intelligence officer, the young and talented Nguyen Van Hue, whose accurate and timely information led to the two landmark battles of the Quang Dien campaign.

The first was Ap Dong Lam, where the "First Strike" battalion, plus D Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., and the PF's hemmed in an estimated reinforced battalion of the 803rd NVA Regiment. The four-day struggle cost 222 dead enemy soldiers and put the NVA on the run throughout the district.

It also helped accomplish something totally unexpected by the Americans. One afternoon in late March, some 2,000 district citizens gathered in the Sia market place to pay tribute to the Airborne combat successes, and to condemn the terrorist tactics of the local Viet Cong. Vowing to fight the VC to the death, the people themselves recorded a stirring moment in their country's history with shouts of "Vietnamese Government Number One! Down with

the VC!"

Such bravado in a secure marketplace would be meaningless unless reflected in the countryside where people were still dying. But it was in the countryside—in the paddies and along the distant canal banks—that a subtle evolution was beginning.

As word of each fresh enemy defeat flashed through the district, the iron grip of fear which had held the people for so long loosened a little more. It became apparent that the enemy's days were numbered, as were those of anyone who voluntarily aided their cause.

Even small children and old women would point out enemy weapons caches and booby-traps. The once-familiar blank stare and shrug of helpless ignorance was gradually replaced by the Vietnamese equivalent of "He went that-a-way."

In late March, April and early May, the 1st and 2nd Airborne Battalions of the 501st Infantry each took a crack at the reeling NVA. In the first week of May, the grim process of extermination culminated in the now-famous cordon of Phuoc Yen.

For four days, companies from all three battalions, plus PF's and the "Black Panther" Co. of the 1st ARVN Division lay siege to the stocking-shaped village complex that intelligence sources

said was harboring an NVA battalion.

The paratroopers were joined by the batteries of the 321st Artillery, helicopter gunships and Air Force fighter-bombers. By morning of the fifth day, the NVA body count reached 419, and another 104 became the largest NVA force to surrender en masse to an American unit thus far in the history of the war.

Except for a few scattered pockets of die-hards, Phuoc Yen marked the end of the NVA in Quang Dien District. Of approximately 1,500 that Lt. Hue estimated to be occupying the district before Tet, more than 800 were killed and the rest fled west to the mountains to lick their wounds and contemplate the "mean little bird" worn on the left shoulders of the Airborne enemy.

Phuoc Yen was also a beginning. "Our PF's had neither the numbers nor the weapons to fight the NVA," said Capt. Selzer. "But now the enemy are Viet Cong, and no one can fight the VC better than the PF's can."

In the last week of May, the Quang Dien PF's pulled a coup that shocked the local Viet Cong. Just before dawn, with the night mist still hanging over a VC stronghold, a small PF band burst through the hedgerows, yelling and shooting. Twenty of the Viet Cong who tried to fight or run were killed.

Six other VC, plus a small arsenal of weapons were easily captured.

To avoid further bloodshed on both sides, a co-ordinated psychological operations (Psy-ops) program was initiated by the 2nd Brigade psy-ops officer, Lt. David Hendry, East Hartford, Conn. The team dropped leaflets and broadcast appeals from former VC, imploring the hardcore Communists to give up a hopeless cause.

"This district is now ripe for psy-ops," said Capt. Donald E. Smalley, Peebles, Ohio, a MACV co-worker of Capt. Selzer. "The Airborne and the PF's have made the remaining VC want to give up safely."

During the first five days in June, 15 former VC decided there was no future for their line of work in Quang Dien District. Marching timidly forward with Chieu Hoi safe-conduct leaflets held protectively aloft, the VC surrendered in two's and three's to the paratroopers of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. and the government troops.

With most of the enemy dead or on the run, the allies turned their attention to the endless fields of rice, ripe and ready for the spring harvest. Before the Airborne came to Quang Dien, everybody knew that the great bulk of the harvest would be confiscated by the NVA and VC to feed their troops stationed in the villages and mountain base camps.

But now there were no more NVA, and the remaining VC were in no mood to challenge the Airborne companies who threw protective perimeters around the areas being harvested. At the end of May, Capt. Selzer estimated that 90 per cent of the crop was safe in the hands of its rightful owners. By direction of the fiery district chief, Capt. Tran Hhu Hung, the rice was shifted to three secure collection points where each farmer was given a receipt for his crop. Throughout the coming year, the farmers will come to the collection points and receive enough of their rice for their families but not enough to tempt the remaining Viet Cong.

Though he is first a soldier, Capt. Hung is a man of his people. Whenever an important decision loomed, he hop-

ped in his unpredictable jeep with balding tires and drove over miles of unsecured roads to consult with citizens whose lives depended upon his judgment.

Lt. Col. Leslie D. Carter, new battalion commander, gave his medical officer, Capt. David H. Leeper, Padukah, Ky., a free rein in giving the district the best medical service available. The young "Bacsi" discarded the usual one-shot MEDCAP approach and set up a regular schedule for himself and his staff at the district's three hospitals.

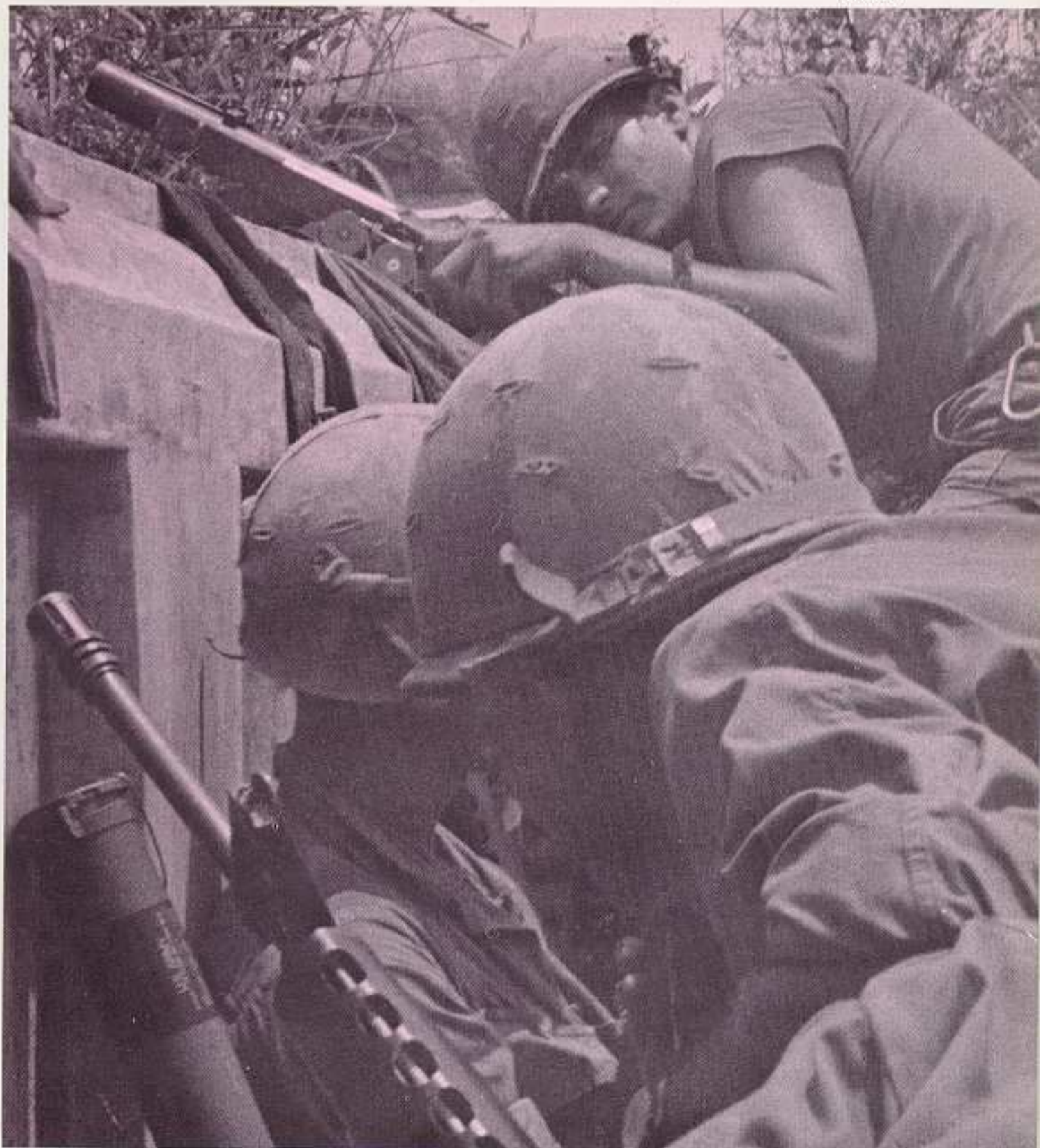
Now Quang Dien District bears no resemblance to the field of terror it became under the heel of the NVA.

The people's smiles, once masks of fear and distrust, became the expressions of good feeling and good times. The "big-footed" Screaming Eagles and the wiry native country folk came face to face, and found not monsters and minatures, but merely international variation of themselves.

Today when the people of Quang Dien District speak of the American soldiers who helped transform their homeland from a hell to a haven, they do not say, "the Americans," "the U.S. Army, or "the GI's." They say, "the Airborne," and they say it with a mixture of gratitude and respect.



Morrow



2nd Brigade paratroopers seek protection of a concrete wall near Quang Dien during heavy firefight with NVA regulars.



McLaughlin

Gunner adjusts howitzer sights while crew members prepare round for firing.

Division Artillery

Downs

A sense of urgency is felt by every 'Redleg' artilleryman of the 101st Airborne Division Artillery. They know that with every fire mission they are probably saving many American lives.

A fire mission starts in the field, miles away from the battery. It is called in to the fire direction center by a forward observer. Inside the FDC, the data is repeated to men behind large plot boards. Then it is passed on to the gun crews.

Standing behind his gun, each crew chief and his men hear a strange litany. "Fire mission... battery adjust... shell HE... lot X-ray," on through the instructions necessary to send a 33-pound projectile crashing down on a target thousands of meters away.

A shell is placed into the chamber of each gun and pushed by a muscular, perspiring cannoneer before the breech block bangs home.

Gun crew chief waits for call to fire.





Following the extraction of an empty canister, another shell is about to be loaded.

Wilson



As this 105mm Howitzer is raised to high angle firing position, the No. 1 canoneer is about to stuff a round in the breech.

“FIRE!” A sweaty hand jerks the lanyard and an ear-ringing crash sends the shell on its way.

Out in the field moving through the shattered debris of a former NVA position, an infantryman smiles, saying in effect, “Thank God for the Division Artillery.”

Sugar



Dusk at Fire Support Base Concord catches 'Redleg' cleaning his howitzer's tube.

The Combat Medic

"The job of the field medical aidman is generally conceded to be the most dangerous—and one of the most necessary—of all military jobs in Vietnam"
—Capt. Melvyn A. Gerstein, 3rd Brigade surgeon.

By Information Office Staff



The assigned combat duty of at least four paratroopers in every infantry company throughout the Division is to perform missions above and beyond the call of duty of everyone else.

They are always on the spot when needed. They carry 40 or 50 pounds of extra supplies, and they are known by all as "Doc," "Big Bandaid," or urgently and painfully, "MEDIC!"

The senior medic in each company occupies a unique place in the ranks of the riflemen. His word is final on all medical matters in the field.

While his platoon was engaged with an NVA regular force north of Hue during Operation Carentan II, a lieutenant was wounded in the arm but refused medical evacuation. The senior medic on the scene, Spec. 5 Lawrence Klemens, of A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., told the young officer his arm had to be X-rayed. The experienced medic, who served his first Vietnam tour with the 1st Infantry, wouldn't take "no" for an answer.

"The job of the field medical aidman is generally conceded to be the most dangerous—and one of the most necessary—of all the military jobs in Vietnam," said Capt. Melvyn A. Gerstein, a Chicago surgeon serving with the 3rd Brigade.

"Current statistics indicate the medic and the rest of the Army's medical team are operating with more efficiency and skill in Vietnam than ever before," he said. "More than 25 per cent of the casualties who lived to see a doctor in World War II died. In Korea, the mortality rate fell to four per cent. In this

war, the figure has dropped to less than one per cent," the doctor said.

Gerstein believes the largest single factor in the historical improvement to save lives in combat is the helicopter. The man requiring urgent medical treatment in Vietnam seldom has to wait long for expedient transportation away from the battlefield. This of course depends largely on the tactical situation.

Paratrooper medic Spec. 4 Frank Gentile, who works with the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., once floated a wounded man down a river north of Hue on his air mattress to escape a firefight and to seek a suitable helicopter landing zone. "While I was in the water, he stopped breathing five times," the 20-year-old said. "Each time I pulled myself up onto the mattress, I gave him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation or massaged his heart until he resumed breathing." Later, after checking on the man's condition, Gentile was pleased to find out his work was not in vain. The man was saved, thanks to his efforts to keep him alive until he reached a doctor.

During Operation Toan Thang in III Corps tactical zone, paratroopers of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 506th Inf. worked in a blistering sun to clear a landing zone out of the jungle following a heavy firefight. The paratroopers worked feverishly to chop down the trees—some of which towered to well over 100 feet, according to observers on the ground. The helicopter pilots came down into the narrow landing zone as soon as they learned some of the men on the ground had but a few hours to live.

The doctors back at the base camp were able to save the men's lives soon after they arrived. "While the wounded man waits on the ground, he is always receiving treatment from a medic," Gerstein said. "When he is put on the helicopter, another medic is there to do everything he can for him on the ride to the aid station or hospital—and it's usually a hospital. At the hospital, he is taken off the helicopter under the supervision of a doctor who starts to work almost before the ship touches ground."

The doctor emphasized the importance, and the obligation, of the first man to see the casualty—the medic. Under conditions far worse than the doctor usually encounters, he must take the extremely important first steps toward saving lives. His most important jobs are always with fresh, unclean wounds with which he must work under enemy fire in the dirt and the burning sun. "During my Vietnam tour I have seen and heard of many instances where combat medics have meant the difference between life and death," Gerstein said.

From June, 1967, until last February, he served with D Co., 326th Medical Bn. (Abn) as the surgeon for the 1st Brigade. He said once at Bao Loc, during Operation Wheeler, quick actions by medics saved the life of a paratrooper who lost both legs to a claymore mine. Because the unit was in extremely heavy jungle at the time, an hour and a half was required to cut out a landing



A team of 3rd Brigade medics fight to save a life deep in the jungle south of Phuoc Vinh.

zone for a medevac helicopter. "The man could have easily bled to death in minutes, but the medics put pressure dressings on both stumps and managed to keep him alive. When we got to the man, he was in deep shock, but he would have been dead if it had not been for the medics," he said.

Shortly after starting his third Vietnam tour as a medic, Staff Sgt. John S. Koop, of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 506th Inf., set up a field medical aid station near Song Be within 50 meters of a day-long firefight against more than 100 dug-in enemy troops.

He inspired less experienced medical personnel that day as wounded men streamed back from the crest of a small hill where their comrades were

doggedly trying to dislodge the enemy from well-hidden rifle pits in a banana grove, 3rd Brigade officials said.

"He's a real pro," one of the younger medics said later. "The bullets were flying around us but he went right on as if he was in the middle of some general hospital back home." Koop's aid station was particularly important at the time because air evacuation was impossible for several hours. After the second battle to save the wounded, Koop remarked, "The most important things a combat medic should know in the beginning of his Vietnam tour are the correct methods of stopping and preventing shock. He also has to know how to start an IV (intravenous injection), because when a man is badly

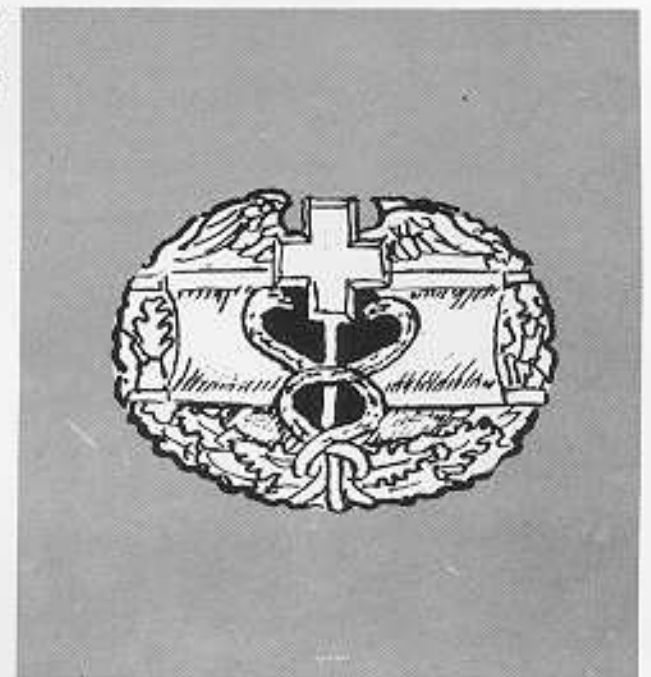
wounded, you've got to get fluids into him as quickly as possible."

Not all medics serving with the Division have as much experience as Koop in the treating of the wounded, but few of them have shown less courage. More often than not, they can be seen dashing into enemy fire to rescue wounded soldiers. Their actions are really heroic each time they go out under fire, but many of them will just say, "this is just my job."

The senior medic in D. Co., 3rd Bn. (Abn), 187th Inf. was killed after being hit several different times in a bitter battle in which his company discovered the base camp of an NVA battalion south of Phuoc Vinh. Seriously wounded already, he was still crawling to other



Estrada



1st Brigade troopers rush through the rain to get wounded man on helicopter.

soldiers with bandages and morphine when he received the wound that killed him.

Another D. Co. medic, Spec. 4 Mike Doyle, Indianapolis, had to be given a direct order to leave the same battle eight hours after he was shot in the stomach. Giving himself a morphine shot, he went on with his duties, aiding

other wounded members of the embattled company until a high ranking doctor ordered him to board a medevac helicopter when he discovered Doyle's condition.

During another bitter battle at Song Be, near the Cambodian border, Pfc. Ernest "Mike" Mickles Jr., a medic with D. Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 506th Inf., spent

Bishop

several minutes on his knees in the middle of a bullet-raked street in a small village. He was giving medical assistance to a wounded lieutenant as a bloody house-to-house battle roared around them.

Still another division medic, Spec. 4 Larry Mize, of the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., rushed into a downed "Chinook" helicopter in northern I Corps to aid a wounded paratrooper while the chopper was under heavy enemy fire. "I had to see if that fellow was really dead or alive," Mize said afterwards. "I would've felt rotten if he were suffering in there and I hadn't helped him." The medic ran into the smoking chopper and found the man still alive. "I bandaged him up and an evacuation helicopter was called in. He was out of there in a matter of minutes."

Sometimes a division medic has to rely on his raw courage just to reach the battlefield. Such was the case with Staff Sgt. Harold Miller, senior aid man with the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 506th Inf. After C Co. paratroopers made heavy contact with a crack NVA unit north of Bien Hoa, the call came out from the field for more medics and all three of the company medics were wounded themselves.

The battle took place under a very thick jungle canopy with trees towering up to more than 90 feet. It was impos-



Division medic administers whole blood to fallen enemy soldier in I Corps.



Sweat blots the back of 3rd Brigade medic as he works on wounded paratrooper following firefight north of Bien Hoa.

sible for any helicopter to land in the immediate area. Because he lacked the necessary equipment for rappelling from his hovering chopper, Miller asked to be lowered 150 feet by rope. As he started his descent, the rope slipped and he plummeted downward toward the jungle floor. The rope was finally wedged in a machine-gun mount and Miller slowly descended the last 10 feet in the

same time it took him to drop the first 140. Later that day, Miller directed several dust-offs. The wounded had to be hoisted the 150 feet up to hovering helicopters. "He is often out with the troopers even though he doesn't have to be in the field that much since he is way senior to us," said a fellow medic.

But all medics, senior or junior, are called upon often to do almost any-

ing that can possibly save lives. Spec. 4 Kenneth Wendel, another medic with D. Co., 1st Bn. (Abn) 506th Inf., used his medical scissors in the Song Be battle to cut enemy barbed wire so a platoon could evade 50 open yards of enemy fire on the way to completion of an assigned move.

On the outskirts of Bien Hoa during the Communist Tet offensive of the



A team of 1st Brigade medics rush a wounded paratrooper to a helicopter waiting to take him to a hospital near Phu Bai.

Viet Cong, medics from Companies A and B, 2nd Bn. (Abn), 506th Inf. performed heroically, according to officials, during 36 hours of the longest sustained fighting 3rd Brigade units participated in since arriving in Vietnam in late 1967. As their units drove attacking NVA regulars and Viet Cong back from Bien Hoa's strategic airfields and out of Bien Hoa village, the medics treated civilians as well as the wounded infantrymen.

Lt. Ronald Darnell, commander of A. Co., said he watched one company medic, Pfc. James W. Terry, get knocked off his feet by a grenade explosion

as he ran to treat a wounded man in the middle of a rice paddy. "It knocked every bit of gear off his right side, but all he did was pick up his aid kit and kept right on running where he was heading," Darnell said.

Sgt. Larry Hall, who was awarded the Silver Star for heroism while serving as a medic for the 3rd Brigade's Phantom Force reconnaissance element, said he believes most medics are not as fortunate as he was in receiving credit for their achievements.

Combat medics, like riflemen, learn quickly to live with the sight of blood

and the cry of pain. Like the infantryman, the medic soon develops a tough, cool efficiency in the face of danger and the worst kinds of unpleasantness.

This attitude is typified by an oft-told, mythical story of doctors at a rear area hospital who removed a body from a helicopter and found on it a note from the medics in the field:

"We tried."

The story appeals most to medics and infantrymen. Better than anyone else, they know what it means.



MIXED

EMOTIONS

By
Maj.
Billy E.
Spangler

Everyday in Vietnam, veteran paratroopers of the Division stand by at Bien Hoa air terminal to catch a military flight up or down country. As they wait, many witness new men arriving and veterans going home aboard their "freedom bird." Their only thought is that it will soon be time for them to go too.

The ch-h-h-h-h sound of air brakes drifted faintly from the west.

A "devil wind" swirled bits of paper and dust into a cone and disappeared between a three-quarter-ton truck with a cracked windshield and a sign which declared in dirty letters, "No Parking."

The air brakes sounded again.

Olive-drab Army buses rounded the corner in front of the Bien Hoa airfield passenger terminal, drove the hundred yards to the far end, U-turned and parked.

"Lucky bastards," said a helmeted soldier as he shuffled across the butt-strewn terminal floor. The scuffed boots, the grime on his clothes and the fatigue in his eyes justified his observation.

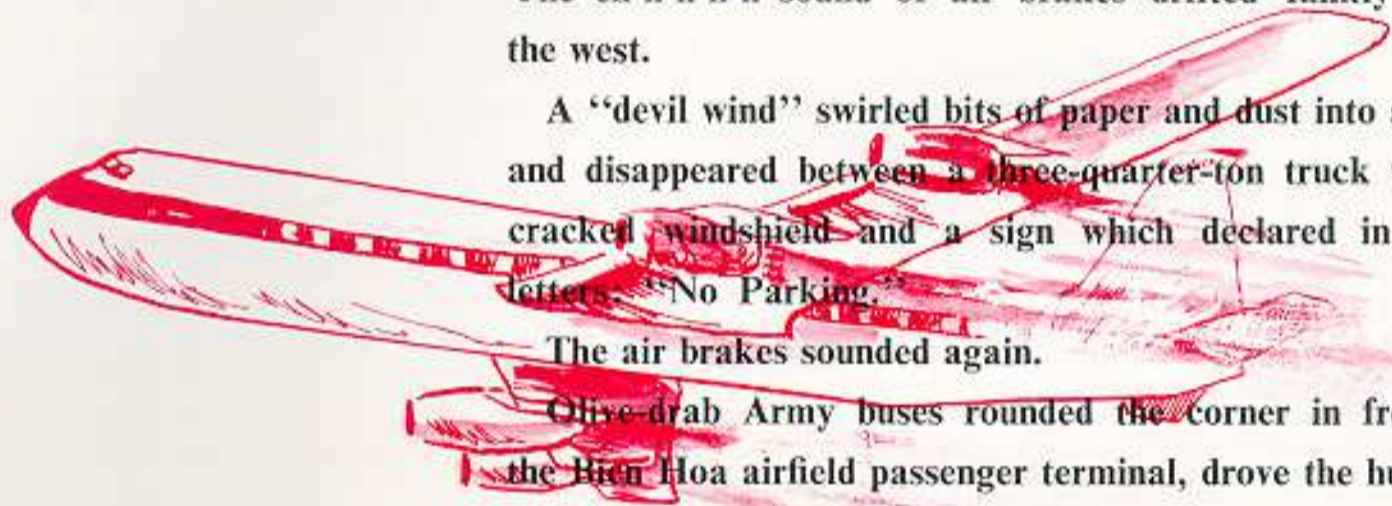
Picking his way through a maze of duffel bags, rucksacks and the junk soldiers carry, the lean infantryman slipped his M-16 rifle from his shoulder and plopped down on a brown leather seat next to a crumpled copy of *Stars and Stripes*.

He stared at the six buses.

The half-open, mesh-covered bus windows framed faces in khaki collars and overseas caps as they peered toward the terminal.

If they said anything you couldn't hear it—even standing close.

The look on their faces said it for them. If the observer needed further information he had only to look at the ribbons on their shirts—Silver Stars, Bronze Stars, Purple



Hearts and the familiar wreathed rifle and cross of the combat infantryman and medic.

They came to Vietnam as kids.

Some had finished high school. Others worked on farms, pumped gasoline, fried hamburgers and delivered prescriptions.

Once each of them wore his shirt tail out, gobbled french-fries after the Friday night game, slept late on Saturday morning and had a girl who thought his cow-lick added a flair of youth he would be proud of as he matured.

They had matured now.

The cow-lick was still there, cropping out from under the overseas hat which felt strange on his head after wearing a steel pot for so long. The sun had browned his face and the natural reflex of squinting, searching, brought premature crow's feet to the corners of his eyes.

"You can tell how much war a man has seen by looking into his eyes," said Bill Mauldin, who followed their fathers from Tunis to Munich.

The soldier in the terminal shifted in his chair, glanced at the man beside him and fumbled for a cigarette in the baggy pockets of his jungle fatigues.

An airman second class who had not found time to get a haircut stood behind the "in-country" passenger counter flipping through manila folders containing manifests of flights up and down country.

He picked up a bull-horn and mouthed an announcement only he could understand, put down the instrument and went back to the folders.

Two soldiers, weighted by rucksacks and a mountain of fatigue, plodded up to the counter for a repeat of what they heard—or thought they heard.

A wrinkled pack of Salems were found finally in a pocket containing toilet paper, a well-worn letter and what once was a handkerchief, but was now a rag.

The soldier removed one bent, crushed, tired cigarette and searched the

Veteran paratrooper sits at air terminal watching new troops and counting his remaining days in country.

other side of his uniform for a match.

His keen ears caught the familiar whine of a 707 jet as it approached for a landing—east to west.

He tensed a little now and the cigarette drooped down as his mouth relaxed in contrast to his attentive eyes.

Those on the buses heard the whine also. Their faces brightened. "There's your freedom bird," said a Spec. 4 at the wheel of the bus.

"Yeah, man!" responded a voice behind him.

"Look at that!" said a freckled face that was now too old for freckles.

Another voice praised the plane with profanity that was more complimentary than in bad taste.

"Comin' for to carry me home," a deep voice intoned from the back.

Somewhere the smoker found a book of C-ration matches and on the fourth try it sputtered to flame and he touched it to the end of his cigarette.

As the big jet taxied on the apron, untanned faces leaned to the circular windows—a row of cameos with identical thoughts:

"This is Vietnam."

"Look at them guys in flak jackets."

"Is that me next week? Next month?"

And the down deep, gnawing question: "Will I stay alive?"

The jetliner halts, the whining stops and the forward door opens letting the deodorant-sprayed air-conditioned air out and the hot, humid Vietnam air in.

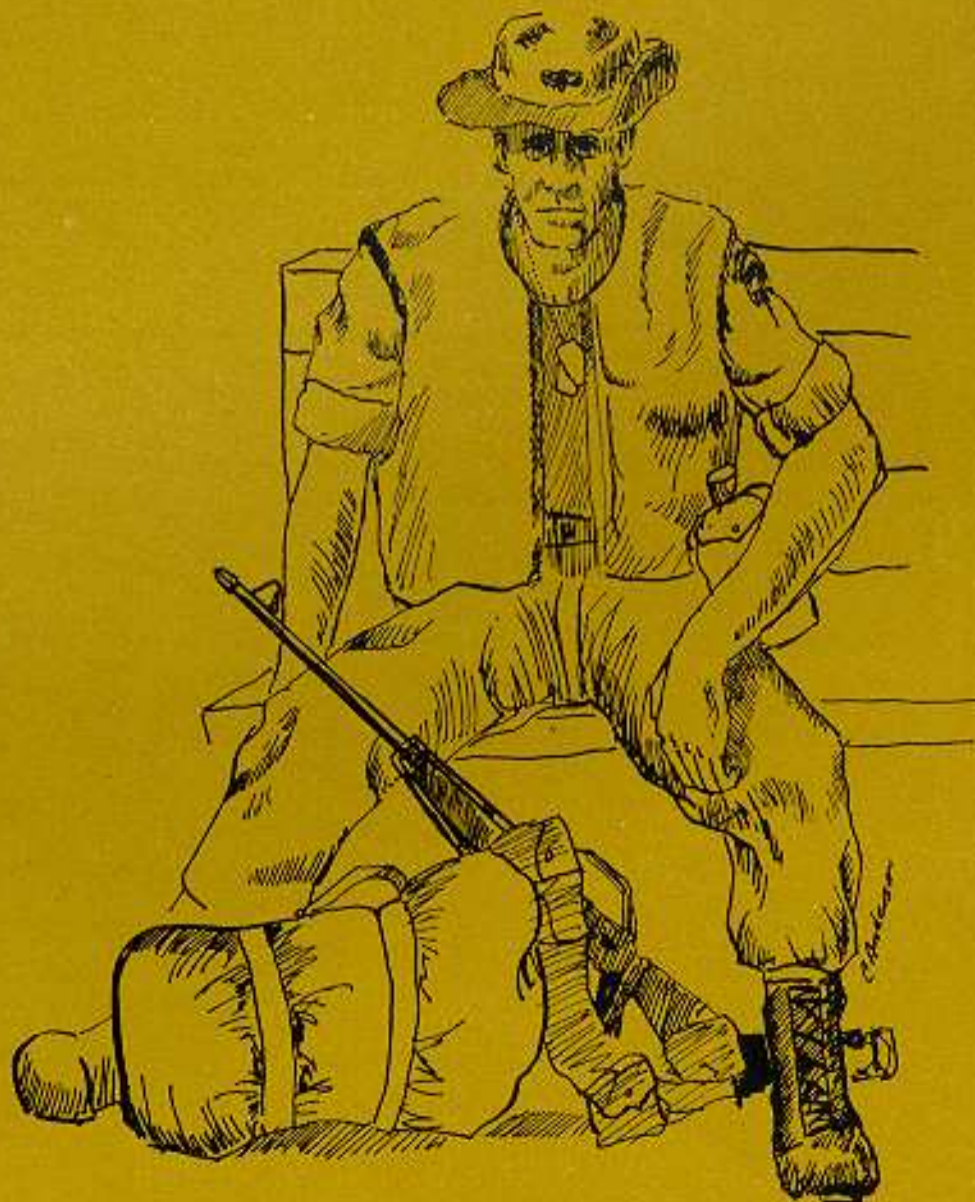
"Welcome to Vietnam," says a voice from the top of the stairs.

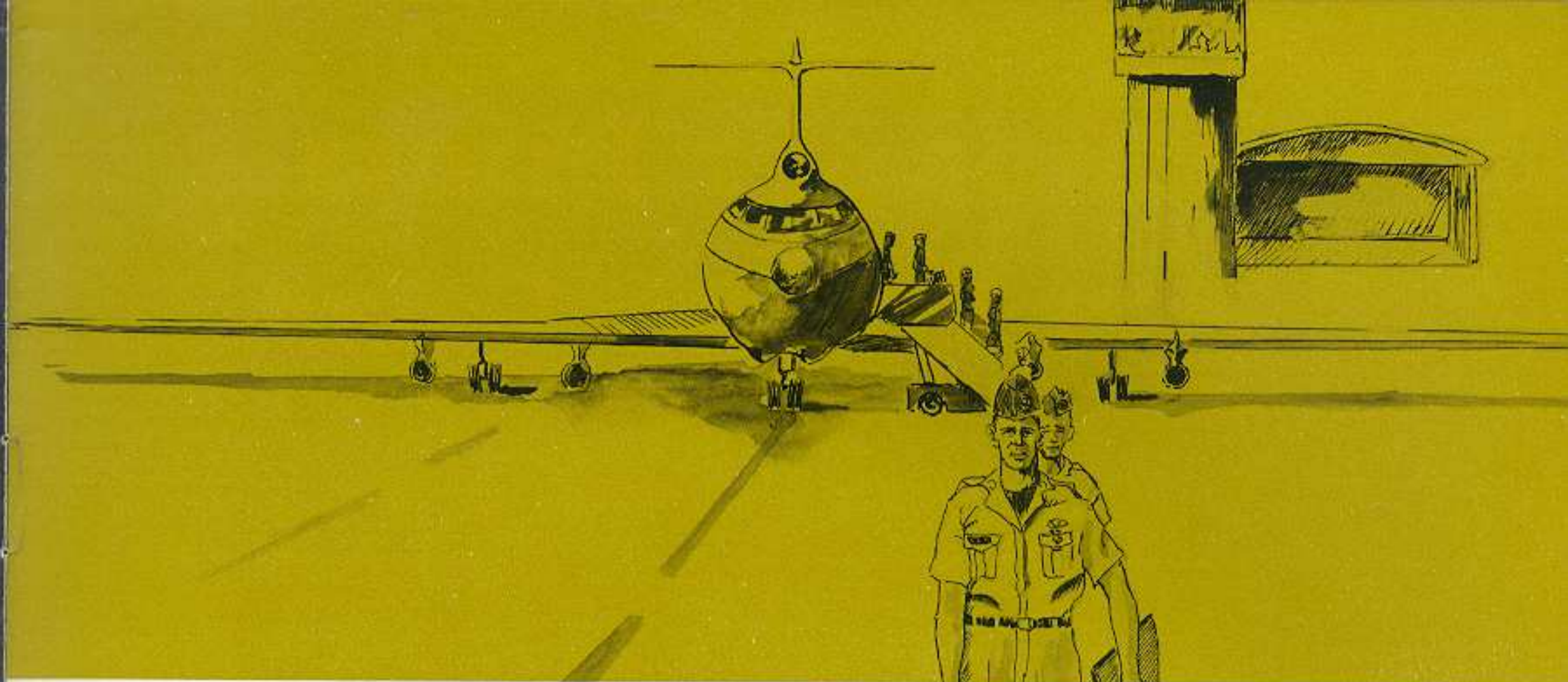
"Up yours," answers an infantry sergeant whose ribbons say he has heard the greeting before.

The welcoming voice begins the routine spiel about processing, transportation and what to do after you get off the plane.

The smoke curls from the observer's nostrils and a smile breaks across his tired face as he sees the first khaki clad figure exit the jet and walk a little unsure down the stairs to the asphalt apron.

All sizes—overweight, underweight, short, tall, adolescent, and mature—form into columns, their white tee-shirts looking like half-moons against a wavering tan sky.





Fresh troops arrive at Bien Hoa Air Force Base with 364 days to serve in Vietnam.

"No smoking once you leave the bus," reminds a driver to his waiting passengers who have looked at their watches ten times in the last ten minutes.

As though the driver's announcement was a prelude to an imminent order to get off the bus, scores of feet stomp out cigarettes, on the bus floor.

Painted on the panel above the bus driver's head is a sign that warned: DANGER- DO NOT PERMIT ARMS TO EXTEND FROM BUS.

Someone, somewhere—weeks, months, perhaps the day before, crossed out part of the sign. It now reads: DANGER—DO NOT EXTEND.

They haven't.

Heads bob and feet shuffle in a rout step cadence as the column marches across the apron, turns left at the freight shack and stirs up grey dust as it proceeds to the passenger terminal.

Eyes of the new arrivals flit back and forth as they look at everything in sight.

Two ARVN soldiers halt their bicycles to let them pass.

An MP in a flak jacket relaxes behind the wheel of his jeep.

The bus passengers look in silence—a few manage a thin smile as the column approaches.

Six bus loads of men want them to walk faster.

The tired infantryman crosses his legs and slouches against the arm of his chair. He lights another cigarette

from the butt of the first and sits back philosophically.

As the column enters the terminal, he frames words with his lips: "Thr-r-e-e hun-d-r-e-d and sixty five to go!"

He smiles.

The bus doors creak open now and the excitement builds as the ribboned men file out to march toward the jet.

They halt at the bottom of the stairs and each slowly eyes the blonde stewardess who somehow found a moment for fresh lipstick. The warmth of her smile speaks a greeting each man understands.

A man in a white shirt beckons them aboard and they hurry—sometimes two steps at a time—up the stairs and disappear into deep seats.

Some of the newly arrived spill into the aisles of the terminal and walk past the observing infantryman.

They look at his scuffed-white boots, the green tape wrapped around the stock of his M-16 and the sweat-stained harness of his rucksack.

A Pfc. with a sharpshooter medal hanging below his National Defense Service Ribbon asks: "Been here long?"

"Almost," answers the trooper.

"What's it like—out there?" asks a Spec. 4 with glasses.

"You'll be all right," responds the veteran. "Just do what you're told."

The jet engines start to whine again and the men in khaki turn to watch the

big silver bird ease out toward the runway.

A bull-horn voice announces: "You men who just came in—fall out and get on the bus that will take you to the replacement battalion. You can claim your baggage once you arrive at the 90th."

The jet has now taxied to the end of the runway and waits for the tower's permission to take off. The stewardesses are scurrying down the aisles giving each man a rolled, cold, pure white washcloth lightly scented with good soap.

"How long before we get to the world?" asks a decorated medic.

"Eighteen hours," smiles the young lady.

"Wake me up when we get there," admonishes a Spec. 5 adjusting his lanky frame to the plush seat.

The four big engines scream now and the swept-winged jet streaks down the runway.

As the 707 lifts into the sky, the infantryman rises and whips a quick salute to the climbing jet.

"Twenty-one days, baby, and it'll be my turn," he smiled to himself.

The air brakes of the last bus made the sound again and a fresh mantle of grey dust settled.

It was the beginning and the end . . . and the almost.



Chopper Pilots Are Funny Guys

By Spec. 5 Jack Hurst

An infantryman traditionally is a very outspoken man. He can talk about the weather and make it Death Valley or Valley Forge. Or Little Orphan Annie a ravishing sex symbol. Or a simple bath one of the great sensual delights of a man's life.

Ask a Division infantryman about helicopter pilots—the men who fly him into action, resupply him with food and ammunition, evacuate his wounded buddies and finally extract him from the steaming jungle.

With his characteristically jaundiced eye, his view is apt to be something like this: "These guys obviously search for hours before hand to find a place where they can let us off in the middle of a lake."

But before long he will remember one night under heavy attack in a perimeter about the size of a dime when some choppers landed amid intense fire to evacuate some of his seriously-wounded friends and bring him some badly-needed ammo.

Suddenly he says something like this: "If I'd been up there where he was, do you think you could've made me come down there where *we* were? Don't kid yourself, chief."

To an infantryman, a helicopter pilot is a sort of odd, heroic guy. A helicopter pilot has the same view of an infantryman. Each finds his battle-hardened partner in war a little kooky.

"If you're getting shot at in a Huey you can get away very quickly," said Lt. Hendry S. Robinson, Clinton, N.C., of the 101st Aviation Co., who spends much of his time working with the infantry brigades of the Screaming Eagles.

"In a Huey you not only can run, but you can do it quickly and even gracefully, because nobody expects you to hang around with this critically needed and highly valuable piece of transportation," he said.

The infantryman, of course, never leaves the scene when the heaviest firing begins. He stays with it until it is over.

"I've never seen an infantryman who

seemed to be happy to be getting off a helicopter in the middle of the jungle—and I've never seen one who didn't seem to be perfectly overjoyed to be getting back on," the lieutenant said.

Warrant Officer pilots of the 101st Aviation Co. who, like Robinson, are attached to the brigades, enjoy harassing the infantryman almost as much as he enjoys teasing the pilots. For instance:

"Some of these company commanders—when they're leading you in by radio for resupplies or MEDEVACS—don't want to tell you how bad it really is down there because they're afraid if you knew you wouldn't go near the place," said WO James R. Morgan, Philadelphia.

But they, too, talk differently when the conversation gets more serious.

"I've taken them into places so hot you couldn't have gotten me off that chopper with a crowbar," said WO John A. Bercaw, Berwin, Ill.

"But they jump out and the Viet Cong open up on them, and they go tearing off into the boonies to get them."

Many of the Division's pilots say they have flown resupply missions to infantry units deep into the jungle and have been greeted on the ground by a grimy soldier who hands them a canteen or, when he happens to have it, even a soft drink.

"That always gets you, because you know they don't have water to waste out there, but you're always glad to get it because it gets hot in the chopper, too," said WO Charles Hagan, Owensboro, Ky.

"So hot sometimes," Lt. Robinson added, "that sweat sloshes around in your earphones."

The helicopter pilot, much like the infantryman, confesses he often gets bored doing his usual day-to-day job in Vietnam.

"When a pilot most enjoys flying is when he is really helping somebody out, really making a difference, like picking up some wounded guy who really needs a ride," Morgan remarked.

Bercaw, who has flown for troops of the 1st Infantry and the 101st Airborne, agreed, "I've run into infantry people all over Vietnam who remember me because I picked them up on MEDEVACS."

Robinson grinned as brought up a pet point. "Contrary to the popular belief in the infantry, we do not look for the wettest and most undesirable place to let them out of the helicopters. It's just that in Vietnam, especially during the rainy seasons, most of the clear areas where you can get close enough to the ground happen to have water in them."

Morgan said he did not realize how

1st Brigade paratroopers jump out into a landing zone in I Corps during a heliborne assault during Operation Carentan II.





Downs *2nd Brigade paratroopers from the 501st Infantry load an enemy weapons cache aboard a hovering helicopter off the Song Bo river.*

soft these marshy areas actually are until one time he attempted to land his craft in one instead of merely hovering over it. "I nearly drowned," he recalled philosophically.

The pilots contend that although the infantryman has a closer view of action on the ground, pilots often have a more comprehensive view because they are above it, can see more of it, and sometimes have access to information from more places at once.

They say infantry company commanders think in terms of the horizontal, whereas pilots look at things from a vertical viewpoint.

"This can make a difference because sometimes things that are instantly obvious to us up in the air don't occur to people on the ground, especially in a tight situation," Hagan said.

Robinson offered an example.

Once during a firefight, an embattled company commander in deep jungle asked him to drop a chain saw from 150 feet in the air so his men could cut out a landing zone for evacuation of wounded.

"I told him we didn't have a rope that long and that it would be in 500 pieces when he got it if we just dropped it," Robinson said. "He wasn't thinking

about the long drop—he was thinking about how the chain saw was needed on the ground that very moment."

He added he is sure pilots have often offered similarly impractical suggestions to infantrymen because pilots do not know some of the things an infantryman has known since his first day on patrol.

The infantryman who rides it sees the helicopter as a strange and mysterious thing. He entrusts his life to the pilot who must know it as thoroughly and completely as the infantryman knows the smell of Viet Cong.

"Lots of times we receive more current information on our radios than they have gotten in their briefings," Bercaw said, "so lots of times we will know before we get there that a landing zone will be hotter when we get to it than we and the infantrymen had expected it to be when we took off."

Because of the roar of the rotor blades it is practically impossible for a pilot to say anything to his passengers except over the radio set used for conversations between pilots and commanders they ferry into combat.

Robinson recalled carrying a load of infantrymen into such an area. When

his helicopter touched ground, they got off the chopper slowly and then coolly surveyed their surroundings. One lit a cigarette.

"I grabbed the arm of one standing by the front of the chopper and said, 'Good God, man—don't you know?' And he said, 'Know what?' And I said, 'This place is hot as Hades—there's Charlie all around you only 50 meters out.'

"He hit the dirt and told everybody else to do the same, and I got out of there."

The helicopter pilot occasionally takes chances, but he takes them for the same reason the infantryman does—because he must.

"Once we were lifting the last load of infantrymen out after a firefight, and we knew there were still a few VC around," Robinson said.

"I was the last chopper out, loaded to the gills, and there was still one guy standing there. I had to either take him and wonder if we could get out of there completely overloaded, or leave him there.

"In the 15 minutes it would take to get back, anything could have happened to him." Robinson turned to his copilot, then looked back at the line doggie.

"The soldier wasn't saying anything, one way or the other," Robinson recalled, "but he sure was looking lonelier and lonelier."

He told the man to push his way on board.

"If there hadn't been a break in the trees ahead of us, we'd have never gotten high enough on takeoff to get out, but we threaded the needle between the trees and everybody came home."

Infantrymen have an unwritten but ironclad law: No matter how rough the going gets, no matter how many casualties the unit has taken and how worn out the individual soldiers happen to be, no man ever leaves another behind to contend with the enemy alone.

This old infantry law is highly respected by the pilots. They have taken it as their own.



The Battle of Phuoc Yen

By Lt. Jon McAtee

So successful was the 2nd Brigade's cordon of Phuoc Yen village early in May, that U.S. Marine forces in Vietnam's I Corps tactical zone have now started to employ this type of tactics near the DMZ.

The stench of death hung in the air as the paratroopers of B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. continued their search at the scene of a five-day cordon operation which marked the largest single victory since the arrival of the Screaming Eagles in Vietnam. The 8th Bn., 90th North Vietnamese Regiment fought for survival for nearly four days trying to break through an impregnable airborne encirclement. Determined paratroopers from the 2nd Brigade repulsed every enemy escape attempt, inflicting heavy casualties on the NVA soldiers.

The battle of Phuoc Yen began with intelligence reports of the presence of the 8th Bn., 90th Reg., operating in the "stocking" area of the Song Bo River, 3 miles northwest of Hue. Two allied rifle companies, A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. from the 2nd Brigade and the Black Panther Co. from the 1st ARVN Division were deployed on the afternoon of April 28 to investigate.

The first contact of the ensuing battle was made under the hot afternoon sun amidst the humid green rice paddies just north of Duong Son village, situated at the opening of the "stocking." The allied fighting force pushed the enemy southward through the rice and into the natural barrier formed by the Song Bo.

Col. John H. Cushman, Lexington, Mass., 2nd Brigade commander, immediately dispatched his forces to seal

any potential escape routes for the trapped enemy force. Spreading through the rice in the late afternoon, the Black Panthers and A Co. paratroopers formed a curving arc of men to seal off the mouth of the "stocking." Delta Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. was helilifted into a reinforcing position east of Alpha Co.

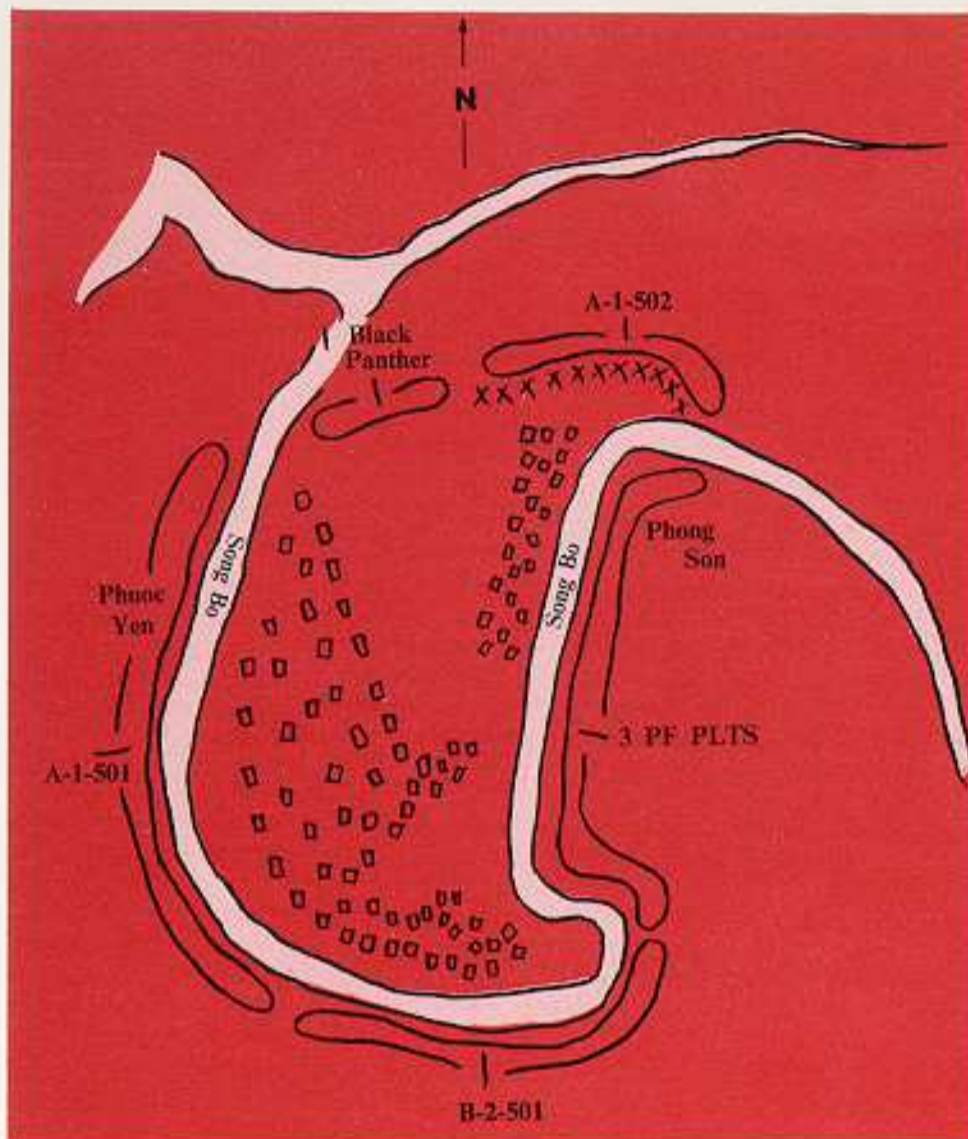
While Vietnamese Skyraiders dropped 250-pound bombs on enemy positions, sending jagged steel fragments whirling through the trees, A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. maneuvered around the bend of the river on the west and south. By nightfall, the paratroopers, with three Popular Forces (PF) platoons on the east side of the "stocking," completed the cordon. They sealed the enemy in what was described by one observer as "a field commander's tactical dream." All forces were in position by 7 p.m. with reinforcing units moving to close on the enemy, should an attempted break take place.

Throughout the night, the paratroopers surveyed their fields of fire by the ghostly light of flares dropped from C-47's. The thump and crack of artillery pounding the trapped enemy battalion provided background sounds to the the shifting flare shadows as the allied troops held the trap shut. At 1 a.m., Alpha Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. tensed as they observed three NVA

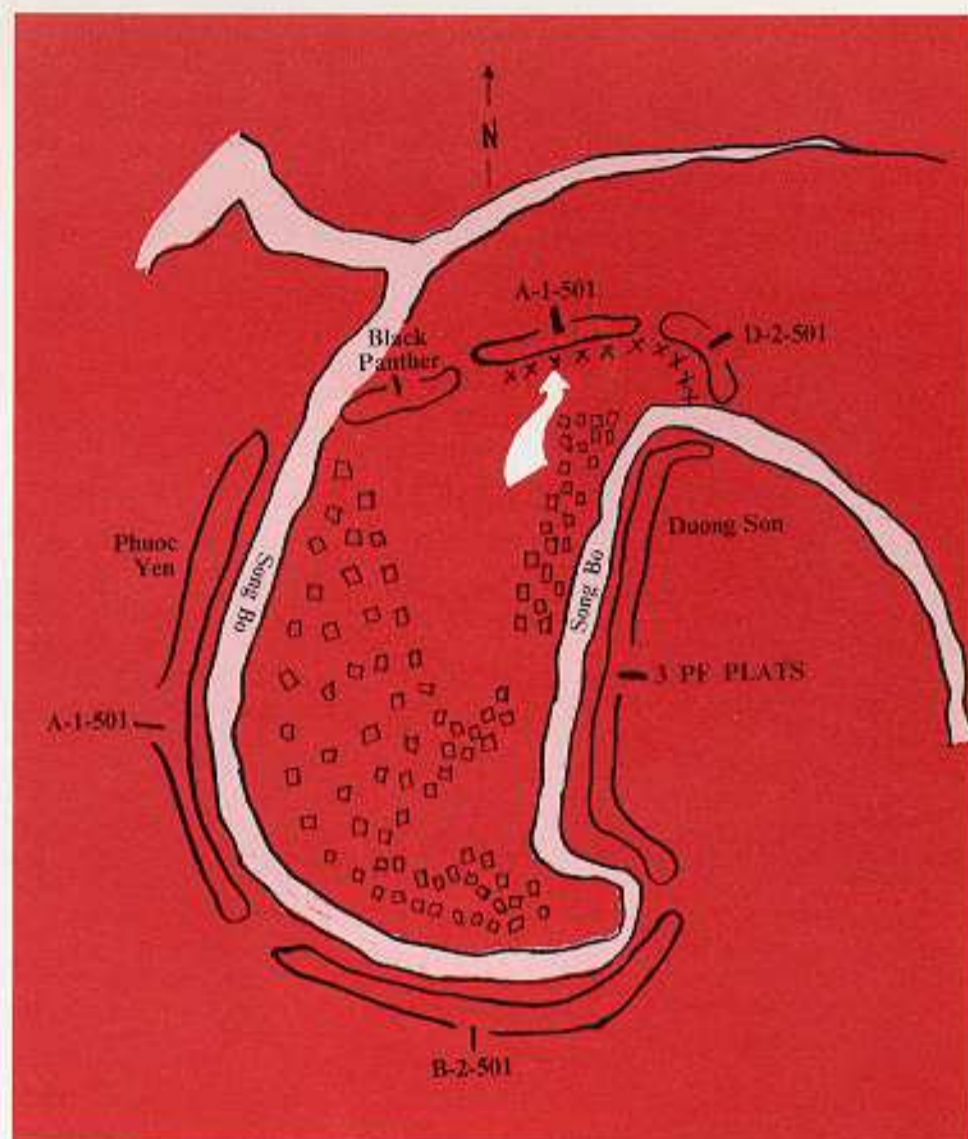
trying to swim out of the cordon. Their figures immediately came into view against the dark water under the flares. They made good targets as the troopers fired on them, forestalling a potential escape.

The first significant attempt to break the tight encirclement was made on the morning of April 29, when A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. engaged an enemy platoon. Ducking shrapnel from bursting 60 mm mortar rounds, the paratroopers held their positions against heavy volumes of small arms and automatic weapons fire. Alpha Co. paratroopers returned the fire as gunships and heavy artillery tore the enemy force apart. Unable to breach the shrinking airborne snare, the NVA force retreated back to their doomed stronghold in Duong Son village.

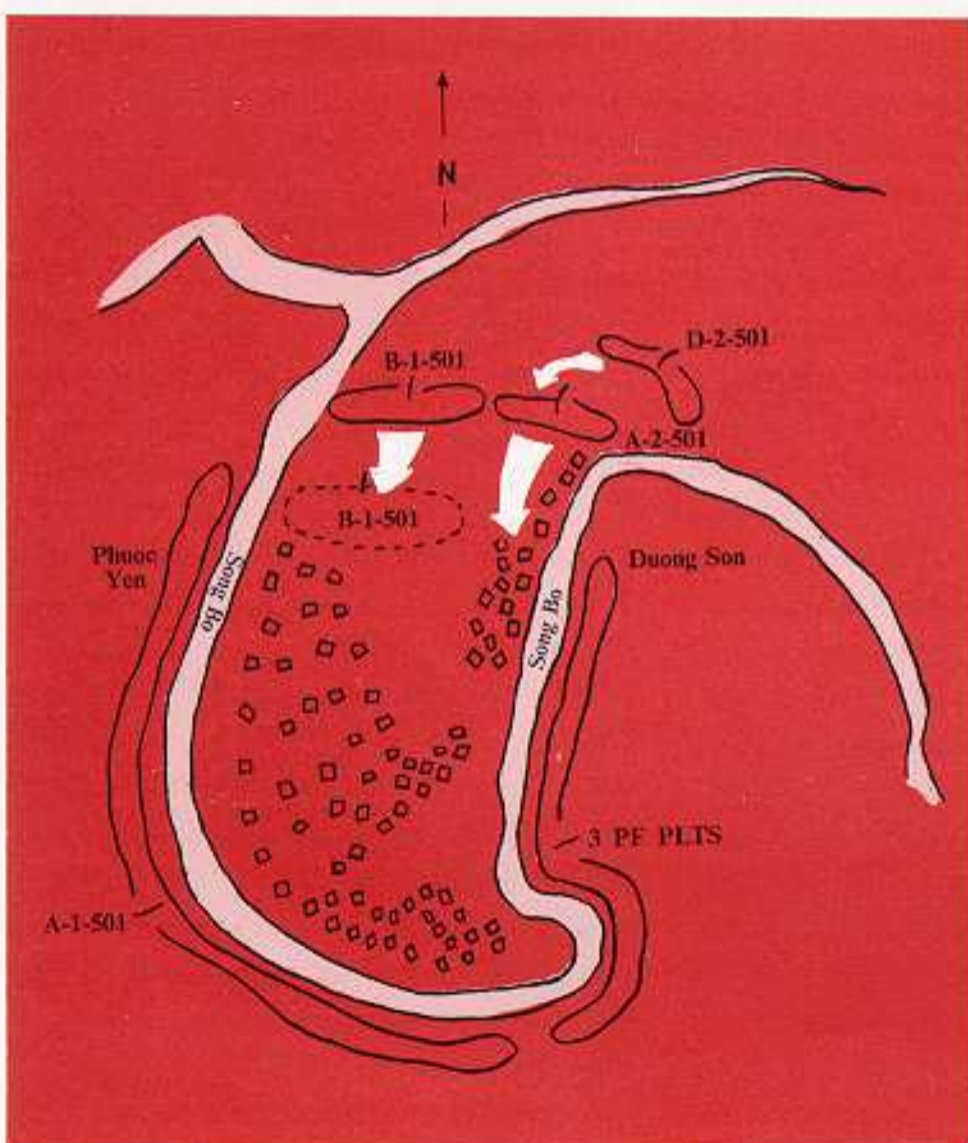
Sporadic fire continued throughout the day with artillery and air strikes battering the enemy fortifications. Late that afternoon, a second desperate enemy attempt to break the airborne stranglehold began as an unknown size enemy force attacked the northern blocking position with hand grenades and small arms fire. The airborne troopers of A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf., nestled behind a natural hedgerow, sprayed the NVA with deadly grazing fire. By twilight, the decimated enemy force was driven back into their sanc-



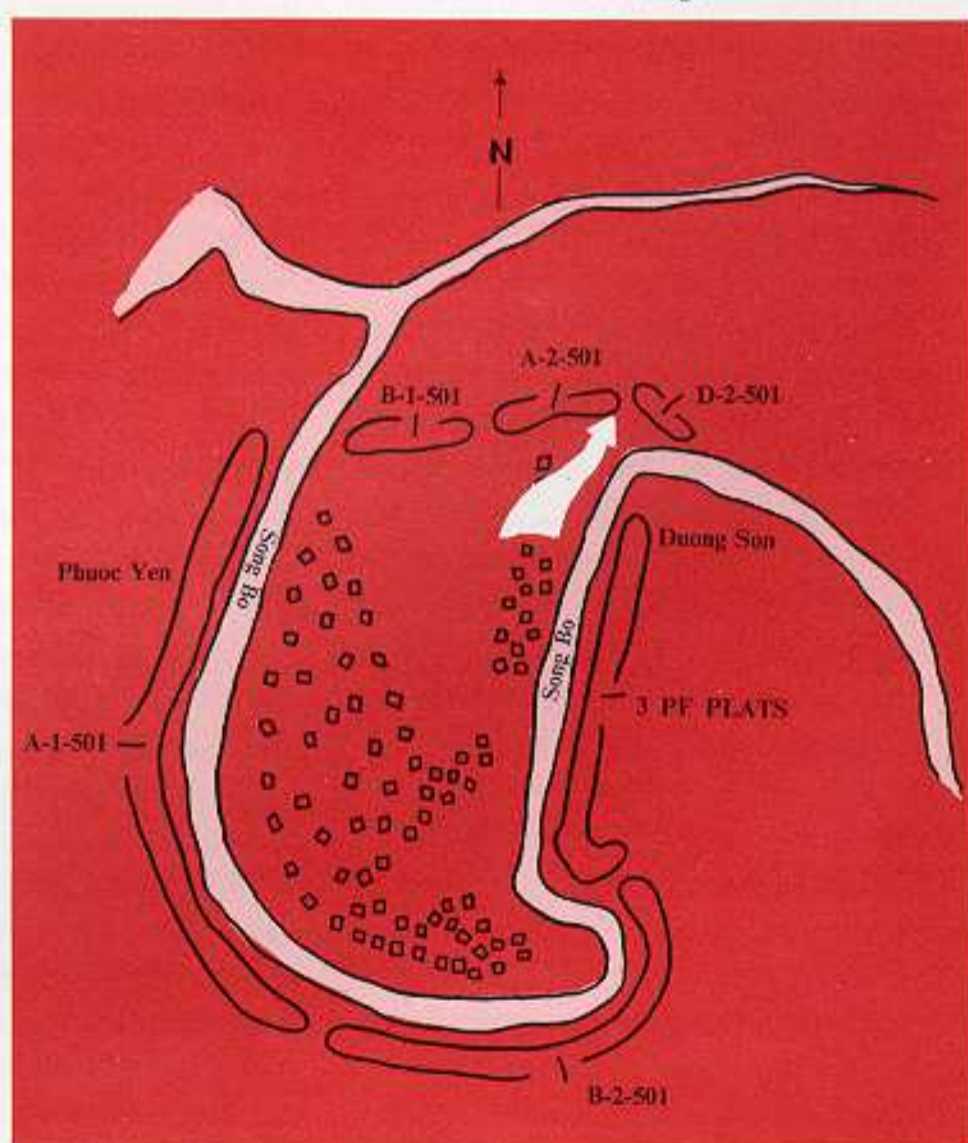
April 28th



April 29th
First Breakout Attempt



May 1st
Assault and Shrinking Perimeter



May 1st
Second Breakout Attempt



2nd Brigade paratroopers storm Vietnamese village following numerous artillery missions and tactical air strikes.

Onn

tuary, leaving seven bodies sprawled before Alpha Co's hedgerow.

The sights and sounds of the first night were repeated as artillery and illumination again made the night miserable for the trapped NVA. On the morning of the 30th, the ARVN Black Panther Co. began an assault into the northern section of Phuoc Yen, but withdrew because of intense enemy fire. Members of A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. also launched an attack on Duong Son village but withdrew after meeting stiff enemy resistance. Fourteen air strikes pounded the enemy forces and artillery fires bridged the gaps between the sorties. "When the air strikes were called in, our artillery shells would stop just as the jets swooped down," said Capt. Jimmie J. Smith, South Lyon, Mich., an artillery fire direction officer. "By coordinating with all factions involved, the intense pressure on the enemy never faltered." During the course of the five-day battle, "Redlegs" of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 321st Arty. lobbed more than 13,500 rounds of 105 mm, 155 mm, and 8-inch howitzer shells on the enemy. Like the airborne infantrymen holding the line at the cordon, the artillerymen toiled day and night, endlessly uncrating, fusing, and firing the high explosives and illumination rounds which steadily

blew the enemy forces apart.

Late in the afternoon of the 30th, the Black Panthers returned to their parent unit and were replaced by B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., who air assaulted into position at the northwestern edge of the cordon.

All units on the cordon received intermittent rifle, machine-gun, RPG, and mortar fire during the night as remnants of the frustrated enemy battalion again probed the confining perimeter for weakness. At 4:40 a.m. on May 1, A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. was struck by a ground attack toward the northwestern corner of the cordon. Supported by concentrated 60mm mortar fire lobbed from a mortar position outside the cordoned area, the NVA charged across the dewy rice toward the hedgerow positions held by the paratroopers. Holding their positions, the airborne infantrymen matched the NVA round for round for two hours before the enemy broke contact. During a lapse in the illumination, an enemy platoon broke through the cordon. At daybreak, 23 enemy bodies were strewn across the battlefield, cut down by the combined paratrooper force. Another 10 were killed attempting

NVA platoon sergeant tells his men to give themselves up.

to swim north in the Song Bo.

Artillery continued to pound the enemy-held villages as a Division Psychological Operations team began broadcasting an appeal for the hopelessly trapped enemy to surrender and avoid further punishment. At 11 a.m., a one hour lull in the shelling was announced.





Rifleman from the 502nd Infantry fires M-16 at enemy bunker position.

A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf. began a southward sweep of Duong Son. Little enemy resistance prevailed as the paratroopers searched the rubble for the battered survivors.

During the sweep, B Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and D Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. tightened the cordon around the remaining buildings in Phuoc Yen. Along the southern bend of the river, B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. boarded helicopters to move to another area of operation, while A Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. and the local popular forces platoons extended their lines to plug the hole in the cordon. At the end of May 1st, the most decisive day of the operation, the combined airborne fighting force killed 121 NVA, and captured 95 prisoners with 59 enemy weapons.

During the night, the few surviving NVA soldiers continued to probe for a weak spot in the dense shrinking perimeter. Short, sharp firefights followed, resulting only in swelling the body count of NVA for the paratroopers holding the perimeter. On May 2nd, a final sweep of the cordon was made with little enemy resistance.

Between May 3rd and the 6th, Bravo Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf. combed the rubble, picking up weapons and equipment, while uncovering additional bodies to bring the final enemy body-count to 429 NVA killed and 107 captured against American losses of five killed and 31 wounded. Interrogation of prisoners revealed their battalion commander, executive officer, and three company commanders died in the vicious five-day battle. So successful was the paratrooper's combat cordon in pinning down an elusive enemy that Lt. Gen. Henry W. Buse Jr., commander of the Pacific Marine Force, said recently that I Corps Marine forces have adopted the tactic and have started to employ it near the DMZ.

Maj. Gen. O. M. Barsanti, Division commander, presents Silver Star to 2nd Brigade company commander after the battle.

Higgs nounced to allow the enemy to safely give up. The team, lead by Capt. Larry Cochran, Thomaston, Ga., appealed to the enemy through a loudspeaker carried to different positions on the cordon. "We wanted to save as many lives as we could," Capt. Cochran said. "An interpreter spoke to the NVA telling them their situation was hopeless.

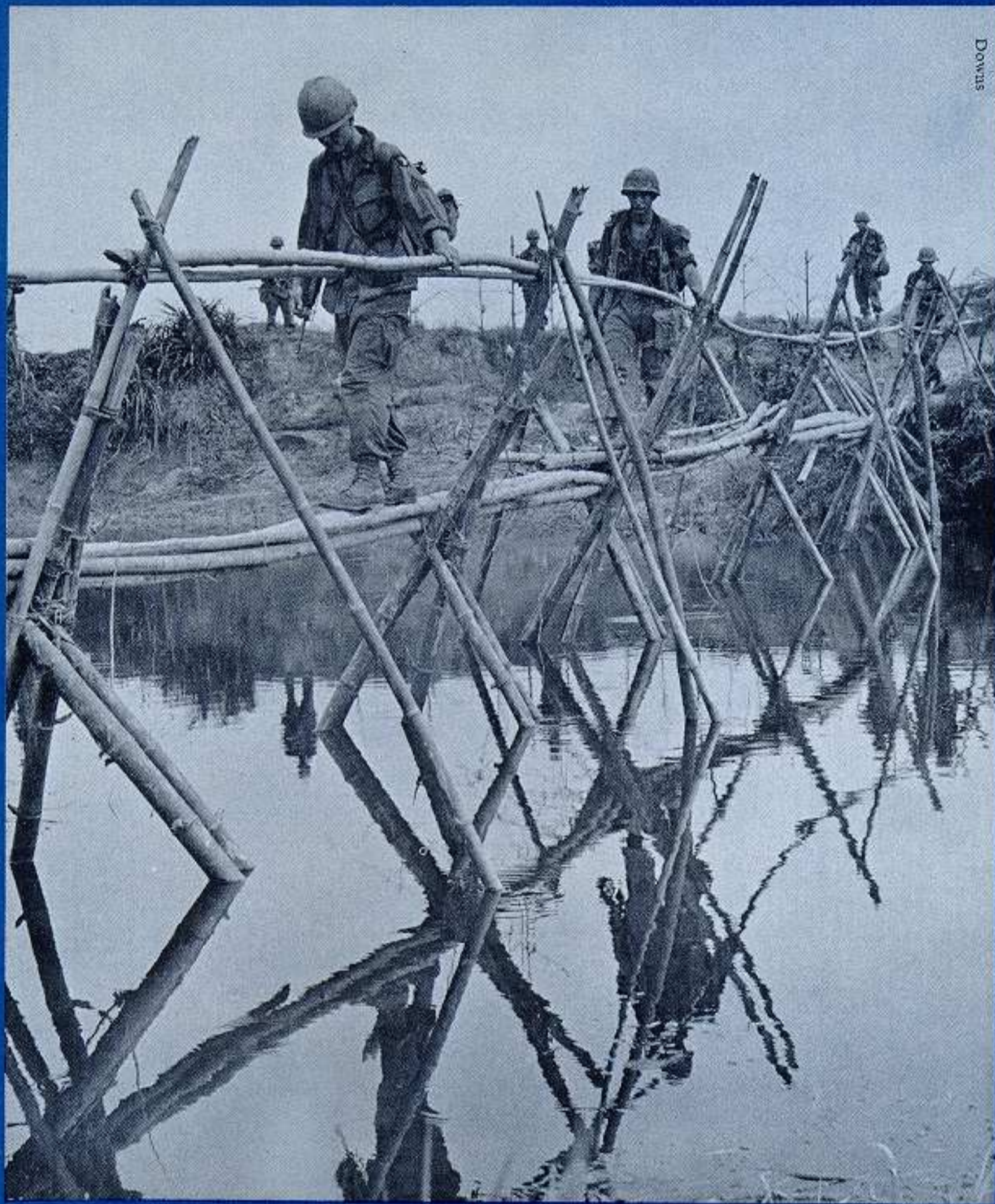
An NVA staff sergeant was first to surrender and after receiving medical treatment and food, he volunteered to urge his comrades to follow the same course of action. Going back to the enemy hamlet, the sergeant went into one of the fortified bunkers and per-

suaded six NVA soldiers to surrender. Soon a slow trickle of NVA filtered to the perimeter with their hands in the air and then a deluge of beaten enemy soldiers began surrendering. Some had to be pulled out of the bunkers, the wounded carried, and many were uncovered by a systematic search of the river bank and pulled out of the water. Medevac helicopters quickly came in to extract the seriously wounded.

Elsewhere in the cordoned area, four air strikes struck the area around Phuoc Yen, where several NVA soldiers were observed trying to sneak past the ring of airborne companies. At 1:45 p.m.,



Bishop



A river crossing north of Hue is made easy for squad leader Sgt. Larry Newell, Melborne, Fla., and his men from the 1st Bn. (Abn), 501st Inf., thanks to a solid bridge—Vietnamese style.

A Screaming Eagle paratrooper stands proud because he knows he is serving with the best of fighting men in Vietnam.

