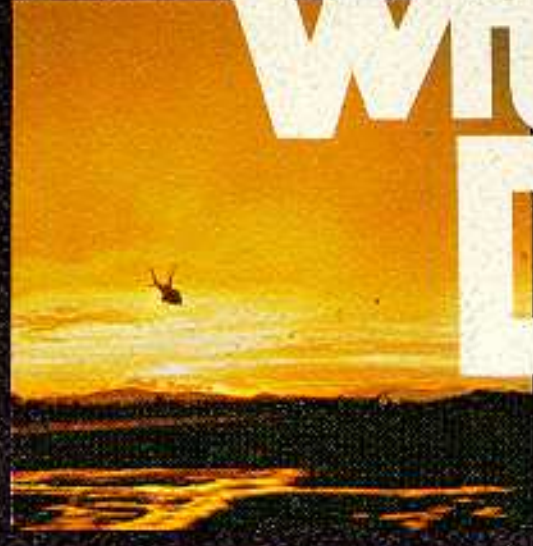




Rendezvous With Destiny



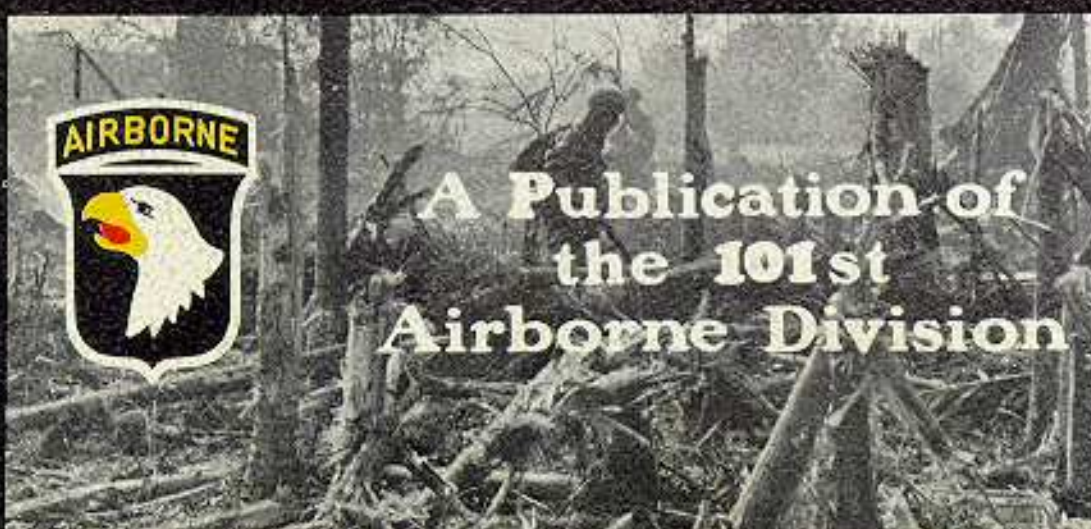
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The Screaming Eagle
Patch,' p. 25



AIRMOBILITY:

Speed and Violence



No division in the United States Army can be more justifiably proud of its legacy, heritage, laurels and battle honors than can the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). I want to assure every Screaming Eagle—past and present—that I am deeply conscious of the great responsibilities I accept as Commanding General of this superb Division—responsibilities to every paratrooper who has made his contribution, both in wartime and in peacetime, toward the illustrious history which has already been recorded.

Further, I want to assure every Screaming Eagle—past and present—that I shall devote every ounce of my energy to insuring that we who are fighting in Vietnam in defense of freedom add to the lustre of the glorious record of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile).

From its activation as an airborne division on 16 August 1942 to its conversion to an airmobile division on 1 July 1968, the 101st Airborne Division was an elite division structured to strike from the sky by parachute. Today the Division is an elite division structured to strike from the sky by helicopter—one of only two divisions in the United States Army to have this unique capability.

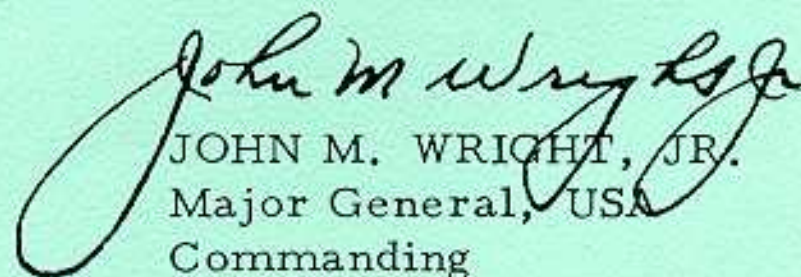
We are still AIRBORNE, ALL THE WAY. We are still Screaming Eagles. The Division assaults by helicopter instead of parachute, but the spirit of the paratrooper characterizes our operations. This we will preserve.

At the risk of oversimplification, I would summarize the unique combat capability of today's 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) in two words: violence and speed. We have tremendous combat power—and we can apply that power in a burst of violence wherever and whenever it is required, in terms of minutes instead of days. While locked in contact with the enemy, we can maneuver our fighting units by helicopter, rather than on foot. Terrain obstacles are now only the enemy's problem, not ours. Also, wherever our maneuver units are committed, we can provide them the necessary combat and combat service support.

Our new fighting techniques demand an airmobile mentality, attitude and spirit. Fortunately, what we need in the airmobile division is the airborne mentality, attitude and spirit. We must think fast, act fast, strike hard, and apply as much combat power as is required to destroy our enemy.

Violence and speed—airmobility in two words.

The 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) is powerful, spirited, and prepared for its next Rendezvous with Destiny. Mindful of our debt to paratroopers of the past, we are now dedicated to building on their foundation as we strike from the sky with our new airmobility. We shall continue to be AIRBORNE, ALL THE WAY.


JOHN M. WRIGHT, JR.
Major General, USA
Commanding

Rendezvous With Destiny

Maj. Gen. John M. Wright Jr., *Commanding General*
 Maj. Richard L. Horvath, *Information Officer*
 Capt. Richard Cardinali, *Deputy Information Officer*
 Lt. David E. Jurgens, *Officer-in-Charge*
 Spec. 5 Alan Magary, *Editor*
 Pfc. Gary Pitchford, *Assistant Editor*

SUMMER 1969

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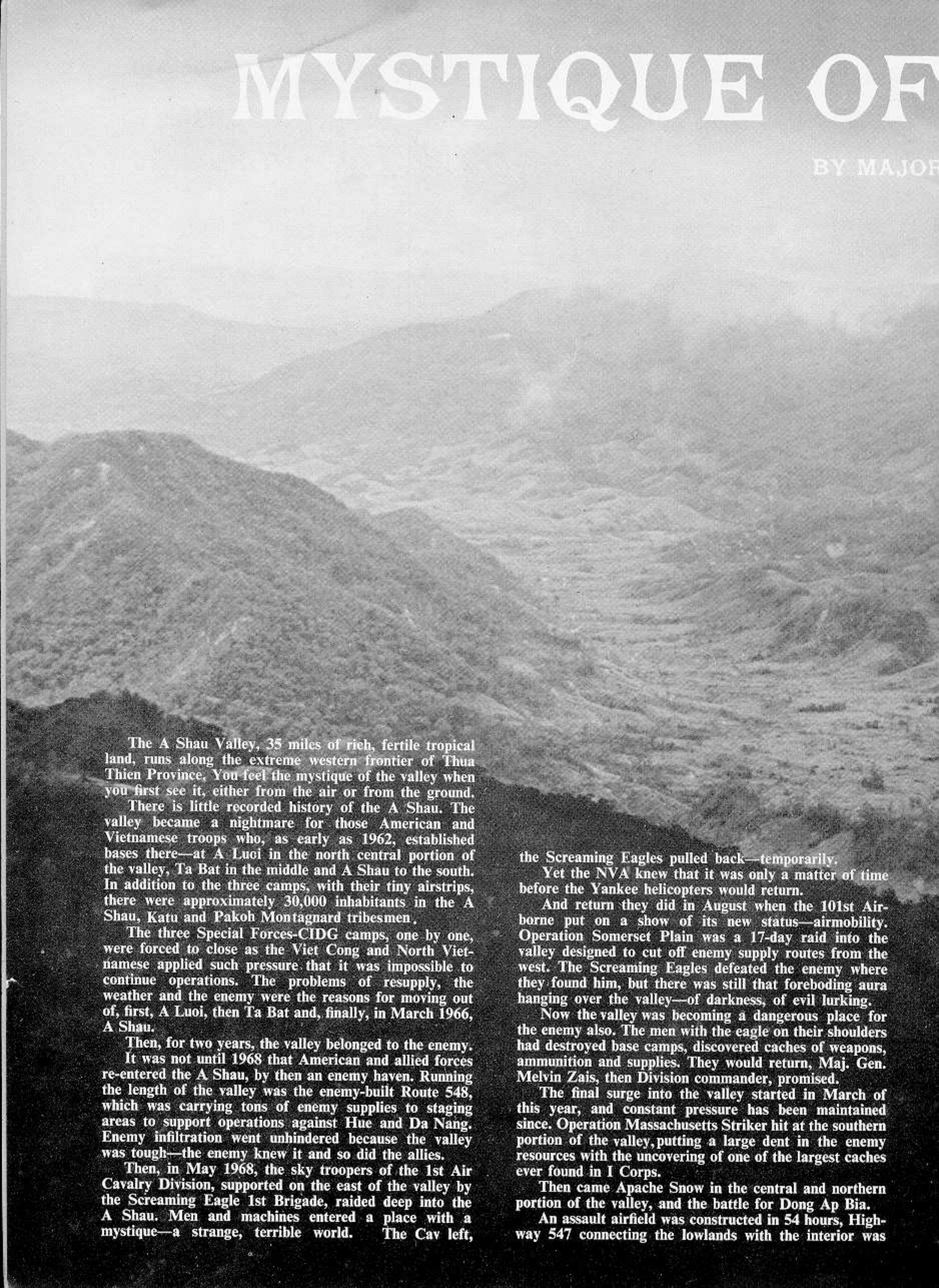
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THE COVER: A division in Vietnam is many people, many different activities—and many photographers. Showing a cross section of Screaming Eagles, our cover art and photos are by the following (see key): Pfc. Mike Cariglio—art, 9, 26, 31; Lt. Thomas Devine—16; Spec. 4 Stephen Hansen—5, 10, 12, 21; Spec. 5 Michael Jones—32; Spec. 4 Don Kelsen—22, 25; Spec. 4 Jerry Lewis—13, 27, 28, 29; Spec. 5 Alan Magary—3; Spec. 5 Terry McCauley—8, 10, 14; Spec. 5 Edward Onn—2; Lt. Harry Oyler—34; Spec. 4 Peter Quidley—33; Staff Sgt. Frank Randant—18; Spec. 4 Herschel Ritchie—12; Spec. 4 David Rose—17, 30; Spec. 5 E.P. Boice—8, 20. Other photographers who took pictures for this issue, not listed above, are Lt. Ben Castillo, Spec. 4 James P. Ducey, Spec. 4 David Lovelace, Spec. 4 Larry Peterson and Spec. 5 John Ranous. Art on p. 10 and 20 by Cariglio, on p. 18 by Spec. 4 William Ladd. Maps by Magary.



MYSTIQUE OF

BY MAJOR



The A Shau Valley, 35 miles of rich, fertile tropical land, runs along the extreme western frontier of Thua Thien Province. You feel the mystique of the valley when you first see it, either from the air or from the ground.

There is little recorded history of the A Shau. The valley became a nightmare for those American and Vietnamese troops who, as early as 1962, established bases there—at A Luoi in the north central portion of the valley, Ta Bat in the middle and A Shau to the south. In addition to the three camps, with their tiny airstrips, there were approximately 30,000 inhabitants in the A Shau, Katu and Pakoh Montagnard tribesmen.

The three Special Forces-CIDG camps, one by one, were forced to close as the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese applied such pressure that it was impossible to continue operations. The problems of resupply, the weather and the enemy were the reasons for moving out of, first, A Luoi, then Ta Bat and, finally, in March 1966, A Shau.

Then, for two years, the valley belonged to the enemy.

It was not until 1968 that American and allied forces re-entered the A Shau, by then an enemy haven. Running the length of the valley was the enemy-built Route 548, which was carrying tons of enemy supplies to staging areas to support operations against Hue and Da Nang. Enemy infiltration went unhindered because the valley was tough—the enemy knew it and so did the allies.

Then, in May 1968, the sky troopers of the 1st Air Cavalry Division, supported on the east of the valley by the Screaming Eagle 1st Brigade, raided deep into the A Shau. Men and machines entered a place with a mystique—a strange, terrible world. The Cav left,

the Screaming Eagles pulled back—temporarily.

Yet the NVA knew that it was only a matter of time before the Yankee helicopters would return.

And return they did in August when the 101st Airborne put on a show of its new status—airmobility. Operation Somerset Plain was a 17-day raid into the valley designed to cut off enemy supply routes from the west. The Screaming Eagles defeated the enemy where they found him, but there was still that foreboding aura hanging over the valley—of darkness, of evil lurking.

Now the valley was becoming a dangerous place for the enemy also. The men with the eagle on their shoulders had destroyed base camps, discovered caches of weapons, ammunition and supplies. They would return, Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, then Division commander, promised.

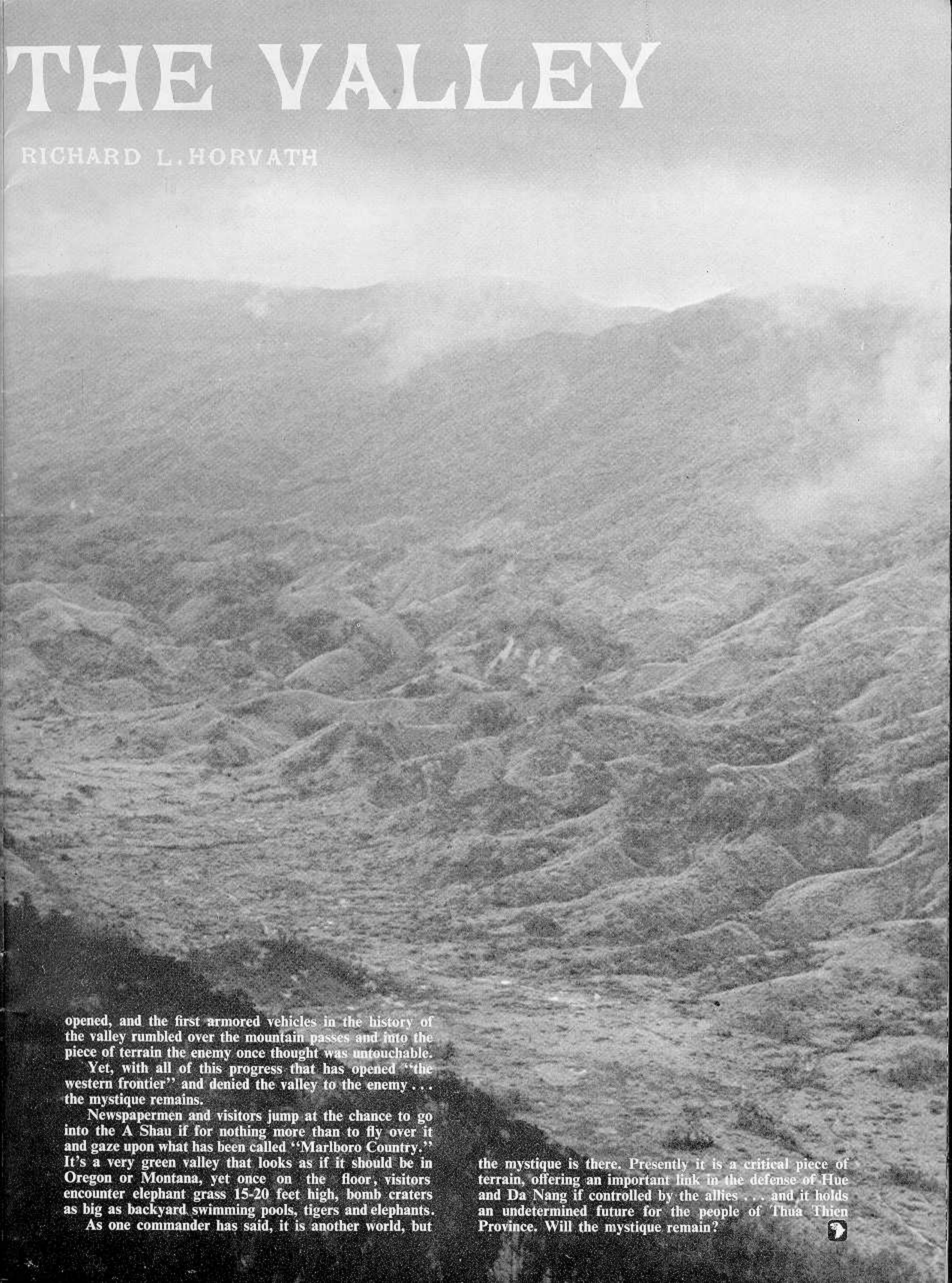
The final surge into the valley started in March of this year, and constant pressure has been maintained since. Operation Massachusetts Striker hit at the southern portion of the valley, putting a large dent in the enemy resources with the uncovering of one of the largest caches ever found in I Corps.

Then came Apache Snow in the central and northern portion of the valley, and the battle for Dong Ap Bia.

An assault airfield was constructed in 54 hours, Highway 547 connecting the lowlands with the interior was

THE VALLEY

RICHARD L. HORVATH



opened, and the first armored vehicles in the history of the valley rumbled over the mountain passes and into the piece of terrain the enemy once thought was untouchable.

Yet, with all of this progress that has opened "the western frontier" and denied the valley to the enemy . . . the mystique remains.

Newspapermen and visitors jump at the chance to go into the A Shau if for nothing more than to fly over it and gaze upon what has been called "Marlboro Country." It's a very green valley that looks as if it should be in Oregon or Montana, yet once on the floor, visitors encounter elephant grass 15-20 feet high, bomb craters as big as backyard swimming pools, tigers and elephants.

As one commander has said, it is another world, but

the mystique is there. Presently it is a critical piece of terrain, offering an important link in the defense of Hue and Da Nang if controlled by the allies . . . and it holds an undetermined future for the people of Thua Thien Province. Will the mystique remain?



MASSACHUSETTS STRIKER

BY LT. FRANK HAIR

The tactical value of the A Shau Valley as a main supply and infiltration route from Laos into Thua Thien and Quang Nam Provinces has rendered it an area of contest for many years. It was not, however, until this year that the U.S. and ARVN forces obtained the capability to invade the A Shau and deny the enemy the use of it for an indefinite period of time.

Operation Massachusetts Striker and Apache Snow initiated the first successful attempt to control the A Shau Valley on a permanent basis by the free world forces. Striker was directed against the southern portion of the valley while Apache Snow followed with the invasion of the northern area. Montgomery Rendezvous was next, aimed at the eastern slope and the middle of the valley floor.

The 2nd Brigade kicked off Striker on March 1 with the insertion of A Co., 326th Engr. Bn., onto a hilltop overlooking the valley. Under the protection of troopers of the 2nd Sqdrn., 17th Cav., they began construction of Fire Base Whip, the proposed forward base camp of the brigade.

From Whip the 2nd Brigade was to conduct operations in the southern A Shau and Rao Nai valleys to interdict and destroy North Vietnamese base areas and supply routes. The success of the operation required bold insertions of the maneuver battalions, followed by forced combat marches to the Laotian border to cut off enemy withdrawals. The enemy situation was obscure, but it was clear that he was very active.

On D-day minus one, Col. John A. Hoefling, then the brigade commander,

told his troops, "We are in for some tough fighting ahead, but I feel we have never before been more capable of success than we are now. The NVA we are going to meet out there," he warned, "will be highly trained, well equipped hardcore troops who will stand and fight, especially when we get close to his base camps and supply depots."

The mountain weather has always been unpredictable, particularly during the monsoon season, which was due to pass in late March. As a result, the operation was delayed when the engineers were socked in on Whip the day after their insertion. They continued their construction on the fire base without adequate food and water supplies. For days they subsisted on rain-water they could catch in their ponches.

The bad weather persisted until finally, on March 12, the 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., was able to move forward as far as Fire Base Veghel. Although this maneuver was not in the original plans, it worked out to advantage when a company of the 9th NVA Regt. was found on the abandoned fire base. "It seems," said Lt. Col. Donald Davis, Brooklyn, N.Y., the battalion commander, "that we've accidentally jumped into a battalion base area."

When the assault helicopters carrying C Co. of the O-Deuce swept down on Veghel at 5 that afternoon, they encountered the enemy in dug-in positions inside the perimeter. Claymore mines had been emplaced and aimed skyward against the helicopters, and the area was heavily booby-trapped. Most of these, fortunately, had been destroyed in the artillery preparation

of the fire base as an LZ.

Four of the first five choppers to land took hits but none were destroyed. Bitter fighting ensued as the clouds closed over again, cutting off air support.

By midnight the enemy had stopped returning fire and the following morning Charlie Company's assault was completed with little difficulty. Twelve NVA bodies had been left inside the perimeter, and eight more were found along the enemy's route of withdrawal.

That afternoon the rest of the battalion joined C Co. at Veghel and began a drive westward in pursuit. For the next 33 days the First Strike battalion fought every foot of the way against well-entrenched enemy, pushing them back until they made a stand at Dong A Tay, the battle of "Bloody Ridge."

Never before had the enemy shown such determination to stand and fight for his ground. Not until the NVA battalion had been decimated did they break contact and flee to their sanctuaries in Laos. This hard-won victory, the result of a substitute maneuver because of bad weather, accounted for 90 NVA killed by actual body count, with many times that number killed or wounded and carried off in the enemy's retreat.

Meanwhile, on March 20, the 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., led by Lt. Col. Joseph C. Wilson, Honolulu, Hawaii, was inserted into the Rao Nai Valley, southeast of the A Shau, and began a sweep to the Laotian border. They encountered light resistance along the way from small delaying elements of squad or platoon size.

On March 22 the No Slack 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. from the 1st Brigade came under the operational control of the 2nd Brigade and invaded the old A Shau airstrip on the floor of the valley. This was the destination of the 1st of the 502nd had it not been committed on Dong A Tay.

Again, little resistance was encountered as the No Slack troopers moved quickly southward to the Laotian border on three axes. The bad weather delays coupled with American activity on the edges of the valley had apparently telegraphed the approach of the Screaming Eagles, and the enemy units withdrew into Laos before they could be overtaken.

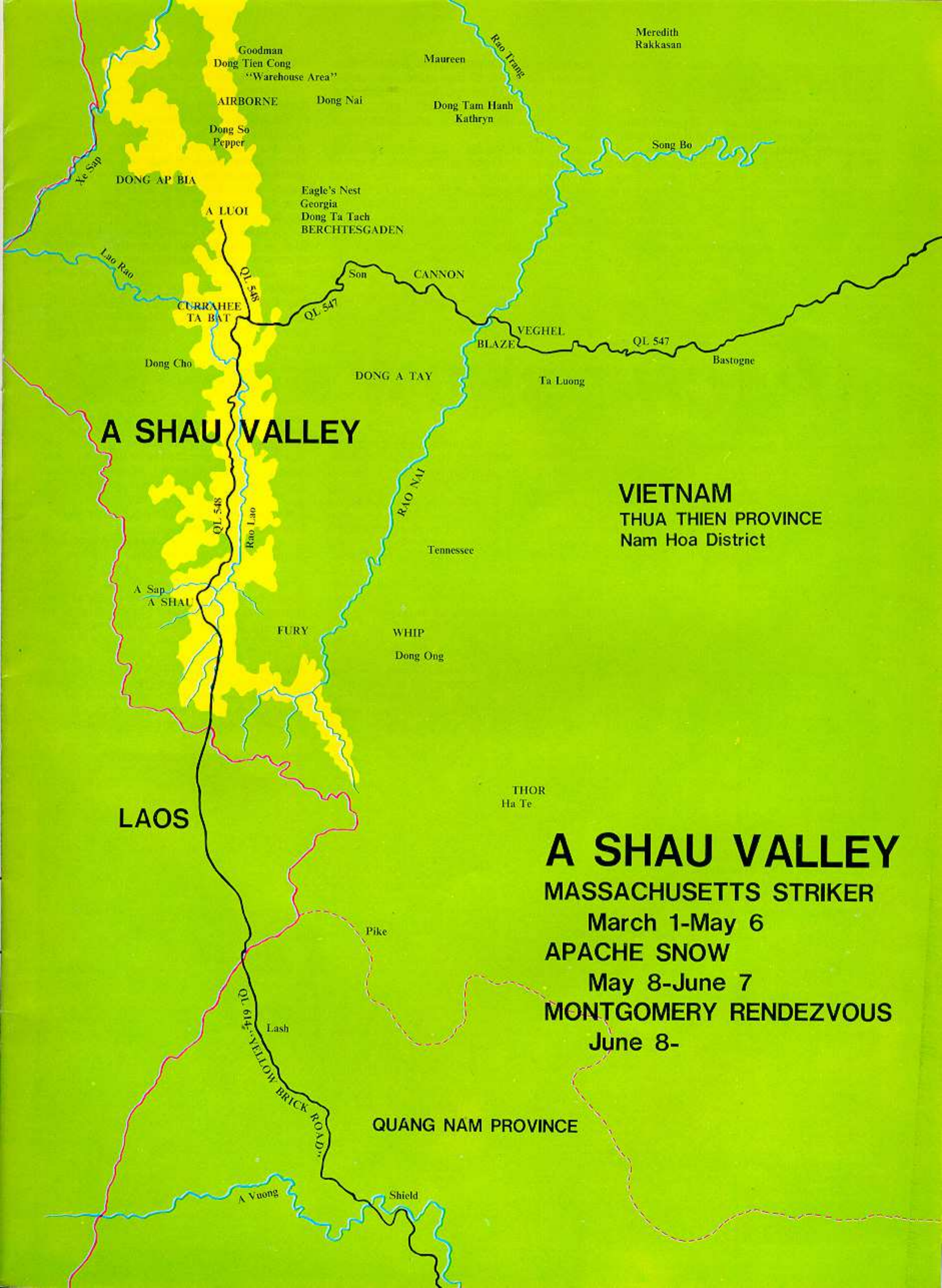
Once the battalions reached the Laotian border they retraced their steps and conducted intensive search operations in their respective areas. In the next several weeks enemy base camps, hospitals, high-speed trails and supply caches were discovered and destroyed or confiscated.

The No Slack paratroopers found several trucks and dozers along a heavy duty road that NVA engineers had been constructing and improving. Lt. Col. Charles W. Dyke, Clinton, Md., the battalion commander found evidence that repair crews had been through the area only five days ahead of his own companies.

Delta Company, 2nd of the 501st, came upon a way-station, hospital complex and drove off what apparently was a caretaker

Hair





Meredith
Rakkasan

Maureen

Goodman
Dong Tien Cong
"Warehouse Area"

AIRBORNE Dong Nai

Dong Tam Hanh
Kathryn

Dong So
Pepper

Song Bo

DONG AP BIA

Eagle's Nest
Georgia
Dong Ta Tach
BERCHTESGADEN

A LUOI

Lao Rao

CURRAHEE
TA BAT

Son CANNON

VEGHEL

Dong Cho

DONG A TAY

BLAZE

QL 547

Bastogne

Ta Luong

A SHAU VALLEY

VIETNAM
THUA THIEN PROVINCE
Nam Hoa District

Tennessee

RAO NAI

A Sap
A SHAU

FURY

WHIP

Dong Ong

LAOS

THOR
Ha Te

A SHAU VALLEY

MASSACHUSETTS STRIKER

March 1-May 6

APACHE SNOW

May 8-June 7

MONTGOMERY RENDEZVOUS

June 8-

Pike

QL 614
YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Lash

QUANG NAM PROVINCE

A Vuong

Shield

STRIKER

platoon. That night, after the company established its night position in the complex, the enemy platoon returned with satchel charges, RPG fire and small arms. The attack was repelled, three sappers dying inside the perimeter.

A few days later the Drive On troopers, following a high-speed trail, found caches that contained 120,000 AK-47 rounds, dozens of rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and mortar rounds. They continued to be harassed by booby traps and snipers and cache security guards.


By this time the 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., commanded by Lt. Col. John E. Rogers, had completed a successful cordon

operation on the plains and joined Mass. Striker. On April 10 they combat-assaulted into Fire Base Thor and the area southeast, spearheading the brigade's move into Quang Nam Province in the direction of Da Nang.

The 1st of the 502nd, after mopping up operations at Dong A Tay, was inserted on April 16 into Fire Base Lash astride the Yellow Brick Road (Route 614). Within four days Spec. 4 Milton Copeland, Hamilton, Ga., discovered possibly the largest electronic equipment and medical supply cache yet found in the war—100 tons. His Charlie Company encountered virtually no resistance as they probed and uncovered 14 trucks, over 600 brand new SKS rifles, Chinese Communist radios and field telephones, large stocks of medicine, large quantities of assorted supplies and equip-

ment and documents indicating the location of another cache.

As the days went on it became obvious that the entire area of the extreme southern A Shau had been abandoned by the NVA, who left the bulk of their equipment and munitions behind in their hasty retreat. The Yellow Brick Road was interdicted and destroyed by the 2nd Brigade, leaving enemy plans for future offensives against Hue and Da Nang extremely hampered if not impossible.

A total of 178 enemy were killed by May 8 when Striker terminated. Tons of munitions and equipment were destroyed or captured. The historically valuable supply and infiltration route of the communist forces was denied to them, leaving no alternate route, so hindering their operations for some time to come. 

APACHE SNOW

BY LT. HARRY OYLER 

During the early morning hours of May 10, anticipation heightened as the 3rd Brigade troopers made ready for their long-awaited invasion of the A Shau Valley. They were going after the enemy where he lived.

The XXIV Corps operation, code-named Apache Snow, was designed to destroy those enemy forces in the steep mountains rising abruptly from the lush A Shau Valley separating I Corps from Laos. There was good reason for a massive strike there.

In mid-January the brigade's intelligence section began receiving the information which would lead to the operation. A prisoner captured by the 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. in January, and another picked up by the 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf., both spoke freely of their activities and traced their routes of infiltration from their A Shau base "warehouse area" into the coastal lowlands of Thua Thien and Quang Nam Provinces. With other intelligence data, this was enough to pinpoint the warehouse and send Air Force fighters screaming in.

In two days of ripping up the landscape, the jets caused 16 secondary explosions while opening up much of the canopy. This allowed forward air controllers (FACs) and recon teams of the 2nd Sqdrn., 17th Cav. to accurately plot numerous bunker and hooch positions.

While Operation Massachusetts Striker continued in the extreme southern portion of the valley, plans were amended to exploit the warehouse area after the Cav made significant contacts and cache discoveries while making a B-52 strike assessment.

The 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. was selected to raid the warehouse and construct a new fire base—named Airborne—on the infiltration route nearby. The final touches were put on the plans for a new thrust into the valley.

By May 9 the 3rd Brigade and elements of the 1st ARVN Division were poised to launch the largest airmobile assault of the Vietnam war. Precise timing and surprise were the main considerations of the operation's success.

Apache Show began with a swift strike into LZs west of the A Shau, next to the Laotian border.

Ten artillery batteries were placed at Fire Bases Bradley, Airborne, Currahee, Berchtesgaden and Cannon only 16 hours before the invasion. Weeks before D-day, in order to confuse the enemy and disguise plans, more than 30 landing zones were "prepped" by the Air Force. Jets dropped "daisy-cutter" bombs designed to detonate above the ground, clearing vegetation without making craters.

H-hour was 7:30 a.m. on May 10. At marshalling points at Fire Base Blaze were gathered quiet groups of men of the 3rd Bn., 187th Inf., the 1st Bn., 506th Inf. and two ARVN battalions. Pilots and door-gunners stood by the 65 Hueys that would take the men into battle. When the time came the troops boarded the helicopters—and Apache Snow was under way.

The choppers crossed the valley in the south and then, using the terrain as a

screen, turned north along the Laotian border to the selected LZs. In the hour before, jets had bombed the landing zones for 50 minutes, artillery had followed with a 15-minute barrage, then came aerial rocket artillery helicopters for a one-minute frosting on the cake.

Covered by Cobra gunships, the lead elements of two battalions were inserted in a 45-minute period, with Cos. B, C and D and the command post of the 1st of the 506th hitting the ground at 8:12. Within minutes the soldiers were pushing from the west—to the enemy's complete surprise.

It was a flawless combat assault. Col. Joseph B. Conmy Jr., Pembina, S. Dak., the 3rd Brigade commander, who was also responsible for coordinating Apache Snow, termed it "an outstanding example of the capabilities of an airmobile division."

"We effected complete surprise on the



enemy by landing behind him, getting in without taking any casualties or losing any choppers," said Conmy.

The allied battalions were to block enemy escape routes into Laos along Highway 922 and to interdict the enemy-built Highway 548, which runs the length of the A Shau. RIF operations would find the enemy and his caches and destroy them.

Enemy resistance was light the first day. "He knew we were in the area," said Maj. Kenneth H. Montgomery, the brigade S-3 (operations) officer, "but he didn't know in what force or exactly where, and thus he was unable to organize any type of counterattack."

For three days Rakkasans of the 3rd of the 187th engaged trail-watchers and then began receiving automatic weapons fire from a hillmass called Dong Ap Bia.

Lt. Col. Weldon F. Honeycutt, Columbus, Ga., maneuvered his companies along ridges leading to the top of the hill in an exploratory assault to determine the strength of the enemy.

That evening the 1st Currahee battalion, under the command of Lt. Col. James Bowers, Springfield, Va., was ordered to reinforce the 187th in taking the hill. Almost immediately the men came under heavy fire from enemy gunners and progress was slow.

For the next three days the combat situation remained static. The NVA units held the hilltop while Screaming Eagles probed and looked for weaknesses. At the same time the hill was bombarded continually with artillery, ARA and air strikes as the Currahee battalion continued to meet resistance in their drive on the hill.

On the 18th, Rakkasans assaulted the enemy stronghold for the second time in an effort to drive him from his well constructed bunker complex. One unit, Delta Company, reported being within 25 meters of the top when a torrential rainstorm struck and forced the paratroopers to move off the hill, which rain turned into a barren mudslide.

Two additional battalions, the 2nd of the 501st and 2nd of the 3rd ARVN, along with A Co., 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf., were ordered to move to the hill, virtually surrounding it, and join the other two battalions for a final assault to secure Hill 937, the highest point on Dong Ap Bia.

At 10 in the morning on the 20th they started up the hill once more and by early afternoon had defeated the enemy and secured the objective, thus ending the 10-day battle and decimating the 29th NVA Regt.

As the battle raged the other three companies of the 2nd of the 506th were helilifted into the warehouse area discovered prior to the start of Apache Snow. Their mission was to locate and destroy an enemy command post complex thought to be in the area, and capture his food and munitions caches.


Co. C quickly discovered both a hospital and the CP complex. More than 10 tons of rice and 75,000 individual and crew-served rounds of ammunition were also captured.

"A North Vietnamese prisoner said he had walked for two days along the valley floor and turned northwest for a few hundred meters to a hospital complex where he received treatment for his

wounds," said Sgt. Alan Austin, Homosassa, Fla., point man for C Co. "He was only about 750 meters off from the location he pointed out to us on the map, and we found the caches and command post in the same area."

The month-long operation accounted for 675 enemy killed, three prisoners, 241

individual and 40 crew-served weapons captured, and more than 100,000 rounds of ammunition discovered.

"This operation," said Conmy, "just proved again that the ultimate weapon is the infantry rifleman. Victory achieved by the heroism of the rifleman going in and digging out the enemy." 

Peterson



A 3rd Brigade trooper walks carefully in the rubble of Dong Ap Bia, in the aftermath of the 10-day battle.

Hansen



ft Photo



VALLEY ACTIVITY

The A Shau Valley from the air looks green and peaceful—but when you get closer you see the enemy-built Route 548 and the artillery and bomb craters that pock the floor. This has been the scene of much activity since March. Most airmobile thrusts into the valley start at a marshalling point near a fire base. Troopers of the 2nd Brigade waited hours at Birmingham (below) for the word go. Once they were on the valley floor (top, right) it was a battle against the undergrowth, fallen trees, sometimes the enemy. At the end of the road, after running contact spread over days and weeks, there was a reward—maybe 600 SKS rifles (left) discovered during Mass. Striker. Apache Snow followed—a short, quick surprise offensive from west of the valley—and then came Montgomery Rendezvous. One big project of this operation was the building of a new airstrip (bottom) near Ta Bat.

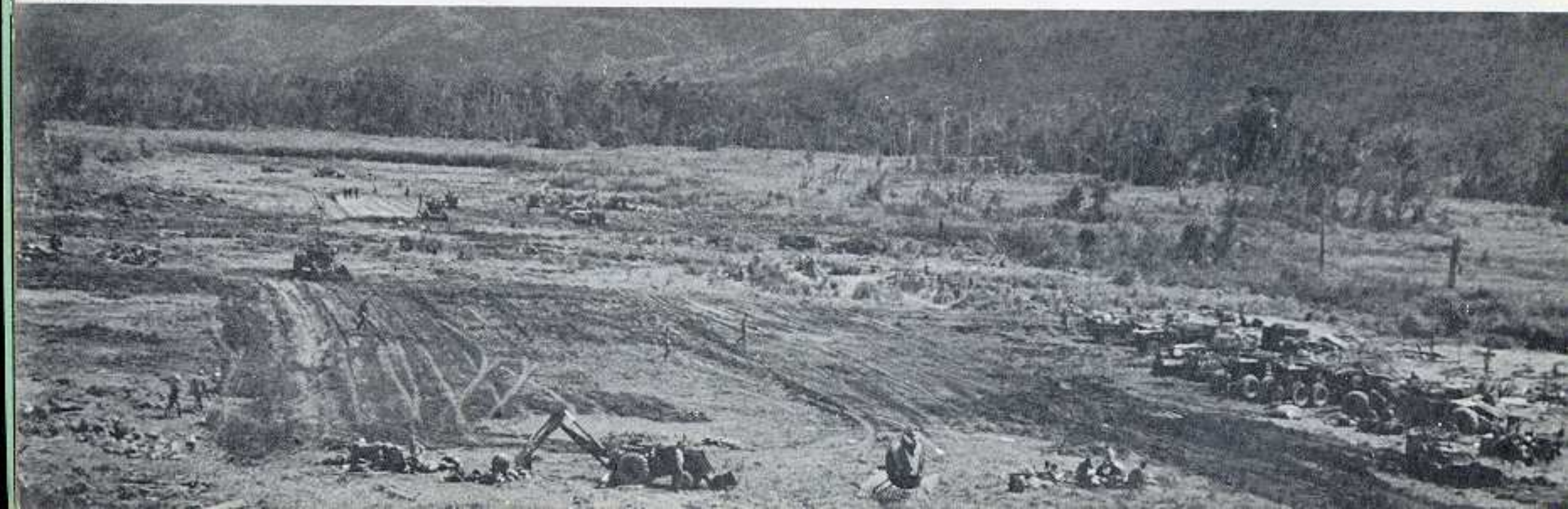
Ranous



Horvath



Magary





3/5 Cav APC moves into the A Shau along new Route 547.

Ranous

MONTGOMERY RENDEZVOUS

BY SPEC. 5 ALAN MAGARY

When Screaming Eagles air-assaulted back into the A Shau Valley June 8, they showed some intention of staying for a long time to be a thorn in the enemy's side. Within two weeks a new airstrip had been built and a new road was complete from the lowlands to the valley floor.

The road and airstrip added new logistical capabilities to the usual airmobile leaps around the valley, the garrisoning of fire bases in critical areas, and the continual reconnaissance-in-force operations.

The construction of the airstrip is the 326th Engr. Bn.'s largest project so far in the war. A company of infantry secured some landing zones near the old French strip at Ta Bat, some engineers were airlifted in and the next day Flying Cranes and Chinooks flew 48 sorties to bring every major piece of engineer equipment together for the first time for one job.

Equipment marshalled for the project ranged from the light-weight mini-dozer to the 15,000-pound D5A bulldozer. For the first few days the dozers floundered in the sticky bog created by the soaked clay found under the covering of elephant grass and topsoil.

Trenches were cut on either side of the strip to allow the water to drain away, parts of the bog were filled in, trees were "blown" and cleared away. Fifty-four working hours later, the strip complete, the first C-7A Caribou, a twin-engined transport, touched down in a cloud of dust.

For several weeks previously, engineers of the 27th Engr. Bn., 18th Engr. Bde. had

been slowly cutting their way from FB Birmingham through the wilderness to create a graded road all the way from Camp Eagle to the A Shau. Most of the road, Route 547, was cut into the sides of steep, jungled hills. The mountainous terrain forced the engineers to build some wide loops and some narrow hairpin turns.

On June 20 the road was initiated momentarily with the entrance into the valley of the first armor in history. A column of 80 tracked vehicles of the 3rd Sqdrn., 5th Cav., 9th Inf. Div. and 7th Cav., 1st ARVN Div. left FB Blaze and Cannon early in the morning. The lead APCs reached the new Ta Bat airstrip seven hours later without incident.

Maj. Gen. John M. Wright Jr., commanding general of the 101st, commented on the importance of the road and airstrip. "We're stronger now in the sense that we have more alternatives available to us to resupply whatever forces we commit out there.

"It's more economical and more efficient to resupply our troops via ground vehicle whenever we can. . . It's also efficient to resupply by fixed-wing aircraft."

Meanwhile, with four Screaming Eagle battalions and two 1st ARVN Div. battalions engaged in sweeps on the eastern approaches of the valley, the enemy reacted to the allied presence with two vicious sapper attacks.

Just after 4 a.m. on June 14 at FB Berchtesgaden, Sfc. Angel M. Rosado, Jacksonville, Fla., was standing outside

the CP of B Co., 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. when he spotted a figure inside the barbed wire perimeter.

"Who are you?" Rosado challenged.


"Quan," the figure replied.

Rosado yelled a warning and rushed the startled NVA, throwing him over the wire and down a 20-foot embankment. With that the battle spread quickly as other sappers infiltrated.

Sgt. Maj. Robert D. Bryson, Houston, Mo., the 3rd Brigade operations sergeant major, killed three sappers while on his way to the brigade TOC, then wounded a fourth. The enemy managed to crawl close enough to the entrance to throw a satchel charge through it. Col. Joseph B. Conmy brigade commander, was wounded in the blast.

Two hours later the battle was over. Thirty-two NVA had been killed, two prisoners captured, and eight RPG launchers and eight AK-47s taken.

The next night FB Currahee, three and a half kilometers away, was attacked by an estimated 200 NVA believed to have come from the 29th Regt., which was decimated the month before on Dong Ap Bia. The attack was repelled by infantrymen of B Co., 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. and two artillery batteries. No enemy managed to breach the perimeter, and the next day 54 enemy dead were found outside the wire.

As of August 5, with Montgomery Rendezvous continuing, a total of 323 enemy had been killed, 39 crew-served weapons and 144 individual weapons captured. 

At the new airstrip in the A Shau, the first Caribou lands in a cloud of dust.

Horvath



ROAMING RANGING AND PROWLING

*By Spec. 4 Kent Johnson
and Spec. 4 Jon Oberg*



Dawn came with a cold whipping rain. There was no sun, the sky merely changed from black to an angry gray and brought a shadowless light to the land. With the light came the assault ships, thirty of them, to land and wait on the LZ Sally airstrip for the weather to break over the mountains. The infantry was there waiting for them, hundreds of men who separated into groups of five to fight their collective boredom until the assault began.

A Pfc., in country less than three months, fumbled in his back pocket and produced an old plastic bag that once held a radio battery but now kept his most precious possessions. From his wallet he pulled a small pocket calendar with a picture of Jesus Christ on the back and crossed off the 11th of March.

This was the third day of waiting. If the overcast lifted enough for the assault, it would still be a tough job inserting the infantry into the deserted Fire Base Veghel.

The job was only going to delay their eventual combat assault onto the floor of the A Shau Valley itself. A Shau—a name to make you wary.

Pilots and door-gunners looked at the mountains with disapproving glances. Nobody liked to fly when up and down and sideways were all the same—gray and cloudy.

A rifleman finished the battered paperback he was reading and passed it on to his buddy. A Superman comic made the rounds and finally disintegrated into a sodden mass in the light drizzle that fell off and on throughout the day.

Finally, late in the afternoon, the radios crackled and the ships began to crank. In three minutes the first hundred-odd men were airborne and heading into the shrouded mountains. The 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. was on its way to war. Goodbye was a last thumbs up from buddies on the ground.

A Spec. 4 in one of the lead choppers nudged the man next to him for a light, and soon the matches had made the rounds. They sat there, not thinking much, just ready and waiting to hit the LZ. They tried not to think about it. Brows showed deep furrows of concentration. Even in helicopters they probed the ghost of the land below for possible movement. The infantryman never stops doing that—he has a built-in scanning device.

The door-gunner gave a two-minute warning and the LZ came into sight. The ship circled twice and plunged to meet the earth. Someone tossed a smoke grenade out and the men jumped and ran for cover, with a whine far different from the helicopters' turbines snapping at their feet, heads, arms. The chopper lifted, thrashing for altitude while holes magically appeared in its fuselage. The blades twisted a red cloud of smoke into swirling patterns.

This LZ was hot. Radios passed the word as RPGs spattered dirt and the scene disintegrated into apparent confusion.

The fight was hard but it seemed short until someone looked at his watch and found that hours had gone by. With that came fatigue.

The fog settled on Veghel and the men moved to mop up and set up a night perimeter. A heavy rain began to fall.

What a hell of a day.

Hell of a day was the next one too. The fog was still there in the morning, letting up only enough to send in the rest of the battalion. Fog has never stopped the



Amid fog and rain the engineers constructed a chain of fire bases up and down the edge of the valley.

infantry and the fire base disappeared behind them as the pursuit of the enemy began. Down ridges and through valleys which were filled with the sound of flowing water they couldn't see.

The eyes of the point man crossed fresh sandal prints and he gave a compulsive jerk, stopping the column in its tracks. Contact would come soon.

A perimeter was set up. Thick fog and drizzle had closed visibility to 10 yards. A squad of old timers moved out to establish contact with the enemy.

It became a world of sounds from the jungle. A twig snapped and the patrol froze. Deadly close, a bolt slammed shut.

With that warning they hit the ground as a heavy machine gun in front of them opened up.

A Pfc. discovered he wasn't fast enough. He ripped the bandage from the front swivel of his rifle and stopped the rush of blood from his leg.

The voice that went back over the radio to the platoon leader was calm. "We can't move without being hit." But the patrol did withdraw and artillery was placed on the machine gun.

Then it started all over again, the struggling up the ridge inch by inch until they reached a place called Dong A Tay.

The enemy was there and he fought.

Some landing zones were in the air—you had to jump to get to the LZ.





Sometimes it's a lonely job, this business of carrying a rifle for Uncle Sam.

Dong A Tay had once been a quiet mountain garden, the green of the jungle reaching for the sun through triple canopy. But incessant bombing turned it into a mass of scorched earth. The smell of cordite, sweat and death drifted through the splintered trees and hit the senses like a closed fist. The fog lifted—now it was smoke that shrouded the hilltop.

To the men on the slope who crouched behind anything they could find to avoid the fire coming down the hill, it was no place to build a summer cottage, although the price being paid for real estate there was high, on both sides.

The battalion was pulled back to evacuate the casualties, and then the ground shuddered with air strikes and artillery called in to smash the bunkers and tunnels protecting Charlie.

Nobody could have survived the pounding. But the enemy did. The men moved back up the hill, only to be forced back down by the intense fire that started as soon as the rain of bombs stopped. By nightfall a few more yards had been gained.

An unfriendly sun dried the mud at Fire Base Birmingham to dust in one day and the whirling rotors on the long line of slicks threw it out in a continual sandblast. But the choppers did make a breeze—that was something to combat the oppressive heat.

Again the men had to wait, but not so long this time. The word came: Go. The line of ships left and disappeared west. The 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. was gone, and Birmingham was deserted again.

This LZ was in a valley. The Hueys slid down and touched their skids lightly in the elephant grass and bomb craters while the paratroopers tumbled off them. Rucksacks were a million pounds heavier, so it seemed.

Everybody got organized, the two company commanders shook hands and the troops moved out. No one knew what to expect. The terrain was different, low hills and thick undergrowth. There wasn't much

shade and in five minutes everyone was soaked with sweat.

The movement was to high ground for a night position. There was a trail to cross on the way. The company moved past more bomb craters and down a creek and then stopped for want of a direction to move. Maybe a man in a tree could see which way to go. That was tried after patrols found the trail that was supposed to be crossed. The man in the tree spotted the high ground marked on the map.

For the height indicated on the map, the hill seemed awfully steep. It was just as overgrown as the rest of the place. It took half an hour to clear a three-man position and get the foxhole started. The network of roots made digging a frustrating job. Each shovelful of soil wanted to stay in the hole and there were an endless number of roots to cut. Dirt flew and put a layer of grime on skin and clothing.

After the holes were dug and the ponchos rigged, the failing light gave a last chance for hot rations. First find the heat tabs. You can turn a C-ration can into a "numbah one" stove but you have to make the holes in it big or the gas from the heat tabs backs up, making your eyes water and creating a horrible stink. A spaghetti "lurp" ration with some bootlegged hot sauce puts an end to your hunger pangs. And some hot cocoa finishes up the day in the best way.

When the fires of the sun had left there was only darkness and an occasional star seen through the canopy. The bugs came out in force. The bugs and the enemy are the only things that really live out there.

Somebody always remarked how a situation always reminded them of a movie—a strange reversal of reality. Just like the World War II movies set in Burma or someplace, strange night birds made

If you didn't like dry land, you could always walk in the water—but very often you had to.

their rounds in the trees, letting out with nerve shattering screams. Crickets added their grating. (During the day the only things missing are drums in the background during a firefight and the eerie notes of Oriental percussion as a line of soldiers moves along a ridge.)

With the shrieking of birds there was the soft rustling of brush as the men on the perimeter shifted silently to relieve their cramped muscles.

The level of mind just below consciousness rambled through old memories to keep the body, dead tired with fatigue, from sleep. The girls they knew and the Saturday nights at the drive-in burger joints were as clear in their minds as though the last cheeseburger had been eaten an hour before. And the hum of the jungle became the muted roar of the crowd at the high school football games.

So it went until dawn, the memories that keep coming back night after night. What they did before and what they hoped and dreamed of doing when they went home. Each man lives his homecoming a thousand times before he really sees it.

Somehow the night went by without incident. After a hot meal of Charlie ration chicken stew or beans and franks, the holes were filled in and the day started. The day's move had only progressed 200 meters when an explosion broke the silence. A medic charged to the front of the column. Word was passed back: Mines.



This was all they needed. "I like to see what I'm fighting," somebody said. The incident put them all on edge. Each step became a risk and all eyes were on the ground as the column moved up the hill.

Day after day they moved, harrassed by snipers and booby traps but never encountering a large force of enemy. All the signs said, "Gone to Laos," and the hills were empty except for enemy calling cards and abandoned equipment. Morale ebbed—there was no one here to fight.

One afternoon the old man led the selected night position to a nearby knoll where they rested and sent out patrols. When darkness came the company moved back to the chosen position. About an hour later the enemy troops, fooled by the fact that the Americans had spent the afternoon on the knoll, hit the deserted position with grenades and small arms fire. Everyone laughed, knowing that Charlie was going to be disappointed.

●
Dong A Tay was tying up 700-odd men of the 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. Their CA to the A Shau Valley floor was put off.

●
Near the coast the men of the 2nd Bn., 327th Inf. did not have a chance to glow with the brilliant success of the cordon they had just completed on Highway 1. The orders were: No Slack to conduct a



Every now and then you got mail, Madison Avenue's dreams caught up with you, and the days become X's on your calendar.

combat assault in the A Shau the next morning.

It was another runway and another delay. The ships came into Birmingham and shut down. Twice the men boarded and the

engines were turned over. On the third try there was relief of actually getting started.

Then somebody said, "You know they've got the LZ zeroed in. As soon as we touch down it's going to fly." Then the butterflies in the stomach began and a new kind of waiting worked on the nerves. The mystique of the A Shau was powerful—it could grab at your heart. But you can't let it scare you. There was nothing to do but grit your teeth and throw yourself into it. Especially if you've been in the A Shau before—May or August of last year.

The flight seemed short. The escort Cobras got busy doing their thing. Now smiles and thumbs up were there to show the spirit that sustained and the confidence in their buddies that quelled the crippling fear somewhere inside.

The airstrip at A Shau, overrun years ago, was now the LZ. It would be taken back. Touchdown, the men jumped from the choppers. Thoughts disappeared, instinct took over. Explosions tried to shatter eardrums. They ran from the airstrip and plunged into the elephant grass. It was a longer jump than they thought. The ground came up and pushed knees into chests. There was no time for pain, everyone was moving out.

But where were the mortars, the artillery? Where was the enemy?

There was nothing. The roar of the slicks faded and then they could hear the sweat dripping off their chins. It was so quiet. There was no war here.

The minutes passed and still there was nothing. The men emerged and there were some smiles. Somebody looked at one of the 20-foot bomb craters that were everywhere. "Hey, sure hope we don't run into any of them elephants. Just look at those footprints."

The battalion split up, with two companies moving south along the high ground. They were bound to hit something. The third headed south after sweeping around the airstrip. They saw the bones of rusting aircraft that lay close by. On the pock-marked airstrip and over the twisted, dented metal the grass slipped slipped silently to reclaim its own.

The column snaked through the grass that towered overhead. It was a bug's-eye-



Lovelace

view of the front lawn. A mine was spotted by the front of the column and word went to the rear in whispers. It was too quiet.

Crack.

There was a dull thud as the ground rose up to meet a falling man. Before he hit, the point platoon was responding with rifles and grenades. A medic charged to the front. The platoon leader had been hit. The old man moved up and got the show rolling. "Lay down a base of fire, we'll flank 'em," he said. "Move out when I tell you and head for that barn over there."

Two squads opened up with everything. The senses reeled as grenades rattled old fillings and rifle fire sliced through eardrums. Now . . . move.

Go.

The tracers arced away from the machine gun.

In half an hour it was quiet again. Two enemy trail watchers were dead. One damn good lieutenant was hit in the stomach, worst of all, the weather had closed in, so there was no way to medevac him. "Take it easy, we'll get you out of here." And seven hours later, at one in the morning, a light colonel and his pilot defied the clouds and darkness, came in and saved the lieutenant's life.

The days went on. The No Slack men weren't cutting the NVA any slack at all, and he had no choice but to run. And while there was evidence that the enemy was undeniably there, and recently, he did not bother to hang around and fight much. So they followed close on his heels and destroyed or captured everything he left behind. The days piled up against each other. They searched when it was light and waited for the attack at night, because the enemy likes to come out and fight at night.

When the late night stillness was broken

by the sounds of movement below, the men from one of the 2nd Bn., 501st Inf.'s companies picked up claymore detonators and their fingers tightened on triggers. But the sounds kept their distance.

"Sounds like a party down there," said a man who had come awake with the speed that only the closeness to death can cause.

Down the hill the sounds continued as people stumbled down the hill and equipment clattered.

"They're trying to make off with something," the CO said. "Fire 'em up."

The noise was silenced when the rifles and grenade launchers were fired. But when the firing stopped the noise started up again. Somebody down there really wanted to get away with something.

The next morning showed what. They found the first large cache of the operation. It was a relief to find something besides fog and silence. Laughter and joking came for the first time in days.

On Dong A Tay there was no laughter. There was only a slight sense of relief, relief of a different kind. The men of the 1st Bn., 502nd Inf. moved up the hill that the enemy had finally abandoned. On the hill they had fought so hard to gain was evidence of hell itself. The hill had been shattered, and death was everywhere, on the slopes, on the trail, in the splintered trees, in the broken bunkers.

They mopped up and moved on, fighting as they went. But the fighting was different. An element of desperation now marked the way Charlie held to his position, then eventually ran. It was as though he was trying to hold back the men who were pursuing him relentlessly while his main forces withdrew.

There was no desperation on the faces of the American infantry, only determina-

tion and sweat that stung when it ran down their foreheads and into the corners of their eyes.

With the pursuit slowly stringing out until it became fruitless, the time to leave had come. In open-doored helicopters that carried them above the heat of the jungle, they moved south, around a bend in the Laos-Vietnam border, and landed under a bright sun on a dirt road that shouldn't have been there. Route 614—the "Yellow Brick Road" they called it, and then set off in search of the land of Oz.

Their senses were still at a peak from the fighting to the north and nothing in this green world could escape their eyes. So it was only a matter of time before the road gave up its treasure. At first there was nothing but trucks. Then Milton Copeland of Hamilton, Ga., decided to turn over a few shovels of dirt and in one thrilling moment came up with a waterproof package. Then everybody was digging and the stuff—100 tons of it—just kept turning up.

And everybody, it seemed, had to come to see the cache. They landed their helicopters on the gravel bar at a bend in the river and walked down the Yellow Brick Road to the infantryman's Oz that lay in a cool stream bed under the green roof.

The operation was over. With rucksacks almost empty the infantry flew back to the coastal plains for the next operation and the next.

A Pfc., in country almost six months now, pulled a plastic bag from his hip pocket. As the bag threatened to below out of the chopper, he got out his wallet and plastic calendar with a picture of Jesus Christ on the back. A dcor-gunner loaned him a pen and he scratched out each of the days of the months. He had had other things on his mind.

This was the treasure found on the Yellow Brick Road.



March 1—Operation Kentucky Jumper, succeeding Nevada Eagle, begins. A 2nd Brigade thrust into the A Shau Valley, Massachusetts Striker, also begins, but is hindered by bad weather.

March 12—The strike is underway as the 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. combat assaults to the edge of the valley.

March 22—The 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. conducts a CA to the floor of the A Shau.

March 28—The No Slack 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. receives the Presidential Unit Citation for Operations Deckhouse II-Nathan Hale, June 19-22, 1966.

April 20—C Co., 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. uncovers a massive enemy cache on the Yellow Brick Road (Highway 614) in northern Quang Nam Province at the end of the A Shau. Included in the 100-ton find are 632 new SKS rifles, 13 trucks, more than 300 rockets and nearly 500 mortar rounds, and numerous items of signal equipment, including 40 field telephones, 13 switchboards and 27 radios. It takes nearly a week to airlift the entire cache to Camp Eagle.

April 24—On behalf of the division, Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais receives the Revolutionary Development Medal from the Government of Vietnam.

May 1—Eagle Beach is dedicated as the Division rest site as DCo., 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. moves in for a stand-down.

May 8—Massachusetts Striker ends after nine weeks. Scoreboard: 178 enemy killed, 859 individual and 34 crew-served weapons captured, and huge amounts of ammunition, signal and medical equipment and food confiscated.

May 10—Operation Apache Snow, a XXIV Corps operation, begins with a massive air assault of troops. Sixty-five helicopters lift two Screaming Eagle battalions to two landing zones near the Laotian border within 45 minutes; the rest of the units are in place within four and a half hours. The 3rd Bn., 187th Inf. makes initial contact with trailwatchers near Dong Ap Bia.

May 10-20—The Rakkasans wage a fierce battle to wrest control of Dong Ap Bia (Hill 937) from the 29th NVA Regt. On the last day they are joined by the 1st Bn., 506th Inf., 2nd Bn., 501st Inf., 2nd Bn., 3rd ARVN Regt. and a company of the 2nd Bn., 506th Inf.

May 12—Redlegs and troopers of the 2nd Bn., 501st Inf. fend off a vicious attack on Fire Base Airborne, a Screaming Eagle outpost built in the enemy's A Shau "warehouse area." Thirty-one enemy die—and Airborne remains alive as an irritating roadblock for the enemy. During the Dong Ap Bia fight the 2nd Currahee

SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY



Oberg

battalion exploits the warehouse.

June 6—In their biggest single mission of the war, the 326th Engr. Bn. begins construction of a 1,500-foot airstrip on the floor of the A Shau Valley north of Ta Bat. Almost 50 Hook and Crane sorties are flown as heavy equipment is moved to the valley from FB Blaze.

June 7—Apache Show ends with Screaming Eagles credited with 675 enemy kills. Paratroopers took three prisoners and captured 241 individual weapons, 40 crew-served weapons and more than 100,000 rounds of ammo. The troopers destroyed 1,200 bunkers and 240 other structures and seized almost 35,000 pounds of rice and other grain.


June 8—Operation Montgomery Rendezvous begins with the 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. combat assaulting onto the eastern slopes of the A Shau, joining the 2nd Currahee battalion already in place. Also included in the operation are three battalions of the 1st ARVN Division, the 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. and 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf.

June 13—The 326th Engineers complete the pioneer airstrip in the valley and the first C7A Caribou lands. The engineers expended 54 hours of working time on the project. Meanwhile, the 27th Engr. Bn., 45th Grp. cuts final section of Route 547, a 43-mile road leading from the coast to the A Shau.

June 14—Just before dawn an estimated 60 NVA sappers attack FB Berchtesgaden, atop a 2,000-foot mountain. They penetrate the perimeter, wounding 3rd Brigade commander Col. Joseph B. Conmy, but are repulsed. With first light, 32 dead NVA are discovered. The 3rd Brigade Forward was defended by B Co., 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. and artillerymen from batteries of the 2nd Bn., 319th Arty. and 2nd Bn., 11th Arty.

June 15—Still angry over the continued American presence in the A Shau, the NVA sends 200 sappers against the perimeter of FB Currahee. Screaming Eagles of B Co., 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. and two artillery batteries thwart the attack and prevent the perimeter from being breached, killing 54 enemy and capturing three in the four-hour battle. The remaining NVA withdraw under a barrage of rocket and RPG fire.


June 19—Early in the morning Fire Base Tomahawk, northwest of Phu Loc, receives 150 rounds of mortar fire and then a ground attack. Seven enemy are killed, one crew-served and three individual weapons captured.

June 20—Eighty armored personnel carriers and other tracked vehicles of the 3rd Sqdrn., 5th Armd. Cav. rumble into the A Shau Valley along the newly graded Highway 547, marking the first appearance of armor in the valley in history. 

May 15—The 1st Brigade learns at 12:30 in the morning that it will move with two combat battalions and support elements to the Chu Lai-Tam Ky area to support the Americal Division. The operation is dubbed Lamar Plain. Only 38 hours after the alert, troops of the 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. combat assault deep into enemy territory near Tam Ky. Also airlifted south with the speed of an eagle were the 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., two batteries of the 2nd Bn., 320th Arty. and a battery of the 4th Bn., 77th ARA Arty, a company of engineers, and elements of the 2nd Sqdrn., 17th Cav. and two assault helicopter battalions. Almost immediately after the Geronimos' CA, they began uncovering NVA base camps more than six

months old, with beds slept in only the night before.

In the first week, Screaming Eagles killed 90 enemy. By June 11 the total was raised to 222 and by the first of July to 313. With Lamar Plain continuing, a total of 481 enemy had been killed, 247 individual and 26 crew-served weapons captured and 19 prisoners taken, as of Aug. 5.

In the operation the 1st Brigade relived part of its history, for it was fighting not far from where the brigade won the battle of Duc Pho in late 1967. Twice in its previous history the Always First brigade had been attached to Task Force Oregon, which was later redesignated the Americal Division, and fought for several months in the Chu Lai area. 

Hansen

Hansen

Horvat



Ducy



Quidley





Quidley



As the morning wind stirs and brings the assembled banners to life, Maj. Gen. John M. Wright Jr. ("Silver Eagle") accepts the unit colors from Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, commanding general of MACV, and the 101st Airborne Division has a new commander.

Not many miles away the wind is man-made, thrust from the whirling rotors of helicopters bringing Screaming Eagles streaking from the sky in a combat assault.

Minutes later, as the last Huey skims toward the horizon, the troopers have already blended into the jungle and the elephant grass.

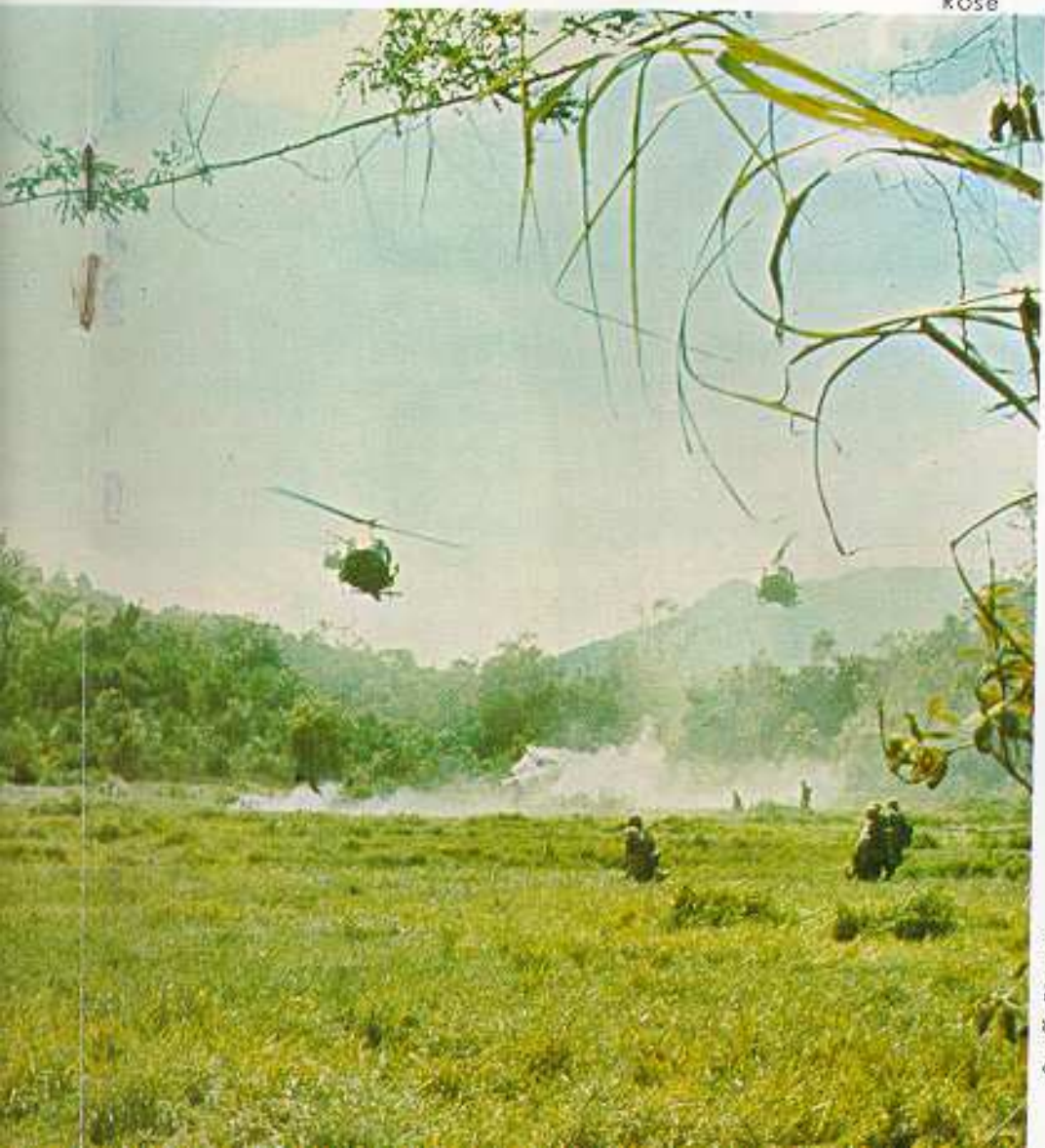
The cawing of birds and babbling of monkeys is cut by the stutter of an enemy machine gun. A mile away the command radio crackles, a shell is rammed in to the breach of a big gun, and it arcs away toward the enemy. Purple smoke curls up in the breeze, marking friendly positions for the Cobras that circle above, waiting to loose their violence.

Back on the helipad at Camp Eagle the ceremony is over, the band members have marched off.

The troops continue their slow pace down a mountain trail. At a fire base the redlegs decide to raise Old Glory.

May 25—another day of ceremony and combat, a day of contrasts, seen in sharp focus by Eagle Eyes.

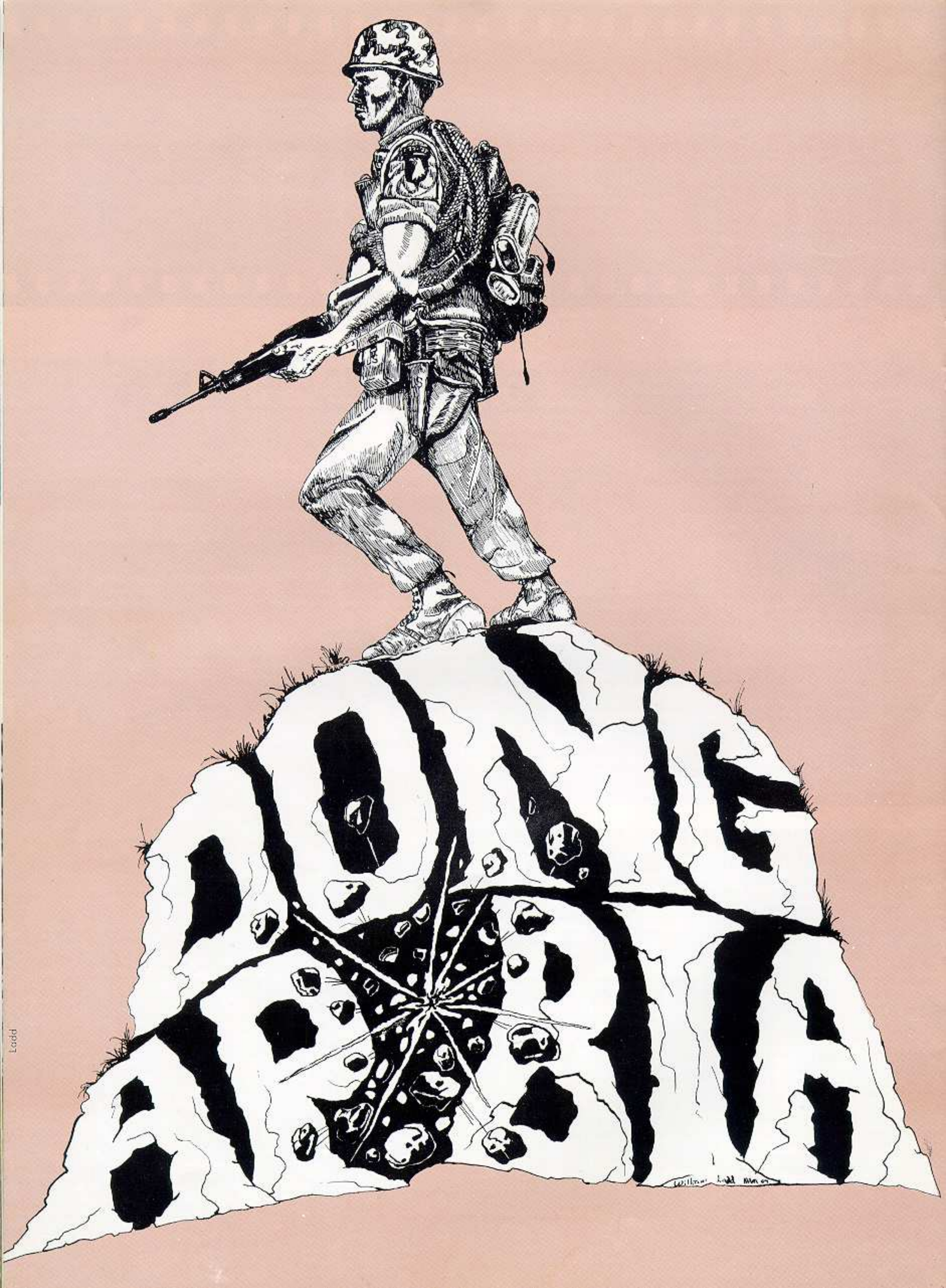
Rose



Staff Photo

EAGLE 'EYES'





Ladd

William Ladd 1968

BY SPEC 5 ROBERT BORDERS

The rain and sweat-soaked paratroopers struggle up the slope. Swept clear of vegetation by the withering artillery fire and muddied by the rain, the denuded earth becomes a slippery mud-slide. The men struggle forward and then slip back. Dong Ap Bia itself, as well as the NVA, seems against them.

A few days earlier, this Hill 937 had been little more than a few brown contour lines on a map: meaningless. But now the ridges and depressions of Dong Ap Bia became a dark, silent enemy as troops of the 3rd Brigade inched their way upward.

In those few days, the impersonal lines had been translated into very personal realities for those who fought and died there. Almost every man has had friends killed or wounded under the merciless fire of the NVA who are so securely sheltered in the bowels of the mountain. For the enemy, the mountain is friend. The heavily jungled ridges leading to the southwest and northeast form superb highways for concealed infiltration. And just two miles away lies the shelter of the Laotian border: sanctuary.

Below the slopes lay the suspected routes of infiltration for NVA troops and supplies. For the enemy the mountain is too valuable to lose. The 29th NVA Regt., fresh from marshalling in North Vietnam, established a base camp here in April. They are well armed with new Russian AK-47 assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and light and heavy machine guns. The stage is set.

When this scene began to take shape, the men of the 3rd Brigade knew nothing of the NVA on Dong Ap Bia. Screaming Eagles were sweeping the hills west of the A Shau Valley floor in Operation Apache Snow; this mountain lay in their path. As Spec. 4 Phillip Trollinger, of Greensboro, N.C., a rifleman with B Co., 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. put it, to them it was "just another hill."

But as the troops approached the mountain, sweeping eastward from the Laotian border, they began to receive the harassment of sniper fire. For three days, as they neared Dong Ap Bia, the sniping increased, soon to be replaced with more concentrated automatic weapons fire. Gradually the enemy made himself known. Artillery and tactical air strikes were called in and the top of the mountain rocked and belched fire and debris at each impact. And then there was a night of waiting.

The next morning, Lt. Col. Weldon Honeycutt, Columbus, Ga., commander of the Rakkasans, maneuvered his companies along the fingerlike ridges leading to the top of the hill, probing the enemy's strength.

"When we first started to assault the hill, we were in pretty heavy vegetation going up the trail," said Spec. 4 Robert M. Rocklen of West Haven, Conn., a radio-telephone operator with D Co., "but all of a sudden that thinned out to absolutely nothing because of the artillery and air strikes.

"It looked like there was about 100 meters of open area with little or no cover. Other than two two large bomb craters, there was nothing we could use for cover,



Dong Ap Bia might have been in the Sierra foothills—but it wasn't—and pretty soon it didn't look this, either.

and we had grenades and RPGs coming down at us."

So now they hung, tenuously clinging to the muddy hillside, riddled by enemy fire. Two squads of B Co. make it to the top briefly but are unable to hold their prize. There will be no more advance today. They fall back and call for support. Again, Cobra gunships and artillery rake the mountain top, pulverizing the very bedrock of the hill itself.

On the next day the 187th tries to maneuver and better its position. This fails. The enemy, deeply entrenched in bunkers and spider holes, lays down withering small arms, RPG, rocket and mortar fire.

"The fire was coming from a bunker complex, and although it was really intense fire, we didn't pull back," Pfc. Anthony Bresina, Chippewa Falls, Wis., a rifleman with B Co., said later. "Instead, they brought up another platoon. When they saw it was no use, we picked up our wounded and pulled back. The whole firefight lasted maybe 45 minutes."

For the next three days, the situation changed little. Allied units probed the NVA positions, found the location of bunkers, and called in air strikes and artillery. They sought weaknesses in the enemy's

defenses. They waited for the pounding to soften the NVA.

On the morning of the 14th, Cos. B, C, and D make a concentrated, three-pronged thrust at the enemy positions on a lower ridgeline. As the troopers fight their way forward, artillery, gunships and TAC air support lay down covering fire. Explosions rock the mountain and debris showers down on the advancing paratroopers. Under this pressure, the NVA fall back and Rakkasans sweep over the crest.

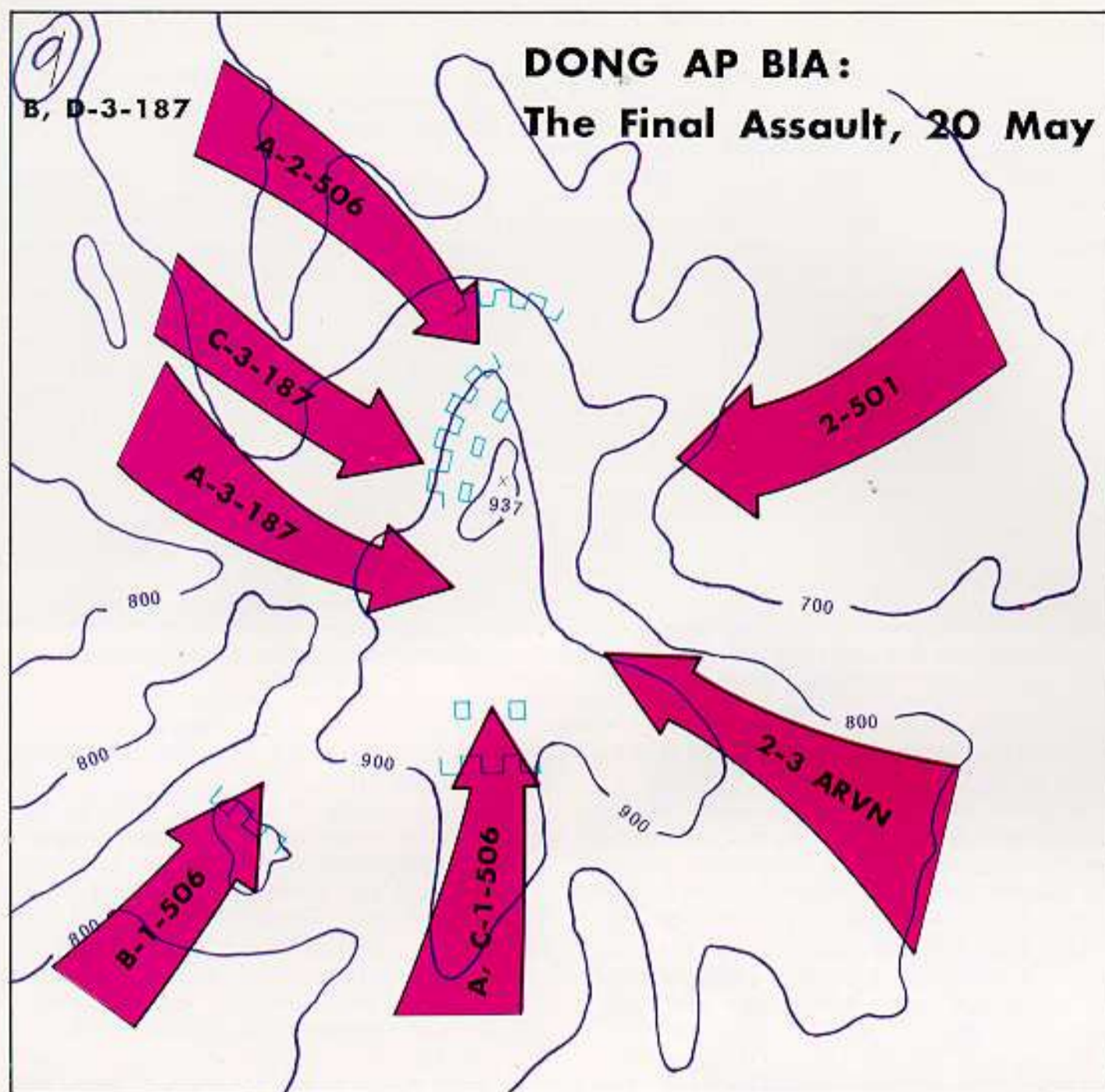
During the next day troopers attempt to drive further up the mountain but face even greater resistance than the day before. The air is laced with flashing green and blue streaks of NVA tracers and the smell of cordite hangs over the hillside. The troopers are faced with concentric rows of solidly built, well concealed bunkers around the hillmass. The bunkers dominate avenues of approach up the mountain.

In the evening the 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf., under the command of Lt. Col. James Bowers, Springfield, Va., is ordered to reinforce the Rakkasans. Three kilometers from the hill, the battalion comes under heavy fire and progress is slow.

For the next three days the situation remains frustratingly static. The Rakkasans

After the final assault on May 20 it became a methodical search for crushed enemy bunkers, pockets of resistance.





maneuver around the hill base while 1st Battalion Currahees move to link up. Meanwhile, artillery, aerial rocket artillery, and air strikes are repeatedly called down on the enemy positions. Before this battle is over, more than 1,000 tons of bombs and 16,000 rounds of artillery smash into Hill 937. The actual height of the mountain is lowered several feet and the landscape takes on an eerie, unearthly aspect. What vegetation remains is twisted and burned. The mountain reeks of death.

On the 18th, three companies of the Currahees begin closing on the southern base of the hill, and the 187th takes up positions northwest of Hill 937. A Co., 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. is alerted and deploys to a staging area to be available to move at a moment's notice if required.

The following morning, as artillery and TAC air continue to pepper the hilltop, the 2nd Bn., 501st Inf. and the 2nd Bn., 3rd ARVN Regt. are alerted to prepare for a final sweep of the enemy positions surrounding the ridgeline.

Late in the morning of May 20th, four battalions execute a coordinated assault on Dong Ap Bia. Amid the thunder of supporting fire and the rattle of small arms, the Rakkasans, with A Co., 2nd of the 506th attached, assault the hill from the north; the 1st Currahee battalion attacks from the south and southwest; the ARVN battalion from the southeast; and the Geronimos from the northeast.

By early afternoon, the once determined enemy resistance disintegrates as allied forces overrun enemy positions and all objectives are taken. On the hill the Screaming Eagles find evidence of the enemy's determination: shirts with sewn-on commands, "Kill Americans, kill Vietnamese," and "Stay and fight and don't run."

Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, then command-

ing general of the Division, tells newsmen, "It was a tremendous, gallant victory by a bunch of gummy guys."

After the capture of the hill, allied forces sweep over the area to check the enemy base camp in detail. The 1st of the 506th secures the abandoned enemy positions, killing 46 enemy in the mopping-up on May 21, while the Geronimos and the ARVN battalion conduct recon-in-force operations to the east and west.


But the battle for Dong Ap Bia is over. After 10 days of bitter fighting, the 3rd of the 187th, the unit which bore the brunt of the struggle, is airlifted to Eagle Beach.

For the enemy, the battle for Dong Ap Bia was almost unbelievably costly. A prisoner captured during the last part of the assault revealed that 80 percent of the men in units in his area were casualties.

Most of the 2,009 bunkers and structures destroyed during Operation Apache Show, which ended twenty days later, were destroyed in the struggle for the hill.

In the battle, 62 Americans had been killed and 420 had been wounded. But although the cost had been high, Maj. Gen. John M. Wright Jr., commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division believes the victory a significant one.

"I've been asked whether the A Shau is the key to the war in the entire I Corps area," Gen. Wright said. "I can't say for certain yet, but I do know it is astride key avenues of approach that have been traditionally used by the enemy."

"We have beaten them decisively once, and we will continue to engage them whenever they come into that area, because as long as they stay in that area and use it as a base against our units and for operations into the province, they constitute a very serious threat." 



How important is a road in Vietnam?

Just about as important as arteries and veins are to a person.

Vietnam's dense jungle, high mountain chains and marshy lowlands have caused almost insurmountable barriers for the American soldier. The U.S. Army has reacted and eventually bridged nature's obstacles, and has benefited from mistakes as well as solutions.

In the air, helicopters hover above the jungle floor, pulling the wounded to safety. Choppers put troops where Charlie is.

On the water, floating bridges or "monster boats" or a unit like the Army-Navy Mobile Riverine Force have eliminated problems.

Roads, however, are still of basic importance to a combat army.

Near the Laotian border in the rugged A Shau Valley, a point man hacks his way through elephant grass. An engineer and his bulldozer are close behind him. Having completed Highway 547 from the lowlands into the A Shau, the engineers are now grading Route 548 running the length of the valley.

Up and down these paths in the wilderness flow life-sustaining supplies, vehicles and, most important of all, soldiers. Shortly after Highway 547 was completed, the first armor rumbled down the road and into the valley for the first time in history.

The most important road in Vietnam is Highway 1, threading its way from Saigon to Dong Ha, just below the DMZ, through the operational areas of many military commands. Each has a responsibility to keep communication and transportation lines open. In Thua Thien Province, perhaps more than in other areas, this link of roadway that stretches from Quang Tri in the north to Da Nang in the south must be kept open. The primary city on the highway—Hue—must be kept safe.

What can happen when this is not done occurred in early 1968. In late January, during the enemy's Tet Offensive, Hue—often called the heart city of Vietnam—was seized and isolated from the world by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army. The showcase of Vietnamese and Oriental art and architecture had for centuries been protected from the ravages of war.

For 22 days in February 1968, the enemy held the city and the allies struggled to recapture it. Traffic along QL 1 (QL stands for Quoc-lo, "highway") slowed to a trickle as the countryside burst into flames.

Without the highway, the body was crippled.

Elements of the Screaming Eagle 2nd Brigade joined the Marines and 1st Cavalry Division in the fight to regain control of Hue. When the smoke cleared 22 days later, the enemy had been driven out of Hue and pushed back into the mountains.

The job was far from completed, however. The enemy maintained base camps on the coastal plains around the city. Paddy dikes and villages were found to be fortified. Many villages were controlled by the enemy infrastructure. Highway travel was never safe.

After the battle the 1st Brigade and



Division Headquarters were airlifted north to operate in an AO around Hue, with Camp Eagle established March 8, 1968. The 2nd Brigade shifted south from operations in Quang Tri Province. In September the 3rd Brigade, which had been operating in III Corps, changed places with the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne. Also that fall the 1st Cav was moved to the Saigon area.

The 101st that spring was given a broad mission: protect Hue, protect the populated coastal plains, protect the rice harvest while depriving the enemy of food, keep Charlie out, protect Highway 1. It might be said that if the Screaming Eagles could secure Highway 1, the rest of the job was simple, and the paratroopers of the 101st could pursue the enemy to his mountain base areas, to the A Shau Valley.

Combat from the spring of 1968 through the rest of the year was largely oriented around Highway 1. The enemy was bloodied and battered during Operations Carentan I and II and the beginning of Nevada Eagle, then the action shifted westward.

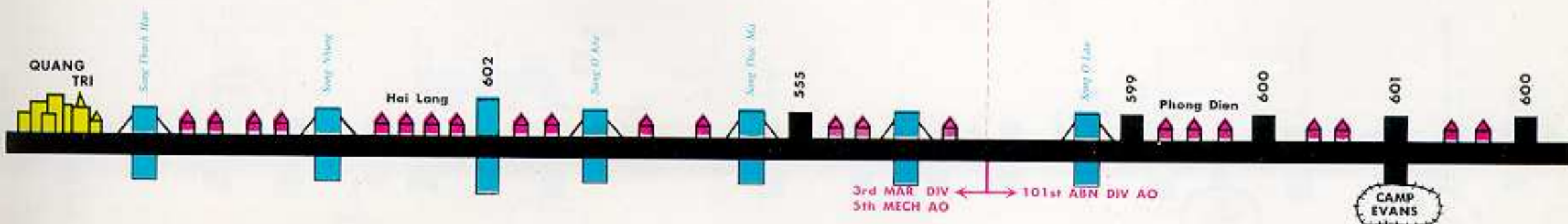
Travel along the highway was still not without perils through the fall as Screaming Eagles stalked the enemy and cut off infiltration to the lowlands.

Units of the 1st Brigade became responsible for a long stretch of the highway

from Hue to Da Nang. As the road became more secure, so did the strand of narrow-gauge track of Vietnam's coastal railroad, which runs parallel to QL 1.

That the area is much more secure is indicated by an important event in February 1969: a locomotive and coaches built by the French in 1920 left Hue station for Da Nang for the first time in years—and it arrived safely. The passengers on the now weekly run between the two cities can look out the windows and see the now heavy traffic moving on QL 1: Vietnamese on bicycles and Honda motorcycles, "Quang Tri Quangai" vans, Lambretta taxis filled to overflowing, produce trucks, people walking, military convoys, engineer equipment.

Beginning in the spring of 1968, the 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. conducted cordon and sweep operations and saturation patrols along the highway, after securing what was then the 1st Brigade Forward headquarters at Fire Base Anzio, about a mile off the highway. The 1st and 2nd Bns., 327th Abn. Inf., which had been operating in the canopy west of Hue, joined the search. Above the Rest troops set up a forward base at FB Old Hickory, close to Phu Loc, while the No Slack paratroopers carved their headquarters out of a hilltop just north of Lang Co bridge, naming it Los



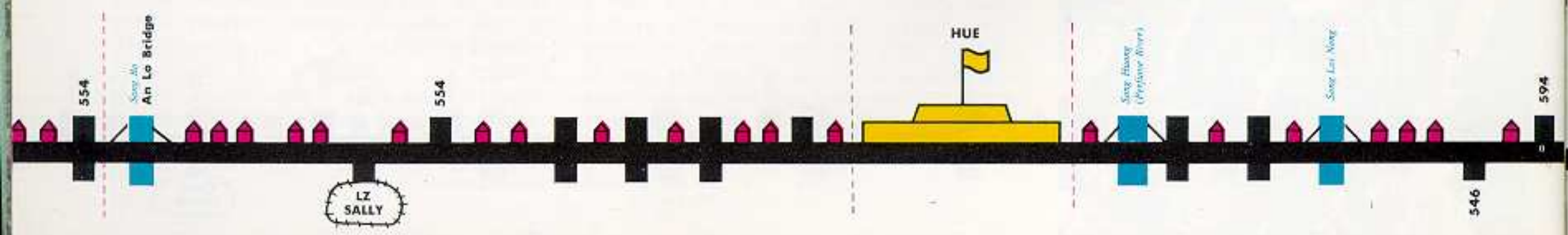


HUE



GLORIES OF A PAST AGE

Photos by Spec. 4 Stephen Hansen





Above, traffic on QL 1 passes over the Perfume River outside Hue. Right, motorcycles buzz up and down the road.

Banos. Fire Bases Greer, Roy and Tomahawk were also established on or near QL 1.

While U.S. Marine Combined Action Platoons (CAP teams) and Regional Forces under the direction of MACV advisors secured the 58 hamlets and eight bridges along the highway, Screaming Eagles threw themselves into the task of shutting off the lowlands to the enemy.

Arms and rice caches were confiscated in periodic raids into Charlie's foodlocker and armory. Villages which previously had cooperated with the VC were encircled and squeezed until the VC popped out. In the Phu Loc cordon in November, 1300 enemy suspects were processed, with several proving to be infrastructure members. In the Truoi cordon, 23 VC were captured, 10 were killed.

The same month, November, the Loc Tu peninsula, shaped like the head of a hammer on the rocky coastline, was cordoned and several Viet Cong were netted. With no place to go once a tight circle was formed around a village, an enemy soldier chose either death or the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) program.

The story was the same further north on the highway for the 2nd and 3rd Brigades.

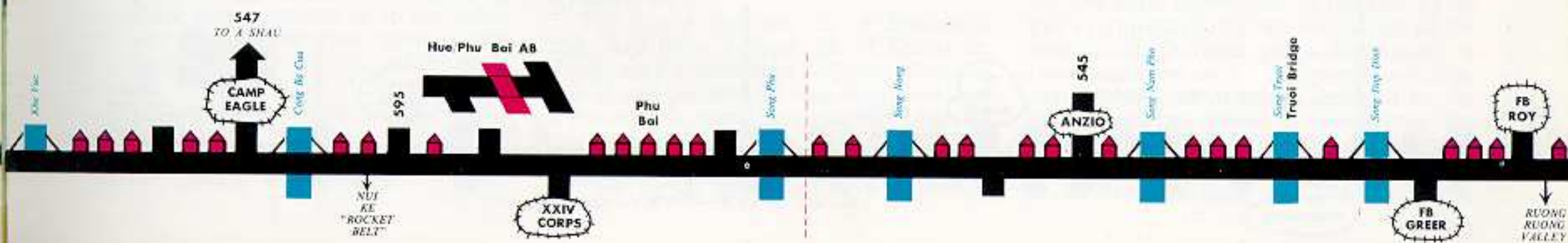
Slowly, life was pumped back into the body. Convoys from logistical centers in Da Nang made more frequent runs up Hai Van Pass (formerly the boundary of the Screaming Eagle AO), across the Lang Co bridge, along the "Bowling Alley" and up the road to Hue and points north.

With Screaming Eagles roaming the mountains on either side of QL 1, the people came out and joined the traffic on the highway. Swarms of trucks, motorcycles and Lambretta taxis bustled along the road, and roadside villages expanded. Screaming Eagles had until September 1968 restricted their travel. Now there is a constant flow of Eagle patches heading toward Phu Bai or the new rest site at Eagle Beach.

In March 1969, little more than a year



Ranous





Above, QL 1 disappears into the clouds as it goes over Hai Van Pass. Below, 2/17 Cav jeep-mounted recoilless rifle guards a convoy going over the ambush-prone pass.

after the enemy flag flew over Hue's Citadel, the 1st Bn., 327th Inf. assumed control of Phu Loc District while the other two battalions headed deep into the mountains.

The highway and district were divided into four sectors, each the responsibility of a company. Fire bases were occupied at strategic points, with FB Roy, a couple hundred feet above the South China Sea, becoming the battalion forward—and its own rest site.

With the departure of the two Screaming Eagle battalions to the mountains came more responsibility for Vietnamese forces. At each of the eight bridges one platoon of Regional Forces maintains security. On the larger and more important bridges—Truoi, Nuoc Ngot, Lang Co—the Above the Rest battalion maintains platoon-size elements. The Lang Co bridge demands more attention because of its location at the end of the peninsula hamlet of Loc Hai. The bridge marks the end of the Screaming Eagle AO and the beginning of the 1st Marine Division AO. Across the bridge, going south, the highway shoots up into the clouds to Hai Van Pass, the scene of many communist ambushes in the past.

During daylight hours the Screaming Eagles send out recon patrols to the base of the mountains and through the coastal rice paddies. Villages are checked thoroughly for enemy activity, and during the rice harvest the patrols keep tabs on daily production to inhibit Viet Cong thefts.

At night the paratroopers and Marine CAP teams are swallowed up by darkness. Under the humid night sky they silently await intruders from the tangled thickness of the mountains. And no point along the road can escape the plotting charts of the artillery units at the fire bases or the illumination that can be provided by mobile



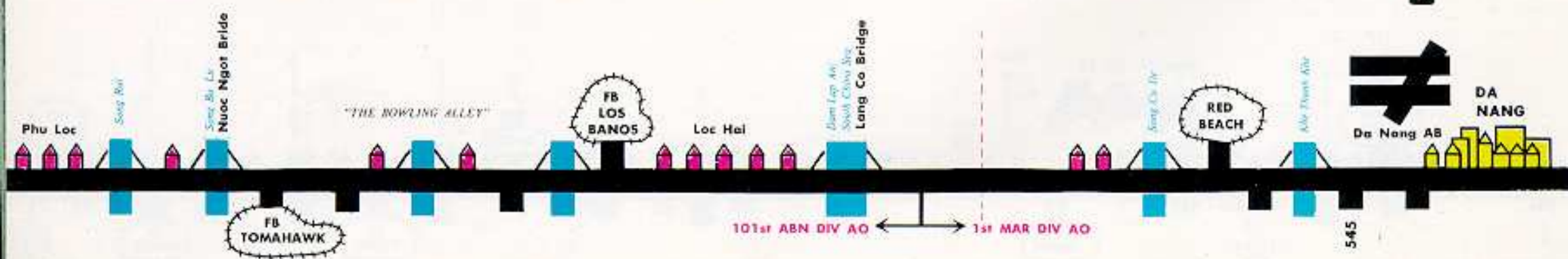
mortar teams.

Security of QL 1 and liberation of the 58,000 hamlet dwellers has brought another change to Phu Loc District. In the short space of four months, the Navy's Mobile Construction Battalion 5 unleashed their bulldozers, giant roadgraders and five-ton trucks and completely altered the once pockmarked highway. From their headquarters north of FB Roy, Seabee crews worked north until they reached Phu Bai, then turned south to blacktop the dusty supply route.

Behind the Seabees lies a black stripe, flanked villages, bridges and graded hills. Supplies now reach their destination in half the time, and mines are no longer feared. Gone too is the swirling red dust that once trailed each vehicle.

Highway 1 has matured from a bumpy, insecure "frontier" road to a smooth two-lane highway that feeds I Corps. As it was secured, so were the coastal plains.

Vietnam and Thua Thien Province have a road, a very important road. It is secure, and it will stay that way.



Lovelace

rgens

THE GIRLS WHO WEAR THE SCREAMING EAGLE PATCH

Rosemary



BY PFC.
GARY
PITCHFORD



Betsy



Jodie



Linda

Fire Support Base Satan II: a lonely pinnacle scratched bare of vegetation and topped with a few bunkers, piles of ammunition, 81mm mortars and troops of the 101st Airborne Division. A trooper picking his way through the boulders scattered across the hilltop glances up at the "Huey" circling the fire base and almost drops, in astonishment, the ammo box he's carrying.

Linda and Betsy, Red Cross patch on one shoulder, the Screaming Eagle on the other, lean from the helicopter and yell, "Hi!" The soldier can't hear them, of course, over the roar of the chopper, but that really doesn't make any difference. He knows what they mean and waves back, somewhat awkwardly balancing his load on one shoulder.

Even an instant before they land, the Red Cross girls, the 101st's "Donut Dollies," as they are traditionally and affectionately called, have begun accomplishing their own very personal and very significant mission.

When the helicopter lands there is no one to be seen. Satan II is so tiny a fire base that a chopper and men can't comfortably occupy the summit at the same time. The Huey's nose hangs over the cliff's edge, the tail rotor nestles between two bunkers.

The girls jump down from the chopper, lugging two large, canvas satchels, and the bird whips away.

Instantly, from crevasses and bunkers, from behind boxes of ammo and piles of spent shells, men scramble up to say hello. They are tanned and they glisten with perspiration from the hot sun and the day's exertions. They are a small sea of brown skin and O.D. green fatigues. In the middle, bright blue dresses painting a contrasting patch of color on the bleak landscape, stand two smiling young ladies.

"Hi" Linda says, "we were in the neighborhood and thought we'd drop in."

This isn't exactly true. In fact, the trip to Satan II had been inserted into an already tight schedule after the girls heard that the men on that fire base needed some diversion.

"They don't get much, up there," an officer had told them. "They eat two meals a day of C-rations and one out of mermite cans. And they don't get to see any movies up there, either."

For Linda Sullivan, 22, of Baltimore, Md., and Betsy Tanner, 22, of Knoxville, Tenn., such a remark is sufficient stimulus. For it was an idea of this loneliness and a desire to in some way cut away part of the drabness from the soldiers' life that in part led these girls into the Red Cross.

"We try to help them have some fun,

to relax, to forget the war and their responsibilities for just a little while," Linda said. "We want them to know that somebody cares if they are unhappy or lonely."

"I wanted to come to Vietnam before I'd considered joining the Red Cross," Linda said. "But I know I wanted to come here and help out in some way. I guess you might call it a personal challenge."

For all Red Cross girls, a college degree comes before the Red Cross insignia. Linda's degree is a B.A. in art and religion, Betsy's a B.S. in physics.

"When I graduated I decided I didn't like physics after all," Betsy said. "I wanted to do something with people, either the Peace Corps or the Red Cross. After looking into the program, I decided this was basically the type of work I wanted to do."

And the type of work that the Red Cross girls do is a serious mixture of group psychology and vaudeville, with a dash of administration thrown in for good measure. Linda and Betsy, and the other two girls who make up the 101st's prettiest support group—Rosemary Thunder, 24, of Burlington, Ontario, and Jodie Rouse, 22, of Denver, Colo.—share the load.

Throughout the week the girls visit fire bases, with two girls traveling together at a time. They try to visit as many locations as they can on a regular basis. But they have no permanent routes or partnerships. Each girl may find herself working with any of the other three on a particular day.

The basic ingredients of the Red Cross girl's campaign to lighten the burden of the men in the boonies are a few smiles, a little attention and "the program." The program is a set of games designed by the girls themselves aimed at overcoming the barriers that separate people and involving them in a common goal—having fun.

At Satan II Betsy and Linda pulled a

large board out of their canvas carrying-case and leaned it against a bunker. Twenty or thirty troopers gathered around, some sitting on adjoining bunkers, others on the hard-packed ground.

After the girls introduced themselves, Linda said, "Today we're going to play a game about holidays. We'll hold up a picture and you tell us what holiday it represents."

The men smile at each other nervously and wisecrack. Playing games seems a little strange to them, and they feel a bit foolish at first.

Betsy holds up a picture of a penny. "What holiday does this represent?"

"Rexall one-cent sale!"

"No," Betsy giggles, "try again."

"Lincoln's birthday," another voice says, this one from the back.

"Right!" Now Linda holds up a card,

Hoots, cheers, whistles and yells.

"But we haven't quite convinced the Department of the Army yet," Betsy concedes.

By the time the game is over, Linda and Betsy have made some new friends, and the arrival of the chopper to take them away is met with jeers and boos.

"Man, that bird can't be coming already," scowls Pfc. Elijah W. Burkett, 21, an infantryman from Cleveland. Turning to the girls he smiled broadly. "You really should come more often. This was really nice, man, really nice."

The girls promise to add Satan II to their weekly schedule and, just before they leave, they pass out pens, writing paper, pen knives and fingernail clippers. These come out of a "goodie bag," its contents sent by five Red Cross "help-mate" chapters in California. These act as support elements



Hansen



this time of a green snake. Nobody can guess.

"Who drove the snakes out of Ireland?" Linda prods.

"St. Patrick!" several shout, correctly.

Betsy holds up a picture of a Boeing 707, but she doesn't even have to ask.

"A freedom bird!" somebody shouts. "DEROS day!" There are some yells of "Short!" and everybody cheers. The ice is broken and the game goes on.

Soon this game is over and the girls turn to the board leaning against the bunker. There are 12 slots, each filled with cards labeled with the months of the year. The men are divided into two teams.

"Each team will try to answer the questions on the back of the cards," Betsy explains. "Answer the questions right and you keep that month. Get 12 months and you win and get to go home early."

for the 101st's Red Cross girls.

They board the chopper and wave good-by, although the men have retreated from the blast of the machine's rotors. They are off, heading for their last stop of the day, Fire Base Panther II.

This last stop will mark the end of a trip that has taken the girls across a wide section of the Division area of operations. At 7:30 that morning they had left the "doll house," their gaily painted home in the women's compound in Phu Bai, and boarded a helicopter for Fire Base Roy.

There, in a mess tent perched on a hill overlooking the South China Sea, they presented their first program of the day. Two more sessions followed at different units at the fire base. Some of the soldiers had been up all night, firing their big guns or standing guard, but they came anyway, played the games and laughed.





Pitchford

The second stop was FB Birmingham, where the girls could present a program to a group of infantrymen from B Co., 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. The ground-pounders and Red Cross girls established an instant empathy and the men entered into the games with enthusiasm and zest.

"We love to program for the boonie rats," Linda said. "They seem to enjoy having us around so much more than other people. I guess its because they seldom get movies or other kinds of recreation."

Rosemary put it this way: "The men are fresh out of the field—dirty, tired and happy to be away from the war for a moment or two. They are boisterous, loud and completely hysterical. They are really fun."

Following the session at Birmingham, the girls move on to a platoon of infantry providing security at Pohl bridge. The men

the complete circuit in the Division AO.

So new games must be planned and designed. This requires ingenuity, art work and research during their "off" hours.

"It's sort of like doing a small term paper every two weeks," Jodie said. "The games have to be simple to understand, easy to play—and fun."

"But you shouldn't get the idea that we're just slaving away, being completely selfless and altruistic," Linda put in. "Really, this is also a selfish job—we all find this work immensely rewarding."

The truth in this statement was obvious in the program at Linda and Betsy's last stop, Panther II. The questions asked, the games played, were by now very familiar to the girls. But they seemed just as interested and involved in the competition as they were in the first game of the day.

"What seafood festival boasts the



Pitchford



Hansen



Hansen

threatened to disable the helicopter when it was time to leave. They didn't, of course, but the girls are flattered.

While Linda and Besty were programing at fire bases, Rosemary and Jodie were busy with a program of their own back at Phu Bai. Whenever they are not in the field, they are programing for support elements in the base camps. It keeps them busy.

"Other divisions have six girls or more," Rosemary said. "There are only four of us at the 101st—but we try hard," she laughed.

For the girls who wear the Screaming Eagle patch, trying hard means long hours, both in the field and in base camps, and back in the "doll house."

The games they present have short lives. They are used for two weeks and then are filed for future reference or discarded, for by that time the games have traveled

world's largest lobster broiler," Linda asked seriously.

"Huh?"

"What?"

"Lobster broiler?" a boonie rat exclaims. "Silly game!"

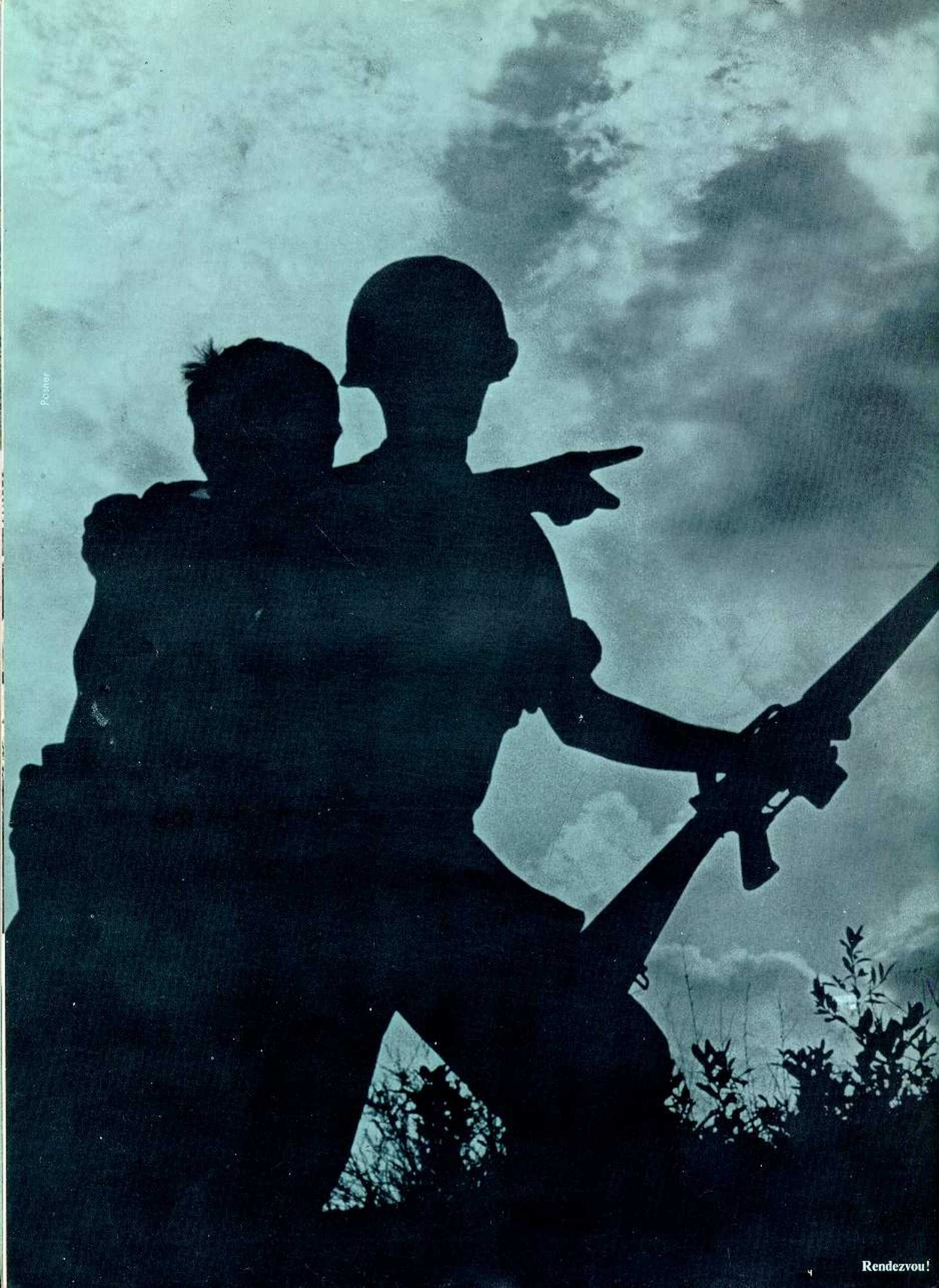
"Yeah, silly game," Linda laughs, and it spreads throught the crowd.

"OK, sorehead," she says, "we'll let you try another. Who said, 'I never met a man I didn't like?'"

"Cleopatra," the soldier snaps back, and the roar of laughter echoes over the barren peak. The infantrymen and the Red Cross are relaxed and happy, joined for the moment in a common bond of good feeling.

For the girls with the eagle patch, it's been another special day.





Potter

KIT CARSON SCOUT

BY SPEC. 4 CALVIN S. POSNER

Hong, a 25-year-old farmer, was working in his family's rice paddy on Vinh Loc Island when Viet Cong cadre entered his village. The "recruiters" collected all the able-bodied men in the small village and, after a brief political lecture, asked them to immediately join the local VC forces.

When no one volunteered, the recruiter told them if they didn't leave their homes and fight with the VC, their families would be liquidated.

So Hong joined the VC.

Now, nearly a year after he was drafted by the enemy, Hong is still fighting in the jungles of South Vietnam, but he is wearing a Screaming Eagle patch on his left shoulder. For Hong is a Kit Carson Scout with the 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf.

"Hong's story is typical," said Lt. Steven A. Sherlock, Lafayette, Ind., the Kit Carson Scout liaison officer for the 101st.

"After a battle, when Hong's VC cadre were wiped out by allied forces, Hong rallied under the Chieu Hoi program. He went to the six-week political re-indoctrination school for Hoi Chanh and then decided to volunteer for the Scouts."

In his five months with Delta Company of the O-Deuce, Hong has saved many of his American buddies by warning them of booby traps and likely ambush sites and by inter-

preting VC and NVA trail markers.

Why would a Vietnamese join the American Kit Carson Scout program?

Lt. Col. Robert E. Keener, Fairmont, W. Va., the Division G-5 officer, explained.

"Scouts are former VC or NVA riflemen, squad leaders or reconnaissance team members. They are men with military backgrounds—professional soldiers who need to identify with a military organization.

"There is also," added Keener, "a monetary consideration of 5,000 piastres a month—about \$42. And Scouts are also draft-exempt from the ARVN as long as they remain Scouts.

"But probably the most important reason is that these people have seen, first hand, what the VC and NVA are doing to South Vietnam. They have been witness to local mass assassinations, forced taxation and military 'recruiting.'"

The first U.S. program utilizing local inhabitants as military scouts was initiated by the Marines during the Philippine Insurrection at the turn of the century. In other wars, too, people have aided the American Army militarily, as Frenchmen guided Screaming Eagles during the Normandy invasion in 1944.

The Division trains its Kit Carson Scouts at the Screaming Eagle Re-

placement Training School (SERTS) at Bien Hoa. The course, said Keener, is divided into two one-week courses.

"The first week, the Scouts get the same training Division replacements get, attending the same classes with new-in-country GIs. This services a two-fold purpose—it gives the Scouts training in our light weapons and tactics while it gives the troopers a chance to get to know and respect a Vietnamese who is not only working for them but with them.

"During the second week, the Scouts get patrolling, scouting, map reading and basic English taught in small classes.

"During their stay at SERTS, the Scouts are paired up on a buddy system with an American soldier. They train, live and work together. They pull details together, and if the soldier goes to the EM or NCO Club, the Scout goes too.

"We hope," Keener said, "this will be the start of mutual understanding and respect."

What does Hong think about his association with the 101st Airborne Division?

"I make many friends, everybody like me. I like GI chow and flip for American music."





These Cavmen think they have an odd job. Maybe you think you have an odd job. But take a look at these :

SOCIAL WORKER
DOG DOCTOR
NEWS EDITOR
GATEKEEPER
CANVASMAN

Canvasman?

By Spec. 4 Don Winter

Four-hundred years ago the soldier's military occupation was his specialty. When the "terces" of Spain descended on the Netherlands in the 16th Century, they made do without the range of support troops necessary in today's airmobile division. The Spanish Pikemen were as often as not non-Spanish, since it was far easier to recruit soldiers on the spot than to transport them to battle. And though the pikeman may have signed up for the money involved, he soon found that the most regular payday was the one he declared himself. So it was with the matter of rations—the soldier scrounged them and cooked them, and if he got sick as a result, he doctored himself or paid a local apothecary out of his own pocket.

Long, hard experience showed that having infantry troops act as their own quartermasters, cooks and finance clerks produced more than a little inefficiency. And as the musket and then the rifle replaced the pike, commanders learned that troops versed in the arts of the new weapons were too valuable to use in non-combat functions. The modern army slowly emerged after this.

The variety and scope of the jobs support personnel perform have increased in each of the great wars of the last two centuries. As the sophistication of the tables of organization grows functions which only a few years ago were considered new-fangled indeed are now given scarcely a passing thought.

The 101st is in the vanguard of the movement toward newer, more spectacular forms of support, but it also has many men who work in jobs that were created by the conditions of the war in Vietnam, or sprung from the Army's desire to provide its men with a full range of support.

One of these men is Sgt. Roy P. Agosta, a 20-year-old Detroit, who came to Vietnam 27 months ago as an infantryman. Nowadays Agosta works as S-5 NCO for the 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. He still holds an 11B MOS, but his job is to learn as much about the needs of the Vietnamese people as he can. "I like the work," Agosta says. "I think I've gotten closer to the people."

Agosta is forthright and gives the impression of steady competence. He is a little hesitant to put a specific name on his job, preferring to list the things he does one by one.

Well he might. In World War II the Army had four staff sections, although a semi-detached group of civil affairs units were formed to cope with the expected complexities of administering the occupied territories. But Vietnam is not that kind of war. The Republic of Vietnam has a functioning administration, and the job of the 101st is to help the Vietnamese strengthen their system. Part of the job is military, and Agosta was in that effort for his first year in-country. Now he is fighting the "other war," helping the Vietnamese people help themselves.

Plain checks a German Shepherd scout dog.



Kendall, Airborne Dateline editor, prepares stencil.

Agosta's day starts with a meeting with the S-5 officer. After that he leaves Fire Base Roy, the battalion forward headquarters, on one of several kinds of missions. He may head up to Hue to talk to theCORDS people there, he may go to Camp Eagle to pick up supplies from the Division G-5, or to 1st Brigade headquarters at Gia Le to hand in paper work, or to any of the hamlets in the eight villages where his battalion sponsors self-help projects.

"We ask them where they'd like help if they haven't come to us first," he says. "It isn't our job to go around doing good deeds any old way."

Agosta says that many of the villages want new schools, new marketplaces, or other improvements. If the villagers have carried the project far enough forward, S-5 will help them obtain scrap wood, cement, sand, tin, and other building materials, or perhaps a little cash.

He told of one village building a new school, and making the bricks for it in the traditional way, "They bricks were a little crumbly. They had too much dirt in them," Agosta says. "They were a little hesitant about changing the formula, but it was an improvement. Most of the time the way they do things is right for them, though."

Agosta's job is a brand-new one, an example of the Army adapting itself to the situation at hand. He realizes that and savors it a little. "When I first came to 'Nam, I didn't realize I'd ever be doing something like this."

Spec. 4 James F. Plain of Memphis, Tenn., has a title—veterinarian technician—that might have been found in descriptions of the cavalry and mule-drawn caissons. In fact, he once fit right into his traditional role, when he worked at West Point for six months and one of his duties was caring for the mule that is the Academy mascot.

Today Plain works with the dogs of the 42nd Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) and the 557th Combat Tracker Team. It's not quite as romantic as the cavalry, but there are many infantrymen who are glad that the Army has gone to the dogs.

Plain had never worked with animals before he joined the Army—"I like them, of course"—and after basic he was sent to Fort Campbell, Ky., for on-the-job training. In 1967 he came to Vietnam where he worked with the 504th Veterinary Detachment in Da Nang. After seven months in the states, Plain volunteered for a second tour, and he is now attached to the two 101st units. "I enjoy it," Plain says.

He finds satisfaction in keeping the German Shepherds of the 42nd and the Retrievers of the 557th in top shape. Both are breeds developed in northern climates, but like Plain himself—"It seems cooler anyway in Tennessee"—they have adapted well to Vietnam.

The dogs lose a lot of their hair in Vietnam, just like soldiers like to shed jackets as often as possible, and the dogs are also susceptible to mosquito-borne diseases.

"They get heart worms from mosquito bites," Plain says. "But if I spot it I can dose it. The dogs develop 'hot spots' on their skin, too, and we have to keep close watch so we can treat it early."

The Stars and Stripes comes every day, but for those who never got in the habit of reading the New York Times at home, Spec. 5 Anthony W. Kendall puts out a pretty good imitation of the Hometown Daily News right at Camp Eagle. Kendall is editor of the "Airborne Dateline," a two-page, mimeographed morning newsheet that features world news, news of the Screaming Eagles, and entertainment and weather.

The Air Force detachment at Camp Eagle provides the forecasts, and Kendall, with the help of the collected works of Peanuts, comes up with the entertainment in the form of a Snoopy cartoon with a topical punchline.

Kendall enlisted in the Army and attended the Defense Information School at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Ind. He received basic journalism training, and then advanced broadcasting training.

"When I got to Vietnam I expected to work in radio," Kendall says. "Editing the Dateline was a surprise, but it's challenging."

One of the challenges is the hours. Kendall works all night so the paper will be "hot news" in the early morning, when it is distributed to headquarters, mess halls and through the message center. He is also challenged by the process of turning news off the radio into newspaper copy.

"Newspapers depend on detail, and the radio doesn't always give that much," Kendall says.

Kendall also finds the sports page a little difficult, mostly because he grew up in Deer Lodge, Mont. "Our sports were rodeo, swimming, and hunting. I've never really concentrated on major league baseball and football before. It's hard to have to spell Carl Yastrzemski when you hardly know who he is."

Security has been a problem for armies since the days of Joshua. But the problem has become somewhat more complicated since then, and Spec. 4 Samuel J. Wylie of Nottingham, Pa., is as concerned with what goes out the gates of Camp Eagle as what comes in. The "Farm Boy," as he describes himself (he raised the 1967 National Junior Champion Angus Bull), is in charge of the MPs who man Camp Eagle's main gate and the Gia Le gate, and he keeps tabs on the Vietnamese personnel who work inside the camp as well.

Wylie's main job is keeping the black market under control. He has found quite a lot of MPC and dollars and PX supplies in his nine months with the division, and the illegally-obtained currency and goods he confiscates are used in non-appropriated fund activities.

"It's an interesting job. I like it," says Wylie, whose nose is perpetually peeling because of the amount of time he spends out in the sun. "I can't say I know a lot about Vietnam, but I have learned something. The Vietnamese are a good people. They get along with the MPs real well. They understand that we've got a job to do."

Flagg cuts canvas for a new jeep seat-cover.



MP Wylie, at Eagle main gate, checks Vietnamese taxi.

Wylie has had some interesting moments in his tour, one time capturing a member of the Viet Cong infrastructure in broad daylight 50 meters from the main gate. Another time he caught a man illegally selling bibles near the gate. The contents of the salesman's pockets caused a lot of speculation about either his intentions or his business acumen: he had \$91 U.S. in his wallet, \$64 MPC, and two counterfeit \$20 bills.

"I enjoy the work" Wylie says, summing up. "But I'm a farmer. I'll be glad to get back to beef cattle."

Pfc. Thomas D. Flagg comes from Michigan, and worked for more than two years at the Oldsmobile plant in Lansing before he was drafted. So born and bred in automobile-land, the 19-year-old from Owosso was not too surprised when he was sent to Fort Polk, La., for advanced individual training as a mechanic.

When he arrived in Vietnam and was assigned to the 101st, he expected to work in such a unit as A Co., 801st Maint. Bn. But when it came down to his actual job, he was a little taken aback. "They told me they were going to make me a canvasman, and I really didn't know they had such a thing."


As it turned out, the name alone was what Flagg didn't know about the job, which was to reupholster seats and repair tops on Army vehicles. "I'd worked on my own car, doing upholstery and so on, and I'd done some upholstery work at Olds," Flagg says.

Flagg has a collection of standard patterns for upholstering the various kinds of vehicles—jeeps, three-quarters, deuce and a half. He cuts out new seat covers from bolts of O.D. canvas, sews the parts together on a special heavy-duty machine, and fastens them to the seats. The work could be routine, but quite often there are special jobs. He works with leatherettes and pipings for some jeeps, and recently, a Russian scout car discovered on the Yellow Brick Road was refurbished by the 801st and presented to Nguyen Van Thieu, president of the Republic of Vietnam.

Flagg made the new upholstery for the car out of black leatherette (he had to work up the patterns first) and then came the most difficult part of the job, fashioning a realistic top.

"A man in the company who was in Berlin told me the Russians don't use eyes to lace their tops, the way we do," Flagg says. "I got the right look by sewing cord, like in the bottom of jungle fatigue pants, into the seam, and picking loops of the cord to hang out of the seam every few inches. The man who knew said it looked pretty realistic."

Whether making a canvas seat back for a jeep or a top for a captured Russian scout car, Flagg feels that he is doing an interesting and necessary job. "Like that Russian car," he says. "It made me feel pretty good that they liked my job well enough to give it to a president."

These five Screaming Eagles all have jobs which would seem strange to the soldiers of the 16th century. Yet whatever they do—civic action worker, veterinarian technician, security guard, editor, upholsterer—they are contributing to the comfort, security, and "esprit de corps" of the man in the field, and thus helping the division accomplish its mission. And that, in the end, is the name of the game for any soldier. 

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