

# Rendezvous With Destiny

2-05  
UNIT HISTORY



**A Publication of the 101st Airborne Division(Airmobile)**





## *The Other War...*

**Y**ou, the troopers of this Division, have the tough job of seeking out and destroying the enemy in the mountainous jungles and the flooded lowlands of the Division's area of operations. I am constantly aware that yours is a difficult, dangerous and dirty task.

**B**ut, if you could ask the farmer in the rice paddy, he would tell you that the communists no longer ravage the land, confiscate the rice crop, and tax the people. He would also tell you that his sons are no longer kidnapped and forced to join the VC. He would say too, that schools and hospitals, dispensaries, and clinics have now opened where, under the communists, there was only sickness and death.

**T**he South Vietnamese government, with United States aid, has been able to provide many of the needs of the people. But you Screaming Eagles have provided the most needed commodity—security. This security has permitted the establishment of governmental control through the use of regional forces, popular forces, national police and other territorial forces.

**Y**our actions have denied the enemy access to the populated areas and have stimulated the rapid advancement and dramatic success of the pacification program in Thua Thien Province. Your accomplishments have given province officials the necessary time and security to carry out current programs and to plan for the future.

**U**nfortunately, members of the press often fail to see the constructive side of what you do. The destruction of war and the fury of battle seem to make more spectacular headlines than the resettlement of a village, the opening of a school, or the harvesting of a rice crop. But these are your victories, the positive and constructive results of your actions. In letters home to your family and loved ones, tell this side of the war; help them to understand the meaning and results of your efforts and those of the South Vietnamese. In the broad context of our objectives in Vietnam, our mission is truly constructive, not destructive.

**T**his is a difficult task we are engaged in, but when at last peace comes, the people of South Vietnam will be strong and free in a land which—with your help—they built for themselves.

*John M. Wright, Jr.*  
JOHN M. WRIGHT, JR.  
Major General, USA  
Commanding



# Rendezvous With Destiny

FALL 1969

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HANSEN-VAN ALSTINE





***TWO FACES  
OF  
PACIFICATION***



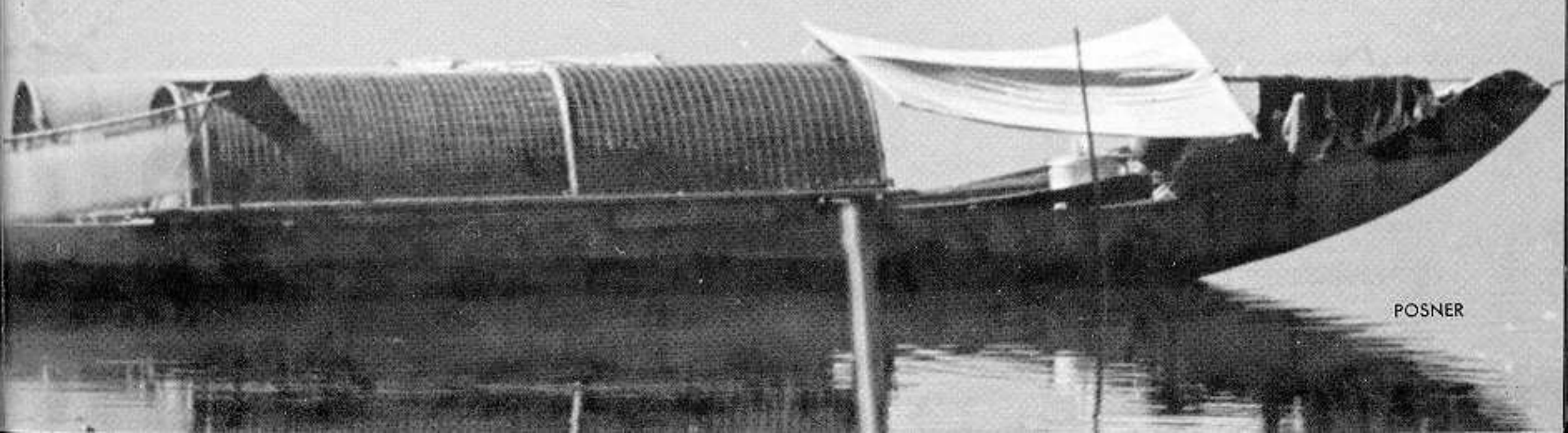


# VINH LOC— *One Year Later*

## *Spec. 4 Calvin Posner*

Fifteen miles east of Hue, Vinh Loc Island stretches along the southern coast of Thua Thien Province. It seems a lazy island, surrounded by white sand beaches and the pale blue waters of the South China Sea. About half the island's population occupy themselves growing bananas, pineapples, sugar cane, coconuts and peanuts. The banana groves dot the island and at harvest time the short, sickle-bladed knives of the farmers flash in the sun as the bunches of green fruit are gathered. The remainder of the island's people are fishermen whose graceful wooden boats surround the island, floating effortlessly on the placid water or nestled against piers and jetties.

This is Vinh Loc Island; one year after the most successful cordon operation in the Vietnam experience of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile.)





## TWO FACES OF PACIFICATION

More than a year ago, prior to the NVA's massive 1968 Tet offensive, approximately 50,000 Vietnamese inhabited Vinh Loc, secure under the protection of local regional and popular force units. But the Tet offensive resulted in the use of all available friendly forces, including those of Vinh Loc, to drive the enemy from Hue. This quick, massive redeployment left a power vacuum on the island.

Local Viet Cong forces acted quickly to fill this vacuum. Determined to dominate the island and use it as an R & R site and as a fresh produce resupply point, they prepared defensive positions and established caches and safe areas.

These VC were brutal and aggressive in fulfilling their mission. On one occasion they staged a public execution of a village elder and a thirteen year old girl to demonstrate the consequence which Vinh Loc residents could expect if they failed to support the VC.

The influx of enemy forces from around Hue greatly increased Viet Cong strength on the island. Forty thousand local residents fled to Republic of Vietnam refugee centers. The high concentration of enemy forces on the island and the removal of civilians from the area set the stage for an allied operation on Vinh Loc.

During the night of September 10 and 11, the Hue River Security Force (USN) continued its normal mission of patrolling the inland waterways. Beginning at 3 a.m., the 12th and 13th Vietnamese Navy Coastal Groups moved into the Thuy Tu Waterway, the Can Hai Lagoon and around the southeastern tip of the island. United States Navy "Swift Boats" converged on the seaward side of the island. Two air-cushion patrol boats from the U.S. Navy's Coastal Division 17 carried the reconnaissance platoon from the 1st Bn. (Ambl.), 501st Inf. on board.

At first light on September 11 the encirclement of the island was complete. The two remaining regional force companies on the island were directed to deploy from the Vinh Loc District headquarters northwest to a point just east of Diem Truong and then turn in a northerly direction across the island to the South China Sea east of An Bang. From there, they executed a sweep back across the island in a southwesterly direction.

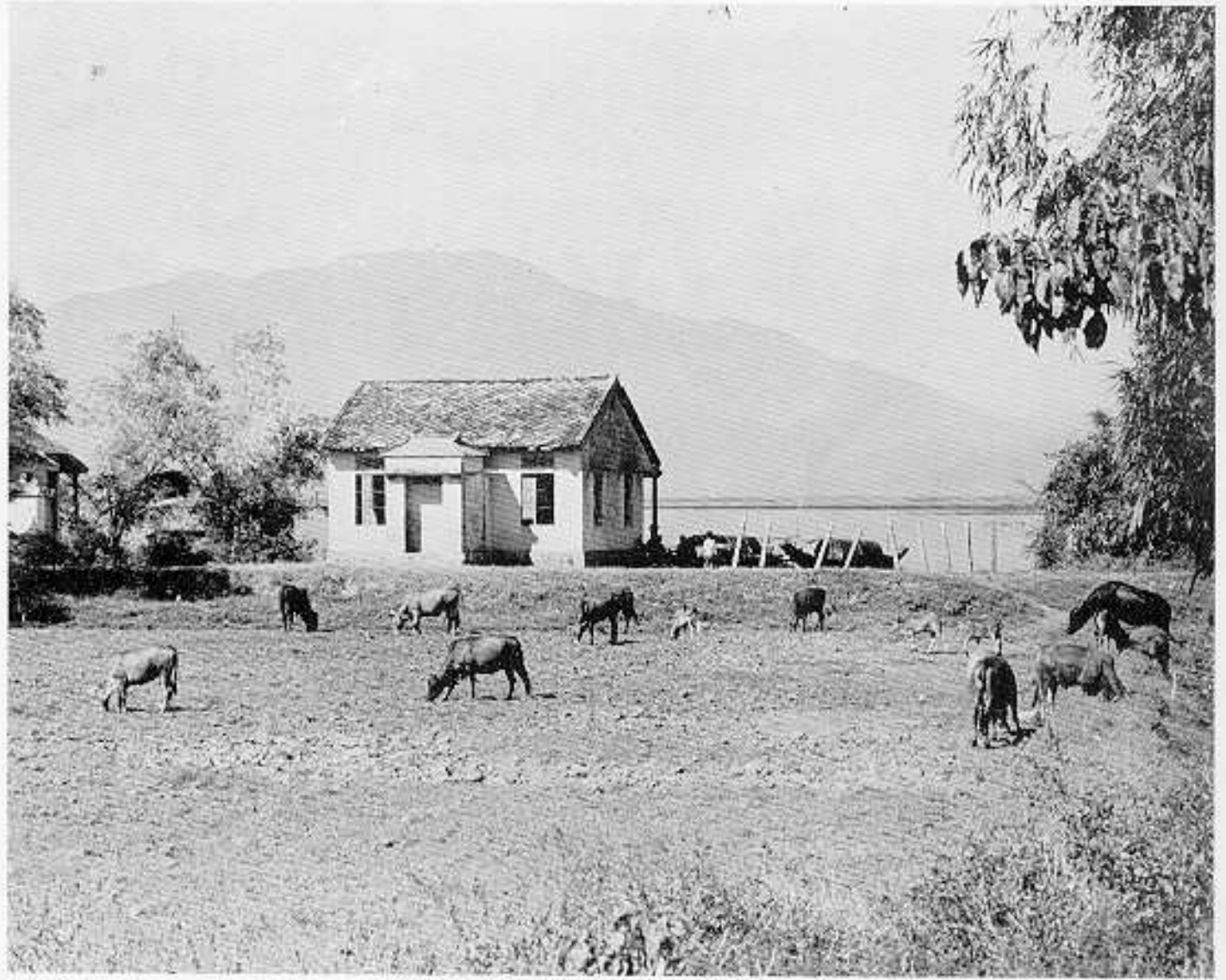
Simultaneously, three companies of the 1st of the 501st conducted combat assaults onto three landing zones on the seaward side of the island and started recon-in-force operations to the south.

Forty-five members of the National Police Field Forces along with the 1st Bn., 54th ARVN Regt. were brought into the massive cordon and search operation.

At the end of the 10-day operation, 154 enemy were killed, 370 captured (including 116 members of the infrastructure), 56 Hoi Chanh rallied to the South Vietnamese government, 58 civilians were detained and 176 individual and 3 crew-served weapons captured.

Friendly forces suffered two killed and nine wounded.

One year later, in the fall of 1969, Vinh Loc is considered by military commanders to be one of the most pacified areas in



*Vinh Loc today reflects the image of peaceful and prosperous life, but a year ago this area was a battlefield and wasteland.*

*A Buddhist priest blesses food in preparation for a feast celebrating the island's new plenty.*





# VINH LOG



*As civic life and community spirit grow on Vinh Loc, organizations such as the Buddhist Boy Scouts become more active.*



Vietnam. The cordon of Vinh Loc completely eliminated the enemy forces on the island and continuing operations of MACV Team 18, which conducts twice monthly sweeps with 3,000 members of the regional and popular forces, make sure infiltration from nearby mainland towns does not occur.

But the success of Vinh Loc today had to be built up slowly from the rubble of conflict. Most of the villages on the island were completely destroyed during the bitter fighting. The island's bridges were all destroyed and the roads were never better than water buffalo trails.

The 101st's civil affairs section, G-5, was given the awesome responsibility of making Vinh Loc Island capable of sustaining the 40,000 refugees that would return to the island. As the Vietnamese filtered back to the island, first a few at a time, then in greater numbers, the job of resettlement began.

"The first step was to have the people establish their local governments by electing village and hamlet chiefs," said Lt. Phillip Neill, assistant civil affairs liaison officer from San Diego, Calif.

"The local elected leaders then have the responsibility of establishing priorities and requesting assistance," Neill continued. "They must request our help before we do anything at all."

Thus it was established—by the people of Vinh Loc—that the most urgent task would be to provide food and shelter for the returning refugees until they could become self-sufficient.

Using materials supplied by the 101st, the villagers began rebuilding their homes, marketplaces and schools. Vinh Loc began to come alive. The 101st, working with Seabees of Mobile Construction Battalions 1 and 133, have helped by constructing more than 28 schools and dispensaries on the island.

"The Seabees' have played a large role in the rebirth of Vinh Loc," Neill said. "They have constructed more than 150 miles of roadway, creating an interlocking road system that enables farmers to get their produce to local market areas quicker and in greater quantities than ever before."

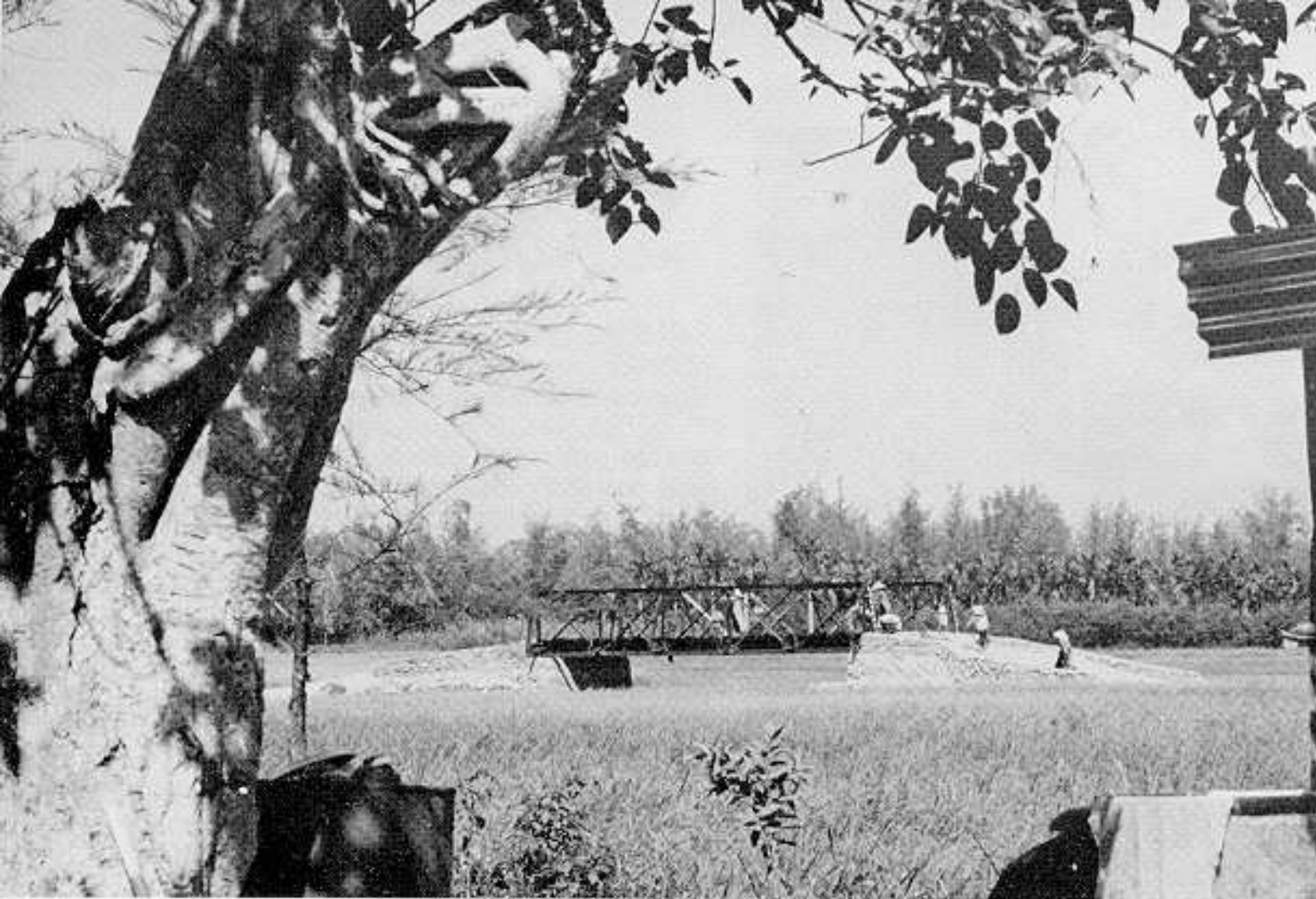
Three bridges, one steel and two wooden, connecting Vinh Tan and Vinh Han have been completely restored by the Seabees since the program began. Many smaller bridges were constructed in conjunction with the road building.

But needs of Vinh Loc extend to more than roads and buildings. Maj. Billie N. Dikes, of Brady, Texas, Division civil affairs officer, explained that an effort was made to make the government itself more efficient. A government that meets the people's needs, is more likely to earn their support.

"Civil affairs teams from the 101st have been instrumental in showing the local government how to set up a local police force, postal system and information service," Maj. Dikes said. "The information service even publishes two newspapers a month."

Medcap teams, consisting of doctors, dentists and corpsmen from the 101st train RF-PF and local dispensary personnel





The 1968 Tet offensive left many of Vinh Loc's bridges in ruins. The Seabees and 101st have worked together to not only replace ruined bridges but build many new ones.

in first aid and sanitation. The teams also travel to the villages and treat the people on the spot.

Today, the population of Vinh Loc Island is approximately 53,000. More than a third of this number are children presently attending one of the 28 schools on the island. Last year, not one child was attending school.

The island's most recent project—and its most ambitious—is the construction of a vehicle ferry system.

"The 101st is supplying the materials and the Seabees are building the system which

will give the people of Vinh Loc a chance at doubling their economy by opening up a trade route to Phu Bai to sell their produce. Five of the six piers have already been built," Maj. Dikes said.

Lt. Neill added that the piers also are important to the island's fishermen, allowing them to unload their boats without beaching them. This means that the boats and fishermen spend more time in the water, making optimum use of their time and equipment.

The village of My Khan is a measure of the success of the pacification effort on

Vinh Loc. The village's economy was based on the toil of fishermen and, prior to Tet, the villagers had two old wooden piers, a small market area and a very small access road. During the battle to reclaim the village from a company of VC following the Tet offensive, the entire village was destroyed.

When the people of My Khan returned, they found the piles of rubble and driftwood that had once been their village. It was a time of despair and confusion.

"As a first step, we organized an election to pick a village chief," Neill said. "Then, with the chief's guidance, we decided on a course of action."

The G-5 of the 101st supplied materials for temporary shelters and food. This allowed the returnees to build their own homes and plant crops without the danger of exposure or starvation.

The villagers later began work on a road to join My Khan and the interconnecting roadway being built by the Seabees. Piers were reconstructed and a school and dispensary built. Wood and concrete were given to the local people to build a marketplace.

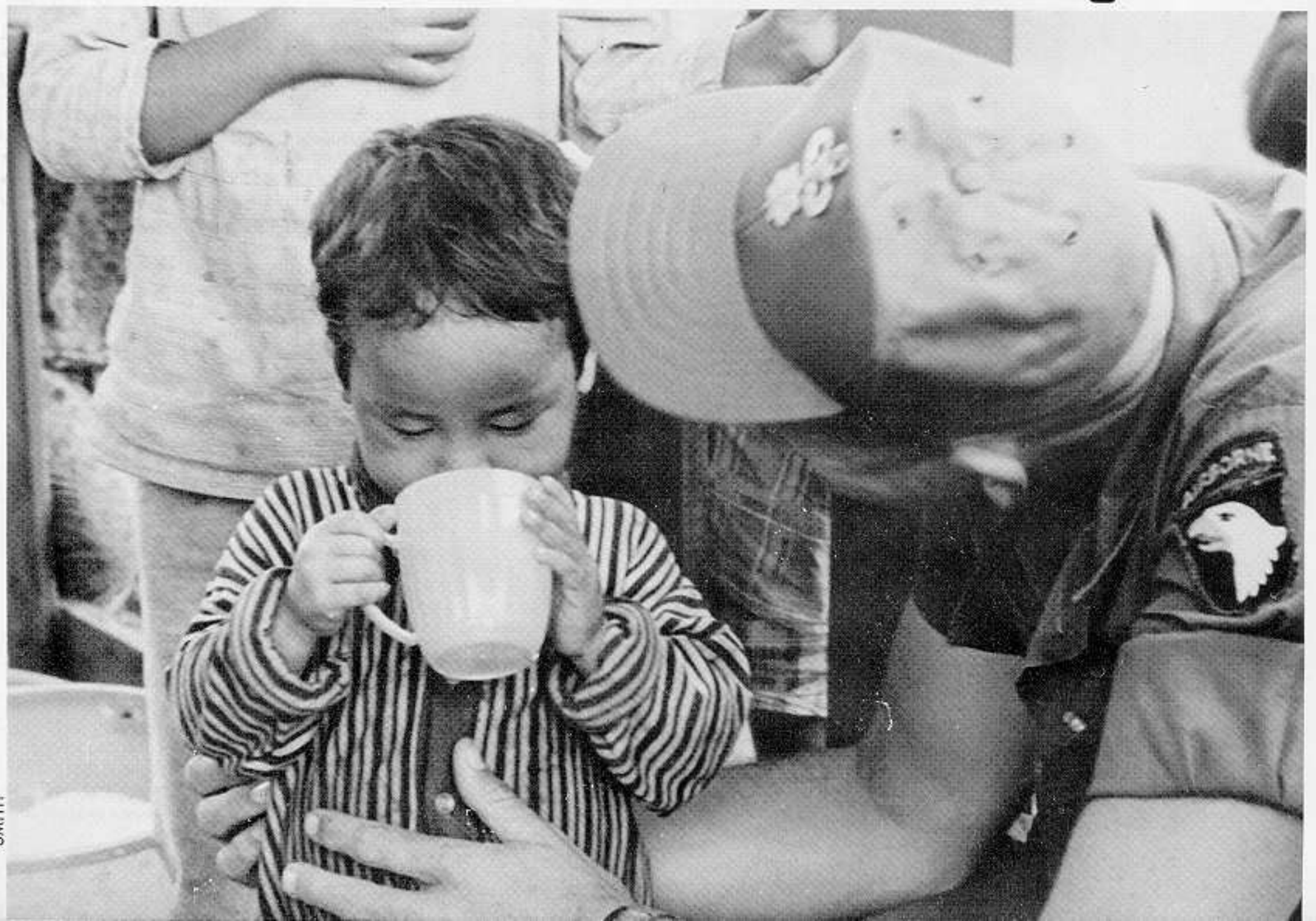
"Today, My Khan is a model of what can be done in civil affairs; its fishing industry is booming, the children are in school, Medcap teams keep check on disease and sanitation and the people support the government," Neill said.

Maj. Dikes termed the My Kahn example—and indeed, the entire Vinh Loc project—a model of civil affairs at its best.

"On Vinh Loc we have seen what occurs when the people of Vietnam are given the help necessary to become self-sufficient and then allowed to compare this to the oppression and terror offered by the VC and NVA."

On Vinh Loc Island the war has been won.

POSNER



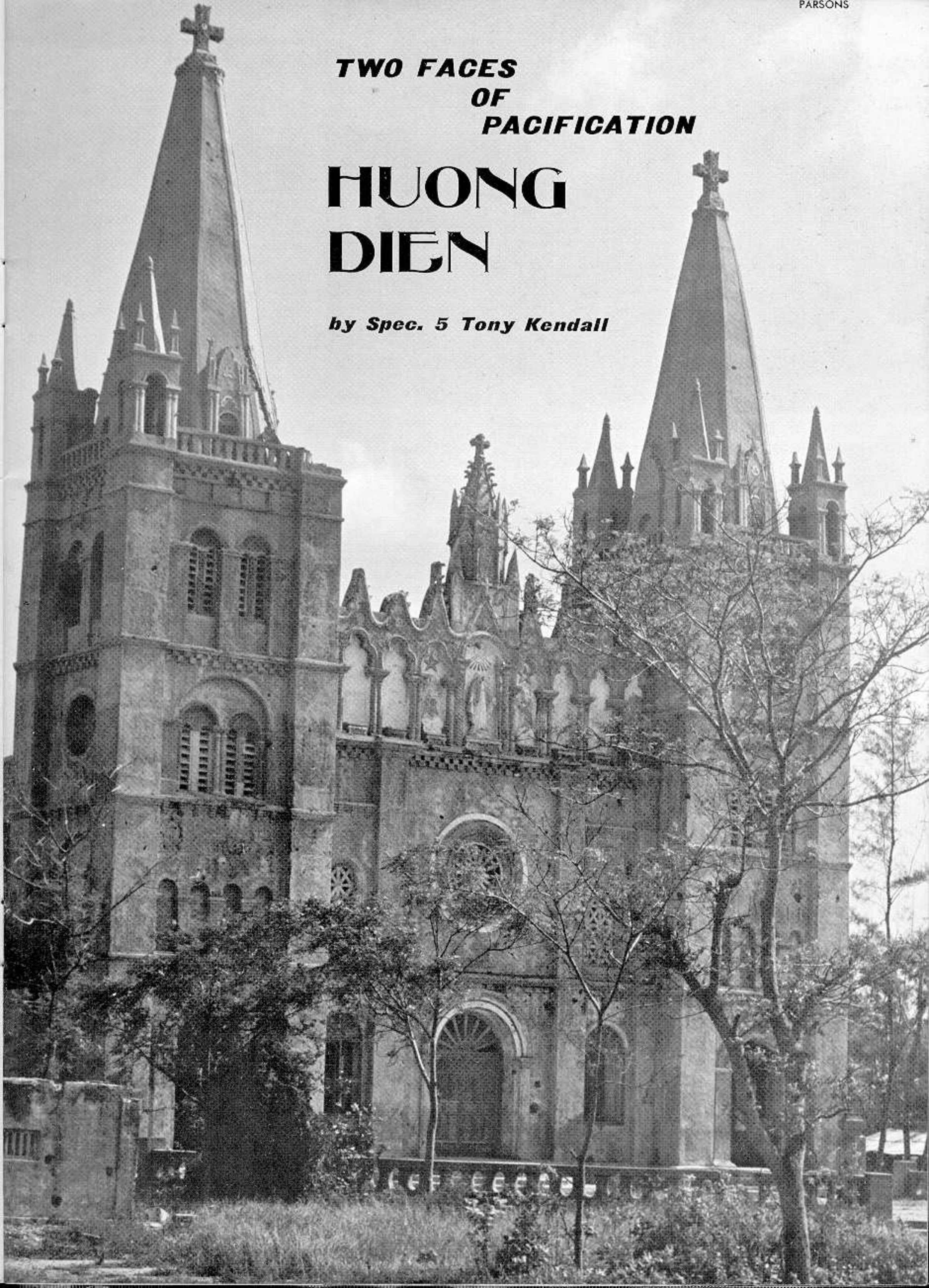
SMITH



**TWO FACES  
OF  
PACIFICATION**

**HUONG  
DIEN**

*by Spec. 5 Tony Kendall*







*The market place at Thanh Huong, shattered and deserted, was one of the first sights greeting the returning villagers.*

The people of Thanh Huong stood on the shore of the stream, surveying apprehensively the remains of what had been their homes for generations unremembered. Dai-uy (captain) Bien, commander of the district in which the village lay, began the walk up the trail leading to the market place which, a year and a half ago, had been filled with the jabbering of buyers and sellers. The walk took him through rice fields, once alive and green, now lying fallow and weed infested.

It was a brilliant, sunny day. Jungle birds—ignorant of history—screamed their annoyance at the intruder; Dai-uy didn't notice them. He was still looking, wondering if anything would be left. Stone-stepping across the tired stream that had served as the village's water supply, public bath, swimming hole and laundry, he was not surprised to see the market place crumbled and shattered, the few remaining walls riddled with holes.

A smile wrinkled his face then. Standing majestically in a clearing a few hundred feet from the market place, was a giant structure which seemed out of place in the tiny community. Towering over the ruins and even outreaching the near-by trees, the old Roman Catholic cathedral stood, flanked on each side by towering, block-shaped steeples. Up until the Tet offensive, Mass had been heard here every Sunday for 65 years.

The Dai-uy looked up to find the once beautiful statue of Christ which, with arms held open, had overlooked the village; now it rested headless and cracked in the alcove. As he looked around, he saw that the other statues had suffered similar fates; all stood with jagged edges where their heads should have been.

Removing his straw hat, he walked inside and found the altar littered with plaster and splintered wood.

But the old church still stood. And to Dai-uy Bien and the people of Thanh Huong, this was meaningful.

Thanh Huong, an isolated agricultural community on the northern boundary of the narrow peninsula that is Huong Dien District, was among the last of the district's villages to be re-settled after the vicious NVA and VC offensive during Tet of 1968.

The history of this narrow peninsula,

jutting like an arthritic finger into the South China Sea, has been as turbulent as that of any district in Vietnam. It was from here that the French began their massive cordon operation in July of 1953 to push the communist Viet Minh out of the area to the north known as the "Street Without Joy". This area, located about half way between Hue and Quang Tri, was named by the French after a bloody and much-ambushed section of Highway One.

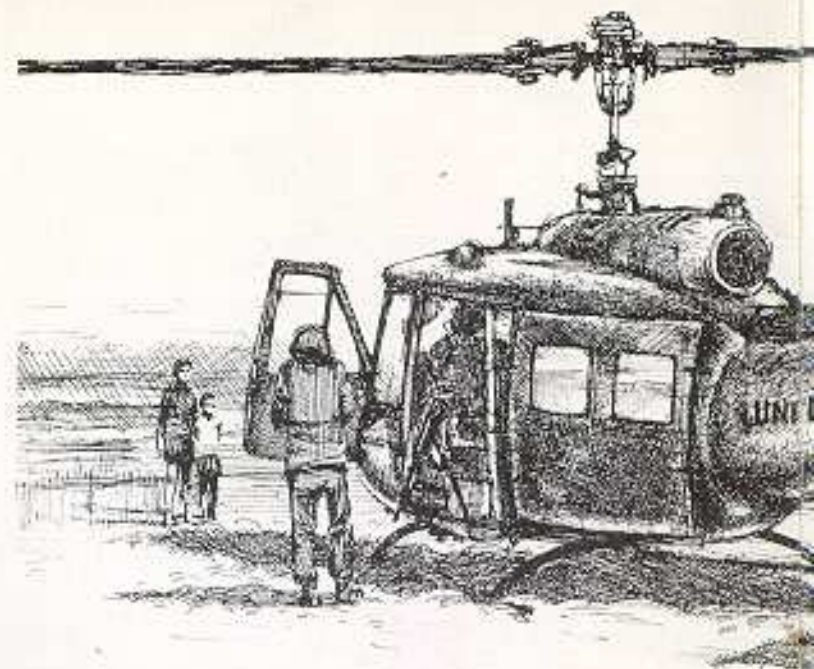
Though the communists escaped the cordon, the French managed to keep a shaky control of the "Street" until July, 1954, when the Geneva Convention split Vietnam at the 17th parallel and the Viet Minh moved north, across the Demilitarized Zone.

For the next 15 years terrorist incidents were infrequent until just prior to the 1968



PARSONS

*In the confusion of the move, an old woman stands— perhaps remembering?*



*A helicopter lands at the refugee center in Tam Dien . . .*

Tet offensive when the communists again began massing and organizing for an all out effort at regaining control of Huong Dien.

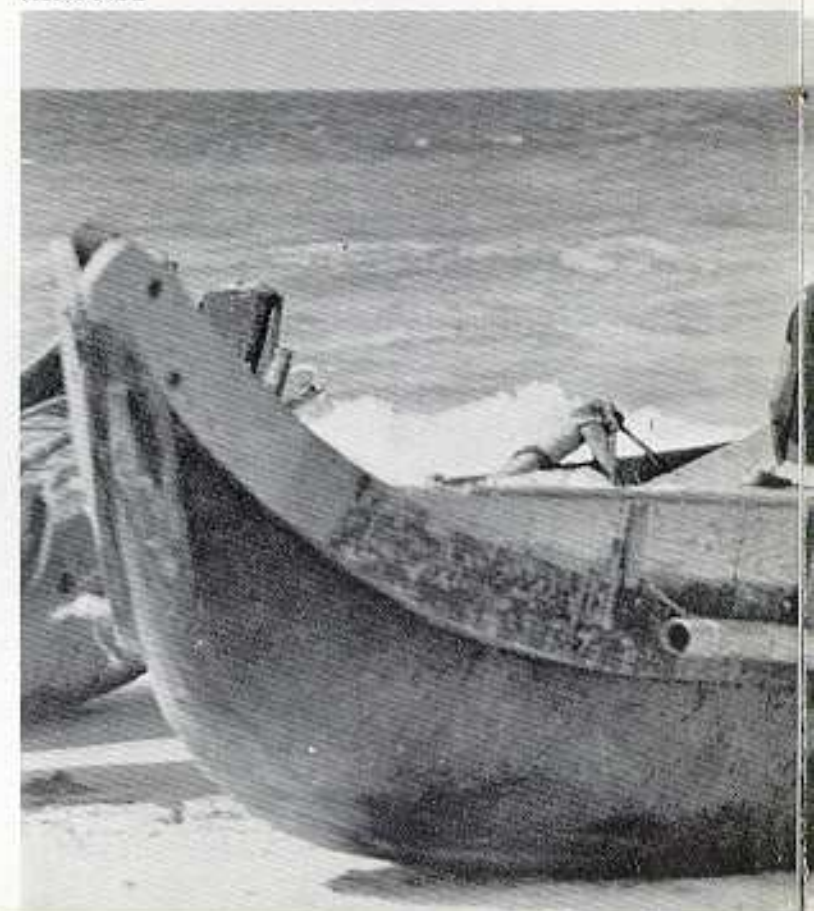
Seeing what was coming, Dai-uy Bien ordered the evacuation of the district's northern villages to refugee camps set up on the other end of the peninsula by the South Vietnamese government with logistical help from the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) and the 1st Cavalry Div.

By the end of the year, the Dai-uy felt that the northern end of the district was safe enough for the people to return. Dai Loc—the village nearest the district headquarters—was the first, then Ke Mon, Vinh Xuong and, finally, the one hit hardest during Tet: Thanh Huong.

The move was made in CH-47 "Chinook" helicopters of the 101st Abn. Div. (Ambl.) when the monsoon weather permitted. The area is almost devoid of roads and those that exist are broken and in poor repair. When the helicopters could not fly, the people came in sampans along the Song O Lau River. Weather and terrain kept the reconstruction of Thanh Huong and other northern villages at a slow pace.

Several weeks had passed since Dai-uy Bien had stood hopefully in front of the old cathedral, but progress had been slow. So little of the village remained and so much needed to be done.

KENDALL







This changed in late March 1969, with the arrival of the 158th Avn. Bn. (AHS) (Ambl.) at Camp Evans, the 101st's 3rd Brigade headquarters. With the advantages of airmobility at their fingertips, the 158th brought with them the answer to Huong Dien's problem.

"Huong Dien is practically tailor-made for the civil affairs (S-5) program of an aviation battalion," explains Lt. Thomas R. Hawks from Little Rock, Ark., 3rd Brigade psychological operations officer. "Helicopters are the perfect answer to the problem of getting to the district the supplies they need."

When the word went out that the 158th was to initiate a civic affairs program in the Huong Dien District, there was no doubt within the battalion as to who would run the project.

Robert F. Vinson, a 22 year-old Chief Warrant Officer, eagerly volunteered for what he knew would seem, at times, an almost impossible task.

"My brother is with a Naval advisor group that operates around Saigon and I had a good idea of what I was getting into," says Vinson. "It seemed like the most interesting way to spend my tour in Vietnam."

A deeply religious man, Vinson has been nick-named "Padre" by his associates. Born and raised in Belmont, Mass., he spent a year at Boston College before going to the seminary at West Hartford, Conn.,

... presenting a marked contrast to centuries older craft on the beach.



PARSONS



One of the many shattered houses on the Huong Dien peninsula. Time, materials and faith would be needed for its reconstruction.



PARSONS

As life returns to Thanh Huong, villagers appear in increasing numbers on the roads and trails and the market fills once again with merchants and shoppers.



PARSONS





PARSONS

From right to left: Lt. Col. Joseph Kastner, battalion commander; CWO Vinson, battalion S-5; Dai-uy Bien, Huong Dien district chief and his advisor, Capt. George Hobson discuss the move from the refugee center at Tam Dien.

to study for the priesthood. Two years later he volunteered for the Army and became a helicopter pilot. He has accrued nearly 800 hours flight time and hopes to have at least 1,000 before leaving Vietnam.

His battalion commander, Lt. Col. Joseph H. Kastner of Dixon, Ill., commented, "Mr. Vinson's the best S-5 I've ever known. He loves the Vietnamese as he loves all people."

Thus it was that two men found similar purpose: Dai-uy Bien, the district chief determined to rebuild Huong Dien peninsula and Robert Vinson of the 158th, the "Padre", determined to see that the rebirth succeed. And quickly they became allies and friends.

"The Dai-uy is a tremendous individual," Vinson asserted. "He has been in the district a long time and people respect him. Once, during the 1968 Tet offensive, the Viet Cong had broken through the perimeter of the district headquarters and were threatening to overrun the entire district. The Dai-uy called all his people into the command bunker and then called in an artillery strike directly on top of his position, onto the compound itself. When the shelling stopped, the bodies of nearly 100 communists were found in and around the compound."

For Vinson, the key to his job is found in a statement made by the Dai-uy: "The villagers have a tremendous spirit and the faith that we can be prosperous again. This faith and their willingness to work hard and make sacrifices will rebuild our land."

Vinson sees his job, therefore, as not one

of building, but "helping to build, to provide the people with the materials necessary to do the job."

When Vinson found the district had no adequate facility in which to conduct high school, he appealed to the men of the 158th. Their response was nearly \$1,000 in contributions. But, perhaps even more importantly, that amount was matched by contributions from the people of Huong Dien. Dai-uy Bien even sacrificed the roofing



PARSONS

At Tam Dien a fisherman mends his nets as his father and grandfather did before him.

tiles on his district headquarters so the school would be safe from the monsoon rains. Now, some 150 young Vietnamese attend the school every day.

Capt. Cloyd Jacobs, of Lawton, Okla., the brigade S-5, commented that an understanding of the people and their needs is vital to the pacification program. It was important for Vinson to get to know the people of Huong Dien and be trusted by them. Only then could he begin to help them.

"Once these problems are realized, effective aid can be given to help the people solve them," says Jacobs.

The key word here is "help"; for this is no give-away program. Only when the people themselves show an active interest in bettering their situations, do the Americans donate the necessary supplies and technical help.

Sometimes the help is in the form of scrap lumber, old ammunition boxes, which can be used to build desks and chairs for schools or scrap tin for a myriad of purposes. For more formal projects, bricks and cement, for example, are supplied for aid stations, schools, water towers and dams.

Another, more direct, aspect of the pacification effort is the Medical Civilian Assistance Program or Medcap. A team of one or two American medics and either an American or Vietnamese doctor will visit an isolated village to give medical care to those people who live too far from a city large enough to have health facilities.

Aside from the obvious benefits of improving the general health of a village, the



Medcap also serves as an "icebreaker" in that it acquaints the village with the Americans and prepares the way for further civic action programs.

When the Medcap was initiated, American medics found the villagers were, in many ways, afraid of them and it would generally take two or three visits by a team to overcome that fear.

Now, it is not unusual for a team to treat 400 Vietnamese during a single visit.

"But Americans must be careful not to become the dominant figures in the Medcap," cautions Jacobs. "Whenever possible, Vietnamese medical authorities accompany us. This acquaints the villagers with their own people so they will eventually rely on them for all their medical needs."

The Medcap is actually a microcosm of the entire pacification effort, helping the people to return to depending on their own government. With units such as the 101st removing the threat posed by the communist insurgents, the people now have the time to reorganize, rebuild and, eventually, be self-sufficient.

As Capt. Jacobs commented, "When you consider that for every official in the Vietnamese government, from the top down to the hamlet chiefs, there is an American advisor, that's quite a prop helping to hold up the country. Our job is to help the Vietnamese become strong enough that—when we leave—they will be able to stand alone."

This makes the job of civil affairs officers such as Vinson and Jacobs one of paradoxes, being at once frustrating, enlightening, inglorious and rewarding.

The frustration, for many S-5's, begins when he finds that many American troops have been in the area before him. If his predecessors were too big-hearted and simply moved in and physically rebuilt the village from the ground up, he may find the populace indolent, confident that the Americans would take care of them.

"In many cases," Jacobs points out, "it is a serious mistake to be too soft-hearted. If we were to simply move into an area and build a school or an aid station or meeting house, it would rob the villagers of their initiative to go on to further projects, thinking it was easier to let us do it for them. It would also indirectly cause them to lose faith in their own government, wondering why the South Vietnamese government has not done the same thing."

"Actually, one of advantages Huong Dien has had is the fact that it's so isolated," says Mr. Vinson. "The kids haven't been spoiled by hundreds of GI's who, with the best of motives, give them 'chop-chop' (any kind of candy or food) whenever they ask for it. This can turn them into beggars."

Mr. Vinson commented that it is difficult to resist opening one's heart and pockets to the children one sees in the countryside. ("Their smiles could melt a stone," he laughs.) But by following the advice of civil affairs officers, one need not leave a village feeling like a Scrooge.

"Any candy or gifts should be given to the hamlet chief or one of the elders," says Vinson, "and they will distribute it to deserving youngsters."

According to Vinson, working with Vietnamese civilians enlightens those in civil affairs to the "other side of the war".

"It's a shame that everyone can't get out to meet the people in the recently pacified areas of Vietnam. Too often we lose sight

of the part of the war which in many ways is most important," said Vinson.

"No one could walk through the villages of Huong Dien and not realize how much has already been done toward winning this war and making the land safe again for the people."

The fact that much of the civil affairs work goes unnoticed does not seem to slow people like Mr. Vinson down at all.

"Actually, that's part of our job," he says. "We have to stay pretty much in the background."

While the headlines may go to the more colorful stories of men in the battle zones, this does not lessen the importance of those whose job it is to rebuild the land. Indeed, their record is impressive.

By the end of Sept., 1969, elements of the 101st had finished reconstruction of 18 separate orphanages throughout northern I Corps. In the 3rd Brigade area alone, 21 schools had been built or repaired with materials supplied through Capt. Jacobs' S-5 section. Five rice storage warehouses, eight bridges, eight dispensaries and aid stations, two dams and extensive reconstruction of hamlets and bunker complexes had also been completed before the beginning of October.

To men such as Mr. Vinson seeing the completion of their many projects is reward enough, but once in a while, a seemingly small gesture will remove any lingering doubts they might have as to the worth of their work.

While on the hospital ship "Repose", recuperating from a gall bladder infection, Vinson was roused from sleep by an orderly bringing a radio message from the Huong Dien District headquarters. Afraid some-

thing was wrong in the district, he was naturally apprehensive as he opened the envelope to read the wire inside.


A wide smile broke over his face as he read the message from Dai-uy Bien, who had sent it in behalf of all the people of Huong Dien, wishing him a speedy recovery with the hope that he would soon be back with them.

"It was the best get-well card I've ever received," recalled Vinson.

A few days later Vinson was back on the job coordinating with Dai-uy Bien to find out what supplies were needed most to complete the rebuilding of Thanh Huong. All the necessary supplies were flown in by Huey "Slicks" from the 158th, and the village began to come alive once again as its citizens made good use of the materials supplied jointly by the 3rd Brigade and the South Vietnamese government.

"Only one thing was missing," thought Vinson as he watched the community beginning to carry on a normal way of life. His eyes shifted to that clearing in the trees a few hundred feet from the market place. True, the old cathedral was still in need of repair, but not too much; it was time for it to rejoin the rest of the village, to share in Thanh Huong's rebirth.

On the last Sunday of Sept., 1969, the villagers knew they were home to stay. The old cathedral with its headless Christ was taking part in the rebuilding of the community as more than 400 worshipers heard the Latin Mass.

Before the altar, waiting for Communion, knelt Dai-uy Bien and beside him, the man he had come to know as "Padre." They shared a victory. 



PARSONS



# No Room For Emotion

*Spec. 4 Nick Lackeos*

“Three six, get up here!” a voice screams over the field radio. “We need you bad.” The rumble of an enemy machinegun echoes from the hilltop just across the canyon and then you hear the return fire ringing away from the M-16s. “WHAM!” An RPG (rocket propelled grenade) explodes across the canyon, its flash illuminating the dark jungle in those last few remaining minutes of dusk.

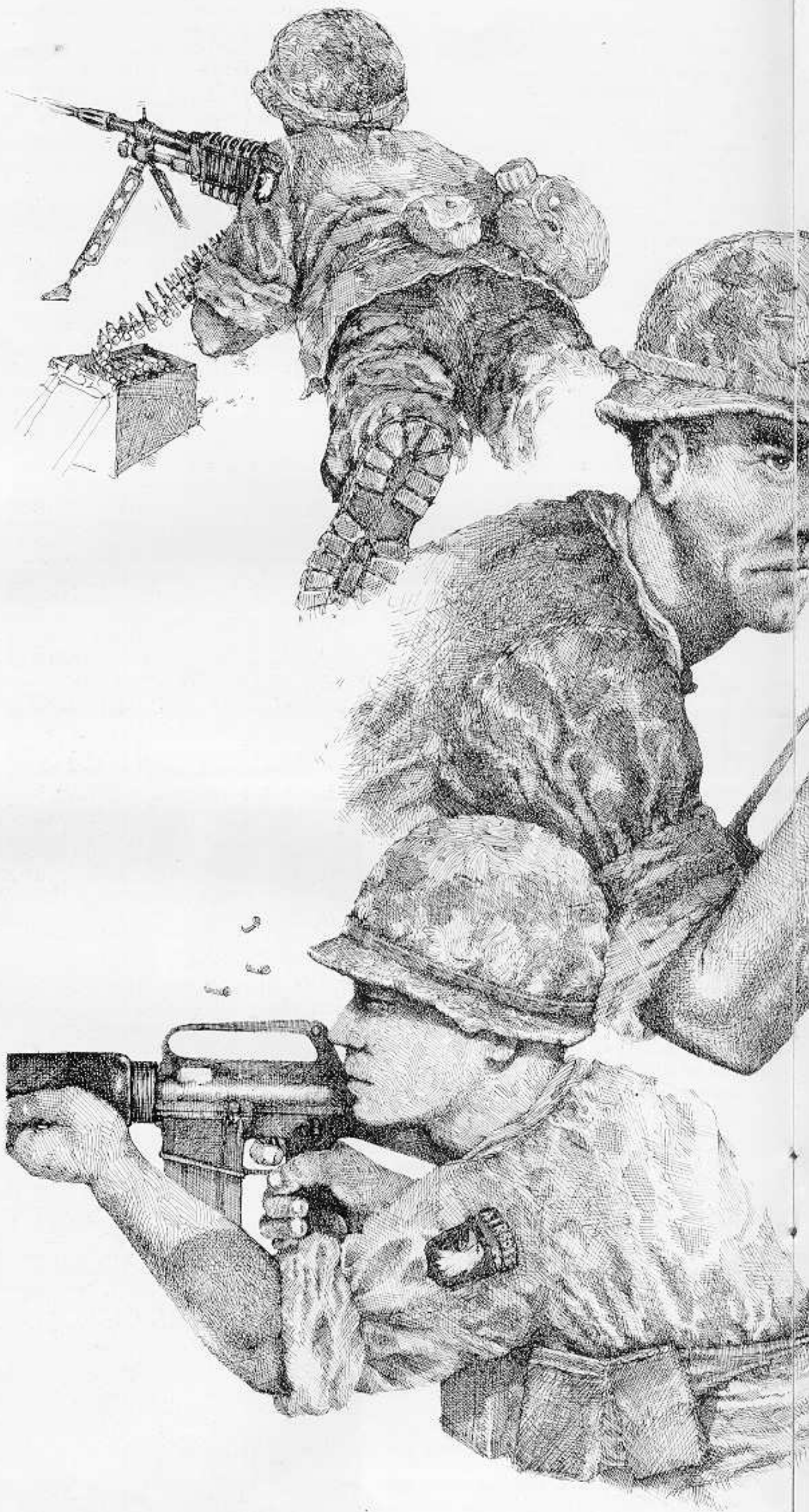
One thought dominates your mind: “This is it, buddy. Now you earn your money. Now you find out what you’re made of. This is where it all catches up with you, the weeks of ‘getting over’ in the rear, the cold sodas in the EM club back at Camp Evans, the movies every other night, the hot chow in the mess halls, the easy, rear echelon life. This is where that trite phrase ‘moment of truth’ takes on real meaning... if you happen to be a Rakkasan troop in the 3rd Bn. (Ambl.) 187th Inf. of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) 3rd Brigade, and you’re on a battalion operation in the forest-blanketed mountains east of Laos.”

“Get up here, three six,” comes the voice on the PRC-25. The men of Delta Co.’s third platoon were answering to the life plea of their sister unit, two six or second platoon, which was pinned down on the hill across the canyon and taking heavy enemy fire.

Three six’s answer didn’t come verbally; there wasn’t time for a transmission. It came in sweat as the men scrambled down the slope, running through bushes and vines that cut into their faces.

The men of three six slid down the dirt incline, ripping pants, taking splinters and scratches, dropping from a small cliff into a shallow stream with full packs. The rocks were slippery along the bank as the men splashed hurriedly through the water. They were rapidly closing the gap that separated them from the point platoon, two six.

The enemy was up there on top of that hill and so were the fellows of two six. It sounded like all hell was breaking loose up there, but that was three six’s destination, and it had to be reached quickly if the men of two six were to be helped.





The triple canopy jungle was thick and the enemy had known Delta Co. was coming, thanks to NVA trail watchers. The enemy had chosen his position well and the ambush had stopped the Rakkasans, temporarily. The fight was not over and the men of three six were hustling up the hill now to aid their comrades and double the Rakkasan firepower.

"Spread out; stay low," snapped Sgt. Thomas R. Foster of Seattle, Wash., squad leader for the first squad of Delta Co.'s third platoon. Lean and tall and burned from the sun, Foster's sandy hair was matted from blood and dirt where he had snagged the side of his head on a limb. But he was up there, leading. He had his squad on line on top of the hill and the men were spraying the jungle to their front, popping lead at the enemy so that the vegetation was showered with a hail-like spray.

"Stay low and keep your cool," called

it. You are in the middle of a firefight—one minute ago it was happening on another hill, separated from you by a canyon with a stream at the bottom that might as well have been the Pacific Ocean. But in seconds you have moved through the jungle in a trance. You've spanned the stream and crossed the canyon to the other side, and now you are there.

For an instant the numbness vanishes and you feel fear. It is an icy tremor in your abdomen. Then, as if a self-defensive device from within you takes over, the fear is chased away as rapidly as it had come. Men are trying to kill you and the fact enrages you. For the first time in your life you experience a part of yourself you never knew. A cool confidence, a strength stemming from your own abilities and instincts, perhaps born of training or some deeper spiritual source, surges up and you move out. The shattering fire of your own M-16



Foster to his squad. "Two six has a KIA." The words freeze in your mind... "KILLED IN ACTION". "Who was it?" you wonder. "Forget it," you tell yourself. It's too late. You can't feel sorry for anybody. You'll go crazy if you let your emotions take control.

This is war in Vietnam. This is combat. This is when men become heroes. This is what makes history. This is when men die and, if destiny is on your side, hopefully, it will be the enemy that is beaten and not you. This is a rare moment in a man's life. It is a climax of life for never before has another man thrown everything he had at you in an effort to end your life.

You have met with the enemy and closed with him; your fangs are in him and his are in you in an effort of destruction. This is war, dirty and raw. This is the cold meaning of combat. This is life and death struggling to overtake the other.

You are numbed from the suddenness of

somehow sounds far away and removed from the sanctuary of your inner self. Time distorts and minutes become hours and the line of tracers arcing against the darkening sky seem to crawl from the muzzle of your weapon.

With the darkness comes the silence as the firing stops. The enemy has taken his dead and wounded and fled into the night. Down on the other side of the mountains, the villages and hamlets of Thua Thien Province are preparing for another night. Somehow, you know that what you have done permits them another peaceful sleep. The enemy you fought in the twilight must withdraw to his sanctuaries to recover.

You know too, that you have found something within yourself this night, something tempered and strong. You are an infantryman. It is a miserable, dirty and underpaid job. But it is your job and it needs doing.

MIKE  
ARIGLIO  
VIETNAM



# Screaming Eagle

## VIETNAM DIARY

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

*July 2*—The 2nd Bn. (Ambl.), 502nd Inf. conducts a four-company assault into the high ground south of Phu Loc to search out and destroy enemy units and installations.

*July 6*—Elements of the 3rd Brigade experience heavy contact as they begin to penetrate the Rao Lao Valley. Exploitation of the Rao Lao was initiated following an increased amount of ground fire being received by aircraft on visual reconnaissance missions over the area. The valley, a gateway from Laos into the A Shau Valley, has been used extensively by the NVA as a supply route.

*July 9*—An Aerial Rifle Platoon of the 2nd Bn. (Ambl.), 17th Cav. is inserted into the area and meets heavy resistance. The following day elements of the 1st Bn. (Ambl.), 506th Inf. and the Black Panther Company (Hoc Bao Company) are inserted into landing zones to assist the Cav. unit. They also meet heavy resistance.

*July 13*—Well coordinated air assaults into the Bach Ma region are conducted by the 2nd Bn. (Ambl.), 502nd Inf. in conjunction with elements of the 54th ARVN Regt. Fire Base Sledge is constructed by the 326th Engr. Bn. (Ambl.) on the side of a French resort area atop the 4,500 foot mountains. Aimed at the destruction of the 4th NVA Regt., elements of the 2nd Brigade maneuvered to the north and south in areas surrounding the fire base.

*August 14*—After 90 days, the 1st Brigade ends its *Operation Lamar Plain* (see page 23) and returns from the Americal Division AO to Camp Eagle. On the same day, *Operation Kentucky Jumper* (see page 22) draws to a successful conclusion. Highlighted by three operations in the A Shau Valley, the Division-wide operation is hailed as a significant contribution to the pacification effort by blocking the traditional enemy routes into the population centers of Thua Thien Province.

*August 21*—Members of B Co., 3rd Bn. (Ambl.), 187th Inf. and 3rd Sqdrn., 5th Cav., a 9th Inf. Div. unit operating under the control of the 101st, discover an enemy cache in the A Shau containing a Russian-made 2½ ton truck, a bulldozer, 20 individual weapons and one light machinegun.

*August 24*—An early morning sapper attack on Fire Base Berchtesgaden is successfully repelled by Currahees of B Co., 1st Bn. (Ambl.), 506th Inf. Approximately 90 NVA sappers, aided by mortar crews on the surrounding ridgelines attacked the 3rd Brigade command post prematurely after being discovered as a result of a normal alert and the firing of two "mad minutes", spaced several minutes apart. Alert and aggressive action by the fire base security force repulsed the attack at the peri-

meter. Aided by Cobra gunships from the 4th Bn. (Aerial Artillery), 77th Arty., 31 enemy were killed. In addition, eight crew-served and 11 individual weapons were captured.

*August 28*—Three Air Force C-130 aircraft are used to air drop over 79,000 pounds of rations, munitions, water and fuel to 3rd Brigade elements in the A Shau Valley. The drop was the first of several aerial resupply missions scheduled to investigate the feasibility of increasing air drops as a means of resupplying units in remote areas. The cargo was successfully dropped into a preselected area within an area 50 meters by 125 meters.

*September 1*—Typhoon Doris sweeps into the Division AO bringing record amounts of rainfall.

*September 5*—Operation Lifesaver, a concept devised by Maj. Gen. John M. Wright Jr., division commander, to turn dangerous, hastily prepared LZs into safe ones is begun. A LZ improvement team, made up of 10 infantrymen from the 3rd Bn. (Ambl.), 187th Inf., 10 members of the 326th Engr. Bn. (Ambl.) and three 101st Pathfinders, was inserted into a "marginal" LZ to clear stumps and trees that prevent safe landings. On the same day, Hanoi announces the death of Ho Chi Minh and calls for a 72-hour ceasefire in memory of the 79-year-old revolutionary.

*September 12*—Brig. Gen. Henry J. Muller Jr. departs the 101st after serving seven months as assistant division commander. He is assigned as senior advisor of Advisory Team One in Da Nang.

*September 14*—Elements of the 4th Bn., 3rd ARVN Regt. and 3rd Bn. (Ambl.), 187th Inf. begin an assault into the northern



A Shau Valley in the vicinity of Fire Base Erskine where they conduct reconnaissance missions throughout the area.

*September 24*—The 3rd Brigade command post is closed out at Fire Base Rendezvous and returned to Camp Evans. Three days later the 3rd Bn. (Ambl.) 187th Inf. is airlifted from the A Shau Valley to Evans, completing the withdrawal of all divisional units from the valley.

*September 26*—Brig. Gen. John J. Hennessey is welcomed to the 101st as the new ADC during colorful ceremonies on Eagle International Helipad. Gen. Hennessey came to the Division from the 82nd Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg, N.C. where he also served as ADC.

*October 18*—Record rainfalls drench the entire AO. More than 50 inches fall in the Camp Eagle-Phu Bai area in 7 days.

*October 2*—The 1st and 2nd Battalions, 506th Inf. and a forward command post are air assaulted into an area 21 miles west of Dong Ha to assist in the redeployment of the 3rd Marine Div.

*October 6*—Currahees of the 1st Bn. (Ambl.), 506th Inf. take one prisoner at an enemy cache site 8 miles south of the DMZ. Located in a large cave complex, the cache contained 2 individual weapons, 22 122mm rockets, 30 60mm mortar rounds, 111 82mm mortar rounds, 20 Chi-com grenades, 17 enemy claymore mines, 2,750 pounds of fish, 3,850 pounds of rice, 36 rucksacks, 405 cans of Spam and 6 boxes of dried spinach. The 3rd Brigade troopers also find 2 NVA bodies believed killed by them when they engaged an enemy force east of the cache site the day before.





ROSE

# EAGLE EYES



VAN ALSTINE



BOICE



JURGENS

*As Fall comes to Eagle country, a season of contrasts begins. On clear days the heat rises in slow waves from the jungle and troopers in the field "take ten" to avoid the heat. Clear skies bring out the helicopters as CH-54A "Flying Cranes" bring supplies to hilltop fire bases and a UH-1H "Huey" is guided in for an extraction. Gathering clouds at sunset bring a night of heavy rain and for one trooper a floating bed the next morning. This is Fall 1969, as seen through "Eagle Eyes."*

BOICE





# Miss



HANSEN



*Miss America, Judi Anne Ford (right), and her court appeared before 3,000 Screaming Eagles at Camp Eagle and immediately captured every heart. For one afternoon the Division base camp was invaded by color, music and pretty girls. No one resisted the attack.*



HANSEN





# America at Camp Eagle



HANSEN



POSNER



HANSEN



HANSEN

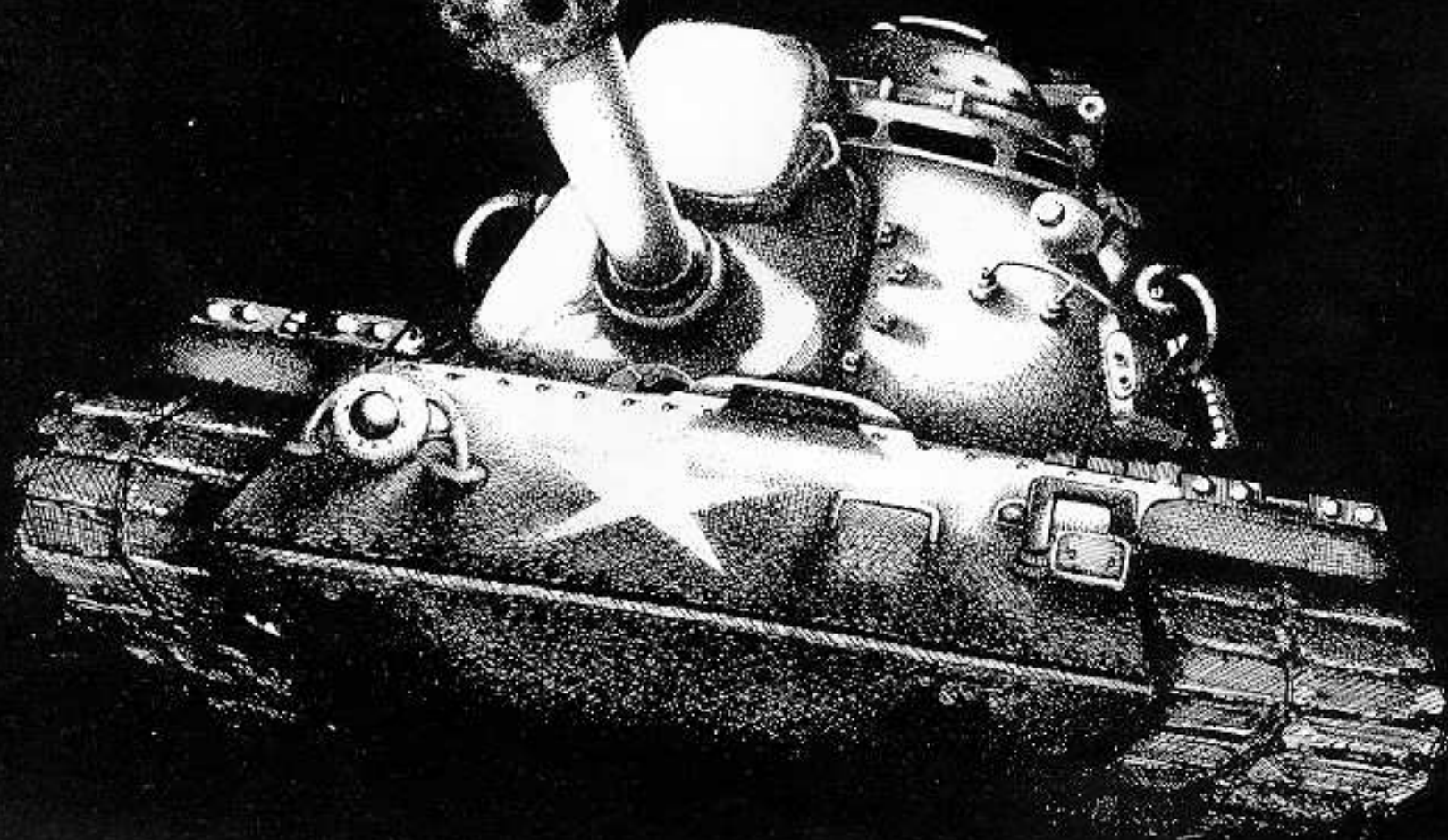


POSNER



# ARMOR in the A Shau

by Maj. Richard L. Horvath







HORVATH

*The tall, suntanned lieutenant colonel looked over the column of 80 armored personnel carriers, dropped his arm and the tracked vehicles started an epic move into the once communist dominated A Shau Valley.*

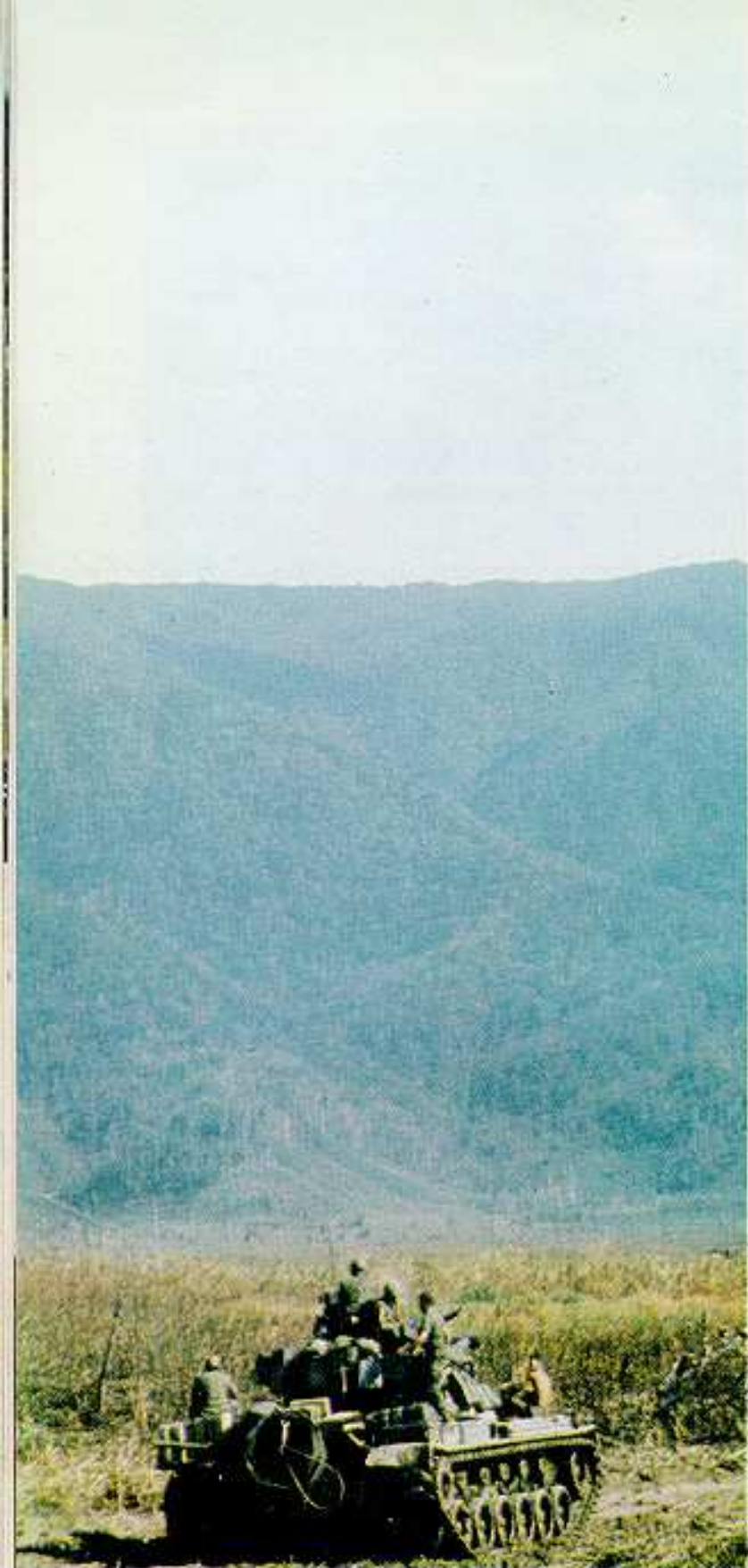
*June 20 marked the first time in the history of the mysterious valley that tracked vehicles had challenged the elephant grass, bomb craters, dense undergrowth and the elusive enemy.*

*The man in command of this massive force was Lt. Col. Thomas Carpenter III, of Miami, Florida, squadron commander of the 3rd Sqdrn., 5th Cav. His unit had fought with the Screaming Eagles since the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) had moved into the I Corps Tactical Zone. Although organic to the 9th Inf. Div., the 3rd of the 5th Cav. was under the operational control of the 101st.*

RANOUS







POSNER



SMITH

*Joining the Cav. in this move to the A Shau—as a part of Operation Montgomery Rendezvous—were elements of the 1st ANVN Div.'s 3rd Sqdrn., 7th Cav. who joined the column as it began the 15 km. trek to the valley from Fire Base Blaze.*

*Men and equipment from the 27th Engr. Bn. had just finished the pioneer road, Route 547, which sliced in wide loops and hairpin turns through the hills and dense jungle. Now the tracks lumbered in single file down the twisting road and finally into the lush tropical valley that would soon echo with more than the roar of the APCs.*

*Less than a month later 13 tanks from the Cav. and 2nd Bn., 34th Armor moved up and over Route 547 from FB Blaze to the valley, beginning yet another chapter in the history of the Vietnam struggle*

*Once in the valley, the armored task force joined with elements of the Screaming Eagle 3rd Brigade and together the combined armor and infantry task force successfully cut the NVA lines of communication into Thua Thien Province. By cutting Route 548, enemy routes into base areas in Laos were severed. Caches were found throughout the valley as the task force roamed at will, unhindered by the confused and frightened enemy.*







JURGENS



SMITH

On July 26 nine tanks from the task force followed a narrow tank trail up to the top of a battered and twisted hillmass. The trail cut by "Rome Plows" led right to the summit of Dong Ap Bia, Hill 937, where two months earlier the Division had successfully routed elements of the 29th NVA Regt. But this time there was no opposition, no withering enemy fire to restrict the move, and the tanks criss-crossed the summit at will.

Moving from one end of the valley to the other, the task force encountered no major enemy contact, although they accounted for a total of 25 enemy killed. Then, on Aug. 21, the task force discovered one Russian bulldozer, a 37 mm anti-aircraft gun and two 2 1/2 ton Russian trucks.

The task force has since departed the valley, but during the 80 days of operating in the tangled brush and high elephant grass, Screaming Eagles, tankers, Red Legs and Cav. men had written new pages in the history books.

Perhaps the mystique of the valley has disappeared. The A Shau no longer presents the eerie aura it did when its green slopes and lush floor were the enemy's domain; Screaming Eagles and the armored task force had made the valley theirs.



JURGEN



POSNER







# KENTUCKY JUMPER: The Chapter Ends

by Spec. 5 Van M. Gilreath

On the evening of Aug. 14 another chapter in the Screaming Eagle saga came to an end as *Operation Kentucky Jumper* passed into history after 167 days of action in and around the A Shau Valley. Ending at the same moment was *Operation Montgomery Rendezvous*, the last of a series of three operations conducted under *Kentucky Jumper*.

In *Massachusetts Striker*, Screaming Eagles entered the A Shau for the first time since a short raid conducted the previous August. In the initial assault into abandoned Fire Base Veghel, Screaming Eagles were successful in driving off elements of the 9th NVA Regt. entrenched there.

On April 20 elements of the 1st Bn. (Ambl.), 502nd Inf. uncovered a 100-ton cache of signal equipment, munitions and medical supplies along the "Yellow Brick Road" 45 miles west of Da Nang. This cache, one of the biggest of the year in I Corps, yielded 13 trucks, 600 SKS rifles and tons of other supplies.

Following *Striker*, *Operation Apache Snow* saw 101st troopers sweep the valley. Beginning May 8th with a massive combat assault in 70 helicopters, elements of the 101st's 2nd and 3rd Brigades, the 3rd Marine Div., 9th Regt. and the 1st ARVN Div. were placed in strategic positions along the Laotian border to the west of the A Shau.

The troopers moved eastward, catching the NVA off guard by this unexpected and unprecedented rear assault, cutting off the enemy's withdrawal routes into Laos and setting the stage for the Division's hardest battle, the struggle for Dong Ap Bia. For 10 days two NVA battalions defended the 1,300 foot peak against artillery, air strikes and ground assaults. The final assault was accomplished by Screaming Eagles of the 3rd Bn. (Ambl.), 187th Inf., 2nd Bn. (Ambl.), 501st Inf., 1st Bn.

(Ambl.), 506th Inf. and the 2nd Bd. of the 34th ARVN Regt. as they drove remaining elements of the 29th NVA Regt. from the massive bunker complex.

In the final phase of *Kentucky Jumper*, *Operation Montgomery Rendezvous*, the 326th Engr. Bn. (Ambl.) cut a 1,500 foot runway onto the rugged valley floor. Seven days after the first bulldozer arrived, an Air Force C7A "Caribou" twin engine transport touched down, becoming the first fixed-wing aircraft to land in the A Shau since the days of French rule.

Later, on June 20, armored personnel carriers of the 3rd Sqdrn., 5th Cav. and the 1st ARVN Div.'s 3rd Sqdrn., 7th Cav., rumbled into the valley along the newly completed Route 547, a twisting, winding road cut through the rugged jungle by the 27th Engr. Bn. Later, heavy armor, tanks and self-propelled howitzers joined them, roaming even to the summit of Dong Ap Bia without opposition.

Although *Montgomery Rendezvous* and *Kentucky Jumper* closed on Aug. 14, Screaming Eagles continued to operate in the valley until Oct. 1 when elements of the 3rd Brigade moved north to an area of operations west of Quang Tri, screening the redeployment of the 3rd Marine Div. But in their wake, troopers of the 101st left a decimated enemy, severed supply lines and shattered communications. Enemy attempts to disrupt the life of South Vietnamese in the lowlands were thwarted permanently in the A Shau.

Maj. Gen. John M. Wright Jr., commanding general of the 101st, termed the five and a half month *Operation Kentucky Jumper*, "... a significant contribution to the pacification effort by blocking the traditional enemy routes into population centers."





# LAMAR PLAIN

Spec. 5 E. P. Boice



ROSE

For Screaming Eagles of the 1st Brigade, May 14 was just another day in Vietnam. Short-timers pulled out their pens and calendars, while newcomers derived satisfaction in knowing another day had passed. Near the Laotian border, Geronimo and First Strike troops of the 1st Bns. (Ambl.), 501st and 502nd Infs.—under control of the 1st Brigade—dug foxholes, checked communications and coordinated defensive concentrations with C Btry., 2nd Bn. (Ambl.), 320th Arty., at Fire Base Pike. Another night of squinting into darkness and fighting sleep lay ahead.

In the rear at Camp Eagle, off-duty personnel checked movie schedules, visited clubs or answered letters with a brief paragraph about an uneventful day.

At 0045 hours on May 15 an operation order broke the pervading silence. Weary troops on radio watch grabbed handsets and listened intently as word was pushed along FM channels throughout the 1st Brigade's area of operations: "Build a landing zone and prepare for redeployment by 0600

hours. Your unit will move to the Americal Division." Stomachs tightened and young eyes stared into darkness. Old rumors died abruptly, killed by rumored answers to an endless flow of new questions.

"There must be beaucoup NCA down there," one trooper said. Down there?! Down where? Somebody injected that the 2nd NVA Division was *down there*. Another mentioned Duc Pho, having read about it when the 1st Brigade fought along side the Americal back in 1968. But murmurings ceased when the sun rose above the ridgeline, burning away the morning fog. There was not time for breakfast, let alone, discussion.

Alpha Co. was the first to arrive at FB Pike, followed by Bravo, Charlie, Delta and Echo of the 1st of the 501st. Charlie Btry., 2nd of the 320th Arty. had already begun closing down. Near FB Lash the 1st of the 502 made preparations, for they would follow a day later. The "Yellow Brick Road," Route 614, was closed; another rendezvous awaited.





KELSEN

*In search of an elusive enemy, a 1st Brigade trooper moves carefully through a stream.*

The scene erupted as "Chinooks" cranked engines and began lifting the advance party to tiny Tam Ky airstrip, northwest of Americal Div. Headquarters at Chu Lai. Jeeps, 2½ and 5 ton trucks were stuffed with footlockers and field desks. Field desks? Optimists only packed a rucksack and water-proof bag. "Somebody said we would be down there for about 20 days." Later they would bring it all.

Marshalling points were established at Phu Bai and Corregidor Pad at Camp Eagle. Conexes, artillery, rucked-up troops and vehicles waited to board C-130s and C-123s bound for Tam Ky airstrip. Tam Ky? Only a few with the "need" knew where it was; most just followed the flow or the license plate in front of them.

Higher up plans for deployment were hastily drawn and distributed. Brigade S-4 coordinated with the Air Force, which would eventually make 69 C-130 and C-123 sorties in three days. At 0830 hours the 1st Brigade liaison team arrived at Americal Div. Hqs., and was briefed by the general staff.

FB Professional, southwest of Tam Ky had come under increased pressure from elements of the NVA's 2nd Div. Americal intelligence feared they had plans to take Quang Tin Province Hqs. located at Tam Ky. The NVA had pushed their way from the mountains into the foothills and were still moving. The 1st Bn., 46th Inf. was in trouble and the "Always First" Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) was called to add another chapter to its nomadic history.

The 1st of the 501st arrived with its legions at 1400 hours, an hour and 45 minutes ahead of schedule. Along with the 1st Brigade's security platoon, they fortified a perimeter around half the airstrip, while staff sections set up tents and commo platoons began putting together a temporary tactical operations center.

North of Tam Ky city the 1st Field Sup-



*At the Hue-Phu Bai airstrip, "Always First" troopers wait to board C-130s and C-123s for the flight to Tam Ky.*

ply and Service Element—composed of detachments from 801st Main Bn., 326th Med. Bn., 326th Engr. Bn. and 426 S&S Bn.—arrived by convoy from Chu Lai, where they had been ferried by Navy LST. Their support would prove vital.

The sense of urgency and purpose was contagious. Headquarters personnel found themselves eating and sleeping next to the men they supported. Gradually there emerged an understanding—the relative hardships they suffered were small in comparison to what the infantryman would go through. Few complained... there wasn't time. Airmobility and the Airborne spirit resulted in teamwork.

At 1542 hrs. Col. Richard A. Bresnahan, 1st Brigade commanding officer, reported to Maj. Gen Charles Gettys, commanding general of the Americal Div.

Operation Lamar Plain had begun. Upon arrival at Tam Ky, Light Observation Helicopters (LOH)—white teams—were joined by combined Cobra-LOH pink teams from B Trp., 2nd Sqdrn. (Ambl.) 17th Cav. Together they began flying visual

reconnaissance into enemy areas. C-130s and C-123s continued to arrive until by late May more than 159,000 lbs of supplies and 751 men had been brought to Tam Ky.

Scores of helicopters from 101st Avn. Bn. (AHS) (Ambl.) arrived a day later, blasting the camp with dust and debris. But no one complained. Outside the perimeter Geronimo troops were grouped alongside the airstrip, five to a helicopter.

Thirty-eight hours after alert orders were given, Geronimo troops combat assaulted north of FB Professional. Immediately there was a painful introduction to change. Cool mountain air was a blurred memory. Temperatures reached 120 degrees. The stale, stagnant air was broken by gasps. For the next 18 days they would sweat, fight and suffer in these foothills and valleys.

On May 19 the 1st of the 502nd combat assaulted into New Hau Duc, setting up a blocking force west of Professional. Enemy elements fragmented by Geronimo troops to the north failed to escape First Strike fire teams when they fled.

*The area around Tam Ky was criss-crossed with streams and troopers took care to keep their weapons dry. Later they would need them.*





The enemy was fortified, motivated and abundant. Hooches and heavily constructed bunkers were discovered and destroyed. Ensuing contact was sporadically heavy. Air support was harassed by communist anti-aircraft gunners, who fired their .51 and .30 caliber machineguns at anything from a F4 Phantom to a LOH. Fifteen positions were spotted by air reconnaissance. Six were destroyed by the Phantoms, four by helicopter gunships and one by Recon, 1st of the 501st. The fighting was characterized in this extraction from an after action report for May 21, the day Geronimos took hill 270:

*"1st Brigade elements engaged in heavy contact as the 1st Bn., 501st Inf. fought a day-long struggle against a determined, well dug-in enemy. At 0500 C/1-501 detected movement outside their night defensive position (NDP) and engaged the suspected enemy with M-79 and hand grenades. A first light sweep disclosed 2 VC KIA. At 0642 B/501 received intensive small arms and heavy machine-gun fire from an enemy force of unknown size. The contact continued throughout the day. C and D Cos. and Recon, 1/501 observed 4 NVA with 12.7mm HMG and engaged the enemy position. At 1000 D/1-501 joined the bitter fighting by engaging an enemy force in the area. The fighting continued throughout the day as the enemy tenaciously defended from steel-reinforced concrete bunkers. Tactical air, artillery and air cav. support was used throughout the afternoon. As the elements disengaged, the enemy fled leaving 25 KIA on the battlefield."*

From its location on FB Young, C Btry, 2nd of the 320th Arty. fired 6,000 rounds in support of the 1st of the 501st during the first week. Many of these rounds were fired while the battery was receiving incoming mortar fire. The heaviest barrage, between 75 and 150 rounds, didn't stop the determined Redlegs.



DUCY

Lamar Plain turned out to be primarily a ground action and much of the "ground" was covered by thick forests. Below: An unexpected rain turns into a welcome showerbath.

BOICE



PARSONS







*An RTO pushes through a stream, checking to make sure his handset and weapon stay dry.*

During the first week of *Lamar Plain* 90 enemy were killed, three POWs taken and 26 weapons and 500 lbs of rice captured. By June 12, 1st Brigade troops had secured the area around FB Professional. The 1st of the 501st was brought in for a well-deserved stand-down and the 1st of the 502nd combat assaulted from their blocking position to the bitterly contested foothills.

By late June the enemy was avoiding contact, his ranks depleted. The 1st of the 502nd uncovered the largest cache of the operation when a Scout Dog named Prince alerted members of Recon (Bad Boys). Five huts measuring 15 x 12 feet, containing 10 tons of weapons and ammunition were found. The cache included: 29 SKS rifles, 72 AK-47s and one M-1; three 60mm mortars and thirty-seven 122mm rounds; 13 cases of AK-47 ammunition, thirteen 75mm recoilless rifle rounds, 284 blasting caps and numerous mortar fuzes. Close by, C Co., 1st of the 502nd found a small lean-to containing two hundred 82mm mortar rounds and 78 rocket propelled grenades.

While *Lamar Plain* was essentially a ground action, troops of the 101st and Americal Divs. received air and ground support vital to the operation's success.

During the intense ground fighting, Air Force F4 Phantoms, under the direction of 1st Brigade forward air controllers (FACS), were responsible for killing 94 enemy, destroying 530 bunkers, 392 structures, 6 12.5mm positions, two mortar emplacements and for producing 197 sustained fires and 70 secondary explosions.

B Trp., 2nd of the 17th Cav., provided aerial and ground reconnaissance and fire support for troops in contact. They also provided a ready reaction force for downed helicopters or other emergency-type mis-



PARSONS

*Below: M-60 machinegunner fires a sustained burst at the enemy while the assistant gunner keeps the ammunition flowing smoothly.*



RITCHIE





Much of Lamar Plain was marked by mud, thick jungle and heat. And there was always the enemy—somewhere.

PARSONS

sions. And the 4th Bn. (Ambl.), 77th ARA was on station with the fury of Cobra miniguns and rockets, firing in support of ground troops and medical evacuation helicopters.

The field supply and service element programmed and rigged between 10 and 30 CH-47 "Chinook" sorties per day, frequently operating from forward field positions such as FB Professional. Because of the intense heat, troops were forced to lighten their rucksacks, carrying two days rations instead of five. This put the pressure on the supply elements and the 159th Avn. Bn. (AHS) (Ambl.), but even under intense enemy fire troops were supplied with food, water—sometimes, ice—and ammunition. At the rear logistics base, a former rice paddy, conditions were not ideal. A cloud of red dust hung over Camp Pape from early morning till, at times, 1000.

Nobody was very happy choking dusty air, but personal discomfort never delayed a mission. Reflecting a spirit evolved during the 1st Brigade's 2½ years fighting alone in Vietnam, rear echelon troops became emotionally involved with an operation. Clerks and cooks—who before seldom suffered more than a shortage of water in the showers—were living in foxholes, filling sandbags and carrying out their duties in stuffy tents. Twice rain threatened to bring support operations to a standstill. Tents were under water and troops had to swim after their boots as they floated by. With everyone's help the obstacles were overcome. There was a family atmosphere of self-protection and unit pride.

The dedication of Camp Pape and Camp Perriera further dramatized this feeling. Captain John Pape was killed shortly after his company, B Co., 1st of the 501st, combat assaulted into an LZ beneath Hill 187. Shortly after arriving in country, Capt. Pape was wounded on a reconnaissance patrol, just prior to taking command of C Co., 1/501. His wounds were inflicted by more than 40 claymore fragments and three AK-47 rounds.

The captain refused amputation of his leg, a change in branch of service, evacuation to the U.S. and a profile. Instead he requested he be returned to the 101st.

After recovering from his wounds, Capt. Pape got his wish, becoming S-3 air for the 2nd Brigade. Still, Pape wanted to return to the field and finally persuaded his brigade commander to give him command of B Co., 1st of the 501st.

Pfc. Lloyd Perriera, A. Co., 1st of the 502nd, gave his life while saving the lives of his buddies. His platoon was pinned down by heavy machinegun fire from a bunker complex and began to pull back. Perriera charged toward the bunker complex with his M-16 and a grenade, eliminating the obstacle and saving the platoon.

Operation Lamar Plain was more than a tactical redeployment of troops and a head to head meeting with the enemy. Lamar Plain was a feeling of unity, pride and sorrow. Troops arriving at Camp Eagle with orders for Tam Ky were dismayed by reports about primitive conditions, but it wasn't long after arrival before they found a place and more importantly, a purpose. Sometimes it was hard to tell an infantryman from a clerk. They were all together defending a reputation which began July 29, 1965 when the 1st Brigade came to Vietnam.



PARSONS



A trooper cautiously probes an abandoned hut near Tam Ky. Many had been occupied by the enemy shortly before.







# PLEISTOCENE'S

or: "Which

# MT. CRACK

by Spec. 5 Al Magary

Once upon a time in Southeast Asia there was a soldier named Marvin Pleistocene who was from northern Idaho. (Is there a southern part?) Growing up as close to Sun Valley as he did, he learned how to ski—on snow—at a very early age. He went to college in Colorado and skied there too. Then his uncle asked that he join his company in Asia. Marvin went over in January, donned the green and fought for his country.

One day in Vietnam Marvin looked at a map and said to his buddy, who was also named Marvin, "Central Highlands. Are there mountains in the Central Highlands?"

"Yes," said his buddy, "there are mountains in the Central Highlands."

"Is there snow there?"

"No," said his buddy, "there is no snow in the Central Highlands."

"Aaarghhh," said Marvin, imitating those World War II comic books. "What am I to do? I cannot exist for an entire year without skiing."

"See the chaplain," said his buddy. That was a common enough answer to any complaint.

So Marvin went to see the chaplain. Now the chaplain, as it happened, was a very clever fellow, and he had an answer to Pleistocene's Complaint.

"Australia," said the chaplain.

"What?" said Marvin.

"Australia," repeated the chaplain.

"So what about Australia?" asked Marvin. "I don't want to go water skiing."

"Ah," said the chaplain, laying his finger on the side of his nose. "But they have mountains. They're called the Snowy Mountains, by some strange coincidence."

"No kidding?"

"Would I kid you?"

"Wow," said Marvin. "When?"

"The snow starts in June and melts sometime in October," said the chaplain.

"Wow," said Marvin, who thanked the chaplain and went to see the R&R officer at Special Services.

"Australia!" demanded Marvin. "In July."

"Hummmm," said the R & R officer, and gave him a line number.

"Wow," said Marvin, who then went to the R & R clerk in his company.

"Australia, July 14-21, line number 48," said Marvin.

"All set man," said the R & R clerk.

"Wow," said Marvin, and he said it again three weeks later when he got his orders. He was positively bubbling when he went to SERTS and then to Camp Alpha to process, and he was gibbering when he finally boarded a World Airways 707 bound for Sydney.

"Don't gibber," said the stewardess.

"Sorry, miss, but I'm going skiing in Australia."

"Oh, you are? May I come with you? I love water skiing."

"Sorry," said Marvin, desperately trying to avoid looking at her honeyblond hair, china blue eyes, Dutch milk complexion



# COMPLAINT

Way To

## ENBACK ? ”

and, uh, other assets, “Snow skiing.” Even for a honeyblonde Marvin would not give up skiing—on snow.

Marvin got off the plane in Sydney and monkeyjumped around a while before going to the R & R center. There he rented a sweater (because it was cold) and leap-frogged over several startled Spec. 4's to get to the Proscenia travel desk.

“Skiing. I want to go skiing,” he panted.

“Ah, how romantic,” said the Proscenia booking agent, who looked just like the airline stewardess except she had a mini-skirt on (despite the cold). “I’ll fix you up.”

Ten minutes later Marvin walked out of the R & R center, went back to the airport and got on a plane for Cooma, about an hour away from Sydney. At Cooma they neglected to open the door of the bus before Marvin got there so crawled in through a window, considering whether to hijack the bus or not.

Two hours later Marvin stood at the foot of Mt. Crackenback in a ski resort called Thredbo in the Snowy Mountains (near towns called Perisher, Smiggin Holes, Siberia and Diggers Creek). He saw snow, real white snow, pristine pure snow. He wowed several times until attracting the attention of 29 beautiful miniskirted Aussie lasses, who yelled, “Hey, Yank,” and ran toward him. He tore himself away from their fondles, dashed into the clothing rental shop (parka, stretch pants, gloves, ear band) then the ski rental shop (skis, poles, boots), put on everything, scrambled past the ski lift ticket office after purchasing an all-day ticket, jumped on a chairlift up Mr. Crackenback and within moments was madly skiing down the mountain, a look of great satisfaction on his face.

They had to drag him off the mountain at 4 p.m. and send him to the lodge. But he had an excellent dinner there, fell in love with an Australian girl and was ready at 9 a.m. the next morning for the lift to start.

Proscenia charged him only \$71 (Australian), about \$78 (American), for three days



of skiing and two nights of apres-ski fun. When it was over, he promptly “extended” his stay for another three days and placed his \$71 (Australian) before the smiling desk clerk. He also vowed to come back to Australia after his tour in Vietnam and spend the rest of his life.

“How was it?” asked his buddy on his return.

A look of bliss on Marvin’s sunburned face was the only answer.

There are any number of incredibly delightful things to do on R & R. You can climb a mountain in Japan (and ski December through April) or you can surf in Hawaii. But if you should happen to go to Thredbo (or Perisher or Smiggins) in southern New South Wales just any day of the year, you would spot a former wearer of the Army green named Marvin madly skiing down a mountain—or else sitting in an alpine pasture waiting for the snow to start.







HANSEN



HORVATH

# BACH MA



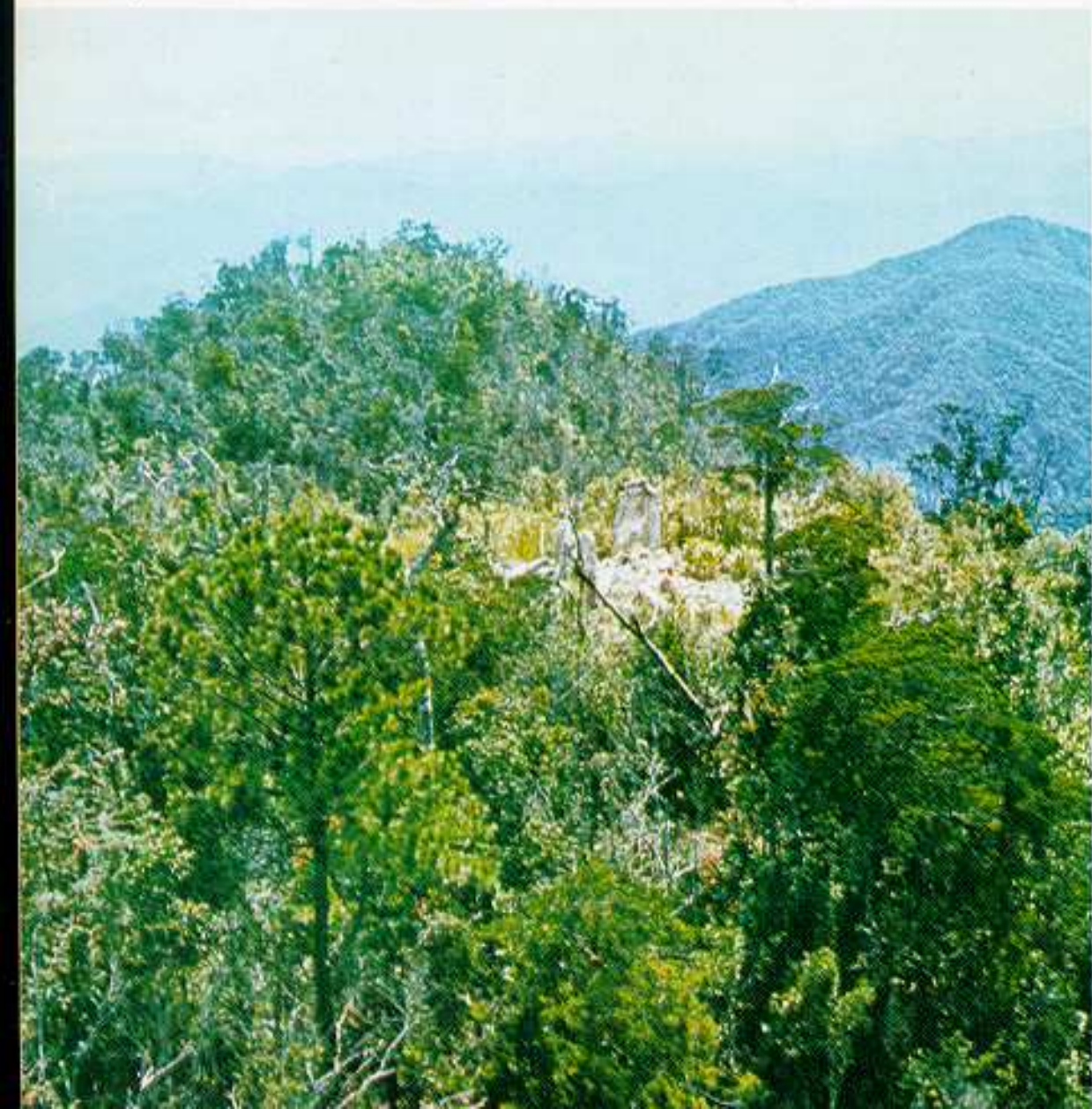
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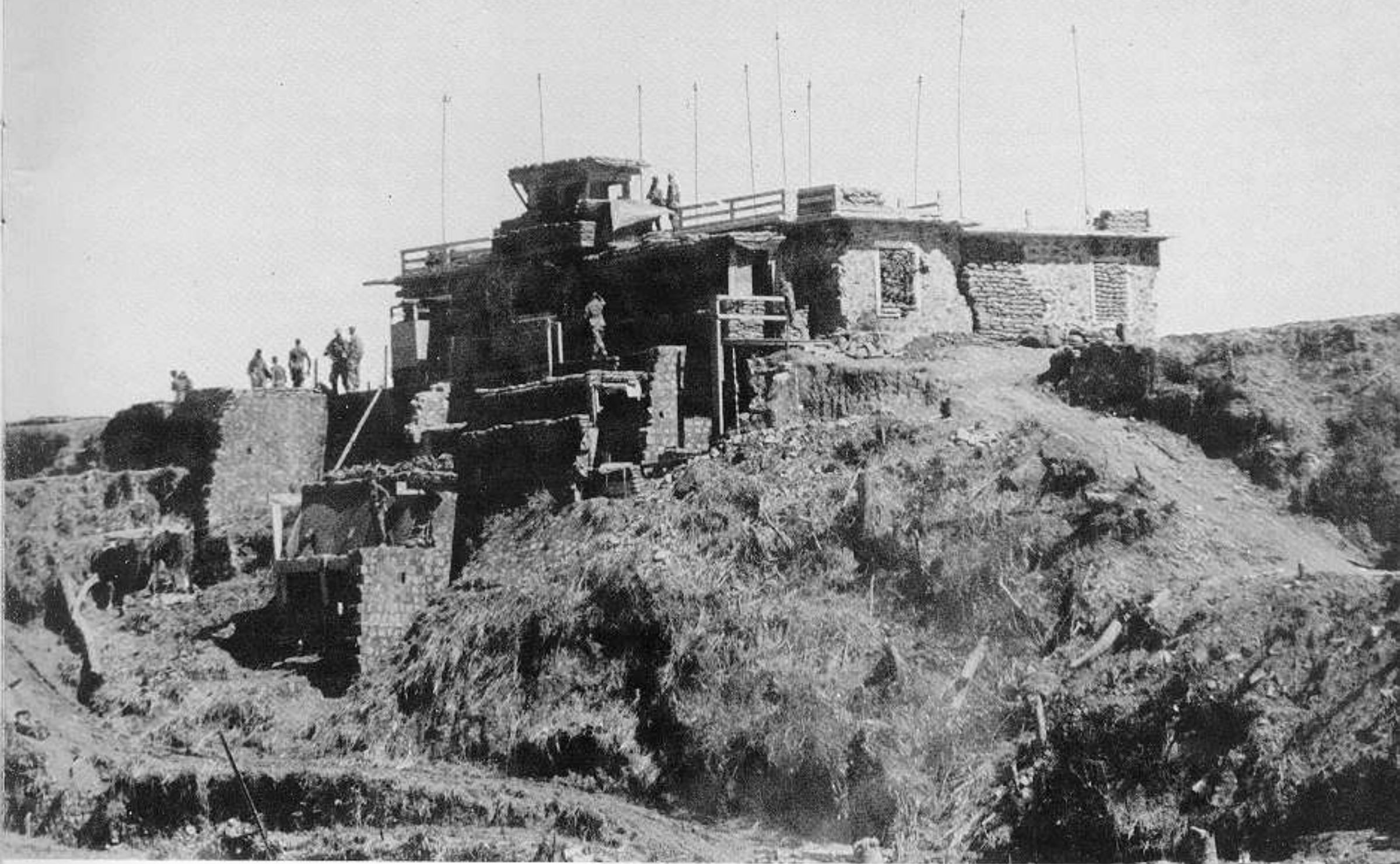
by Spec. 4 Roger Higle

*On a high ridge above the coastal lowlands of Phu Loc District stand the ruins of palatial villas and French resorts. Here the NVA and VC once gathered for raids on the lowlands and rested after the battle's end. But in July the 101st Abn. Div. (Ambl.) changed all that, assaulting into the area and establishing FB Sledge. And soon the savage beauty of Bach Ma no longer belonged to the enemy.*

HANSEN







*Bristling with antennas, the tactical operations center rests in a villa at the very top of Bach Ma. In addition to being almost inaccessible, the position offers a commanding view of the terrain.*

High above the lush coastal lowlands of Phu Loc District, Thua Thien Province, rises a huge cloud-capped ridge called the Bach Ma. According to Vietnamese tradition, the ridge got its name, "white horse", from the white cloud which continually caps its 4,500 foot peak.

Bach Ma is a formidable natural fortress, and until July of 1969, it belonged to the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong forces operating in Nam Hoa and Phu Loc, areas rich in the much sought after staple of Vietnamese life—rice. In the Bach Ma area, where the mountains are close to the coastline, it was no problem for the enemy to move stealthily into the low-lying villages to confiscate rice and other foods, as long as he could control the country below from the towering ridge called Bach Ma.

In July, 1969, it had been over a year since any friendly forces had occupied the crest of the strategic ridge line. The French had been there in earlier years, and they had built a twisting road to the top, but the road was in disrepair. What was required to take the Bach Ma was an airmobile assault.

The move onto the roof of Thua Thien

Province was scheduled to begin on the 11th of July. Two battalions of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)—the 1st Bn. (Ambl.), 327th Inf. and the 2nd Bn. (Ambl.), 502nd Inf.—under the operational control of the Division's 2nd Brigade, were ready to assault from the vicinity of Fire Base Roy. Then, the weather atop the "white horse" closed in and the operation was delayed two days.

The dense cloud cover lifted on July 13, and Screaming Eagles assaulted the Bach Ma along with elements of the 54th ARVN Regt.

The assault was unique from the beginning because the CA was made into two separate LZ's simultaneously. The two sites, both on the crest of the mountain, were two thousand meters apart. Landings were coordinated from one command and control ship flying above.

Among the first on the top were men of C Co., 326th Engr. Bn. (Ambl.). Their job was to clear the area for the insertion of US and ARVN 105mm artillery. They had two days to get the job done.

"We were on a tight schedule," recalled Lt. Douglas McArthur of C. Co., "but airmobility made it possible to complete

the project on time."

CH-54 "Flying Cranes" shuttled excavation equipment, including bulldozers, to the ridge from Camp Eagle. Capt. Dennis McCool, commander of the engineer company, put the value of airmobility in perspective when he observed, "Without the choppers, it would have taken six months to build this place."

"This place" rapidly became a model fire base called Sledge, accommodating two batteries of artillery, a joint tactical operations center (TOC) and eight helipads. From it, the allies could control enemy infiltration routes through the mountains to the west and deny access to the resources of the coast.

Even while the forward TOC was still being set up in an old French villa on Bach Ma, Screaming Eagle battalions were moving out into the areas north of Sledge, blasting scores of LZ's where none had existed before. What had been enemy controlled terrain was being opened up to the airmobility of the 101st.

Sweep operations ended on July 26 when the 2nd of the 502nd was extracted to Roy for a two-day stand down. Phase One of the operation was over; Phase Two swung





CH-54 "Flying Crane" drops a bulldozer blade on a newly cut landing zone on the Bach Ma. From this LZ the earth moving equipment expands the cleared area outward, forming the foundation of the fire base.

into motion the next day, and by the end of the second day the O-Deuce and 1st of the 327th had assaulted into FB Musket and the Elephant Valley respectively.

In Phase Two, Screaming Eagles were working inland from Bach Ma, in rugged terrain searching for the enemy, his caches, his fortifications, and, hopefully, his rear staging and headquarters areas. Contact was light for the most part, just as it had been in Phase One. The enemy was leaving trail-watchers and small patrols behind to fight delaying actions while his main force units, particularly the 4th NVA Regt., retreated deep into the interior. As the US troops swept along, they continued cutting LZ's for future use—many of them "instant LZ's" cleared by the explosive power of 10,000 pound bombs, delivered on target by Air Force fighter-bombers.

Traces of the enemy were uncovered almost daily, but on August 2 aviators from 2nd Brigade's C Trp., 2nd Sqdn. (Ambl.), 17th Cav. hit paydirt. They spotted a large hooch and bunker complex. Tactical air was called in, and the air strikes brought 11

secondary explosions. Strike Force troops of the O-Deuce moved in on the ground and found numerous other bunkers in the area. They recovered more than 100 pounds of documents detailing the organization of the 4th NVA Regt.; most of them were found in a recently-abandoned complex assumed to be the regiment's former headquarters.

At almost the same time, other elements of the O-Deuce were discovering a large abandoned sapper training camp, complete with a US-style defensive perimeter and numerous training aids left behind in a hasty departure. The cache included rice, wheat and salt, Chicom medical supplies, blasting equipment, sapper tools, training manuals written in Vietnamese and Chinese, and hundreds of satchel charges.

Speaking of the sapper camp, Strike Force battalion commander Lt. Col. George D. Moore Jr. said, "This camp was almost certainly a staging area for sapper raids on nearby allied fire bases and the Hue-Da Nang Railway."


In the first week of August, the operation began drawing to a close. The enemy had abandoned his mountain home in a hasty withdrawal. The clearing and securing of the Bach Ma area had been accomplished in 30 days.

Those days not only saw an operation succeed. They also provided a proving ground for the airmobile concept. Infantrymen of the 101st had been sustained by daily resupply in the canopy while traveling light—without rucksacks. Huey "log birds" (resupply helicopters), LOH's and giant "Chinooks" had perched on Sledge's eight helipads in a never-ending succession of missions. In their nest, Screaming Eagles had survived 150 mile per hour winds and chilling temperatures.

"Airmobility withstood every test on Bach Ma—the enemy, the terrain and the elements," commented Maj. Jerome A. Bruschette, S-3 of the O-Deuce, and the joint US-ARVN TOC operated without a hitch."

By August 11 the 101st troops had been extracted from Bach Ma and the surrounding area to Camp Eagle. Sledge was turned over to ARVN forces who continued to secure the region against enemy infiltration from the back of the "white horse." The operation was over for US forces, and a few weeks later, the ARVN would leave too.

Thanks to the smoothly coordinated efforts of Vietnamese and Americans, Bach Ma was no longer closed to the allies, no longer a shelter for NVA and VC forces. The allies, in addition to destroying enemy fortifications and gathering his caches, had cleared more than 80 LZ's. The old fortress Bach Ma had become open territory. It was secure and easily accessible to the airmobile troopers of the 101st.

The threat to the enemy in Phu Loc is permanent. He no longer dares to use the highlands around Bach Ma to endanger the people and the plenty of the coastal lowlands which he had formerly exploited as a matter of course. 

As Fire Base Sledge takes shape, Screaming Eagles clear the surrounding brush.







PARSONS

**On August 16 the Division celebrated its 27th Anniversary as Screaming Eagles continued their mission of helping to protect the populated areas of Thua Thien Province. In the years between the Division's birth in 1942 and its role in Vietnam today—names such as Bastogne, Normandy, Berchtesgaden, Dak To and the A Shau Valley have been written into the 101st's history. But the basic mission, the defense of freedom and democracy, has never changed.**



