



Ralliers End 'Cat-Mouse' Game

By SP5 Joe Kamalick

PHUOC VINH — An important crimp was placed on key VC and NVA infiltration when some 60 VC sympathizers ended a year-long game of cat and mouse and rallied to the Republic of Vietnam last week.

The 62 villagers, who for the past year have been forced into a nomadic life by pursuing 1st Air Cavalrymen, walked into ARVN Armored Cavalry lines along Highway 1A just north of Phuoc Vinh, some 40 miles north of Saigon.

They were the final group from the

village of Phuoc Sang, raising the total number of rallying, former VC sympathizers from the hamlet to 90.

The villagers had been serving as guides for main force enemy supply units working down infiltration routes above and around the Cav's Phuoc Vinh division basecamp.

The villagers were first pursued — and thus started on their nomadic life — a year ago when the 1st Cav moved into Phuoc Vinh. They were described as "very, very elusive."

A handful of villagers had escaped

last June and July and told commanders here that the remaining villagers, though friendly to the VC, were tired of their nomadic life and willing to surrender. But some 15 VC cadres kept the remaining villagers from turning themselves in, they said.

The villagers credited psychological war broadcasts, leaflet drops and artillery and B-52 strikes as the reasons for changing sides in the war.

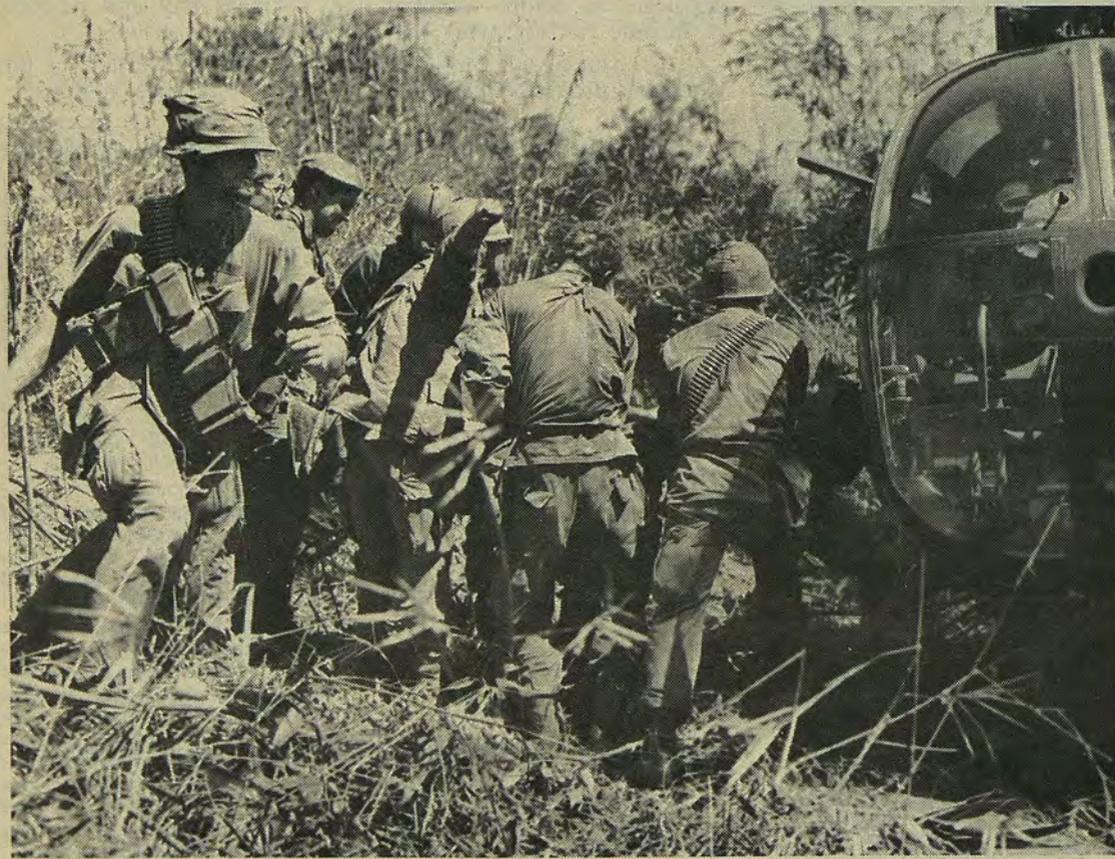
On two occasions, 1st Cav and ARVN troops had moved in company-sized sweeps in unsuccessful attempts to sur-

round the roving band. Extreme caution was taken to avoid getting into a firefight with the VC cadre, lest civilians be killed.

Interrogation revealed that 59 of the villagers had been moved to Cambodia by the VC before the remaining 90 decided to cast their lot with southern Allied Forces.

Units working over the year-long chase included almost every maneuver battalion in the 1st Cav as each in their turn serve as the base defense at Phuoc Vinh and there operate under the command of the 1st Cav's Division Artillery — a command set-up unique to the Cav.

More to Come . . .



When Specialist Four Chuck Harris snapped this photograph, he didn't realize he'd be the next Skytrooper to use the MEDEVAC helicopter. The 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, information specialist was hit with shrapnel from a mortar round while patrolling with Companies C and E. Specialist Harris is recuperating in Walter Reed Army Hospital, Washington, D.C. A friend found the damaged camera and forwarded the film to the Information Office.

Air Cavalrymen Kill 451 Enemy

PHUOC VINH — Heavy battle action in the 1st Air Cav area of operation resulted in 451 NVA and VC troops killed during the week of Dec. 6-12.

The largest number of enemy casualties occurred in prolonged fighting around Fire Support Base Jamie, 56 miles northwest of Saigon in War Zone C.

Including 20 killed Dec. 5, there were 110 NVA killed in a series of engagements lasting through Dec. 8.

Providing most of the Skytrooper punch was Company A, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, as it swept into and through NVA bunker complexes northeast of the firebase.

On Dec. 6, a day after combat assaulting into the area, Alpha Company pulled out from its night defensive position, accompanied by a platoon of Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) soldiers walking point.

They moved only 300 meters before making contact.

"The CIDG's were doing a great job getting us through the thick bamboo," said company RTO Private First Class William Duffey. "Then we ran into the NVA. We opened up, and they shot back with AK's, .30 caliber machine guns and B-40 rockets."

With the enemy's position clearly revealed, the Allied Forces called in gunships, artillery air strikes and Cobra-borne aerial rocket artillery to slam the bunker complex.

At day's end, Skytroopers had killed 20 enemy in 10 separate actions.

The following day the scenario was repeated nearby and 18 more NVA were killed.

While preparing to be lifted out Dec. 8, Alpha Company made short work of NVA gunners who took several Cav Hueys under fire as they settled into the pickup zone.

While one platoon boarded birds and headed back to Tay Ninh, the rest of the company picked up its gear and swept into the bamboo to silence the enemy weapons.

Skytroopers encountered the enemy in several unrelated contacts during the day, killing 26.

Eleven NVA died in a Dec. 9 skirmish 12 miles southwest of Bu Dop.

After setting up one platoon in a stay-behind ambush to their rear, soldiers of Company D, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, advanced into an enemy bunker complex.

Contact was made simultaneously by both elements. The ambushers killed five NVA with the remainder of the company killing six.

An attempt by the Charlie Troop "Blues," an aerial rifle platoon of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, to capture an NVA .51 caliber machine gun resulted in the deaths of three NVA on Dec. 11 eight miles northeast of Song Be.

The ground troops combat assaulted into a clearing near the gun's location but had to extract after 10 minutes due to heavy enemy fire leaving three enemy dead.

Separate actions in the Skytroopers' area of responsibility accounted for 58 enemy killed for the day.

During the week, nine Cavalrymen were killed and 40 wounded.

Medics Enjoy Those Nightcaps

PHUOC VINH — "We've really met with success in our psychological operations," boasted Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Miller, 1st Air Cav civil affairs officer.

"And some of our best projects are the clinics we conduct for the Vietnamese — MEDCAPs," he continued.

"Don't your MEDCAP teams sometimes stay in a village overnight?" Lieutenant Colonel Morris Brady, division artillery commander, questioned with a twinkle in his eye.

"Why, yes," replied Colonel Miller.

The groundwork laid, Colonel Brady smilingly suggested, "Then maybe you should call those operations NIGHTCAPs."

Bandsmen 'Cherish' AK

By PFC Charlie Petit

PHUOC VINH — It's been a long time since an Army band led the troops into battle, but that's what happened to 1st Air Cav musicians, albeit inadvertently.

"We were half way through 'Cherish' when an AK-47 started firing from the hillside behind us," said Chief Warrant Officer Richard N. Saddler, bandmaster.

Called on to entertain kids and draw a crowd for a MEDCAP mission, the band was in the hamlet of Loc Thien, 74 miles north of Saigon.

For lack of other transportation, the 34-member group, tubas and all, had ridden from nearby Loc Ninh perched on the

turrets and sides of five 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment tanks.

With the tanks scattered about the hamlet, the medical corpsmen treating the village's residents, and an appreciative crowd gathered, all went well for the first 25 minutes.

"Not everyone heard the gunfire at once," said Specialist Five James Smoker, a clarinetist. "So the band just sort of ran down like an old-fashioned record player."

The band wasn't entirely unprepared for this sort of thing. The musical Skytroopers wore flak jackets and steel pots, their M-16 rifles nearby.

Over the clatter of three tank-mounted .50 caliber machine guns, one could even hear some

of the musicians pumping out M-16 rounds.

"Nobody got hurt, but there sure were a lot of AK rounds going through the tin-roofed building I dove into," recalled Sergeant Charles W. Dixon, the drummer.

The brief exchange lasted only a few moments before the villagers and troopers were able to crawl out of foxholes, houses and from behind tanks.

There were three casualties — a clarinet, saxophone and French horn got trampled in the initial confusion.

The French horn got its bell crushed when its scrambling owner didn't quite make it over a tuba on his way to the safety of a nearby tank.

Cav Convoy . . .



A 2nd Brigade convoy of the 1st Air Cav, escorted by armored personnel carriers with ARVN soldiers pulling security, carries supplies and building materials to Fire Support Base Buttons, home of the Blackhorse Brigade.

(U.S. Army Photo by PFC James McCabe)



*SGT RE-UP
S2
"DID YOU
KNOW???"*



PHUOC VINH—A conversation overheard between two Skytroopers: "Extend? You gotta be out of your mind . . . you have to show me an awful lot before I'll extend for even one day over here."

Does this Air Cavalryman know and understand just what he can get out of an extension in-country?

First, anyone can apply for an extension of up to six months.

If you extend for a six-month period, you are authorized a full 30-day leave (non-chargeable) to the site of your choice, provided it's in the free world.

The Army will guarantee free transportation, from Vietnam to your leave choice and back. Necessary travel time isn't deducted from the 30-day leave period.

Should you take the six-month extension, you can request a change of assignment to a location more to your liking.

The assignment change and request for extension are sent in at the same time, so there is no danger of getting the extension and not the assignment.

Additionally, with a six-month extension, you become entitled to another R and R and out of country leave.

And with your extension, you are entitled to the same privileges as before—combat pay, overseas pay and deletion of income tax for every month spent here.

Of course, not everyone is able to take advantage of the extension program due to ETS, families and other reasons.

If you are interested in finding out about an extension, see your personnel services non-commissioned officer for details.

... For God And Country

By Chaplain (MAJ) Edward A. Simon

11th Aviation Group Chaplain
The slogan — "The Greatest Show on Earth" — fit the Barnum and Bailey, Ringling Brothers' Circus perfectly.
We all love to see a good show

and enjoy being entertained. The circus performers did a tremendous job.

We remember walking down the avenues during the Christmas season and how overwhelming the many attractive store window displays were.

Displays and shows, parades and spectacles — we can't be without them. These essentially require a response from the on-looker — either his praise or his purchase.

However, the greatest display of all asks nothing in return. It is solely a display of love, expecting nothing in return except a reception of that love.

God loves us. And He has demonstrated His love to us many times through His care for the world, His love of His own and His provisions for our daily needs.

But His greatest display was demonstrated many years ago on Calvary's hill when Jesus Christ died in our behalf. Yes, God has displayed His love to us, "in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

Christ died that we might have life. He died that you and I might have eternal life through faith in Him.

This, then, is God's great display to the world — the death of His Son.

God's love is still present with us today and will never be withheld from us. He still entreats us to come to Him or He is ever willing to receive us and forgive our sins.

If you have not yet trusted Him as Saviour, why not make use of His gracious love today?

"For to all who received Him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His name." (John 1:12)

Education Center Keeping Busy

By PFC Dennis Thornton

QUAN LOI — Ever want to take a course in Serbo-Croatian or analytical geometry and calculus? Or maybe you'd like to finish the English class that kept you from earning your high school diploma.

"We have 75 college correspondence courses ranging from English to physics to real estate principles, 54 high school

courses and an assortment of spoken language and technical non-credit courses," said Corporal Ronald R. Brown, in charge of the 1st Air Cav's Quan Loi Education Center.

Technical courses range from jet aircraft engines and electronics to law enforcement and plumbing, Corporal Brown said. And lessons for nearly every spoken language in the world are available on tapes or

records for individual study.

"Fifty to 60 per cent of the Skytroopers taking courses are out in the field," emphasized Private First Class John Cullinan, another member of the center. "The grunts usually try harder to complete the courses but don't have the spare time of the men with rear jobs."

Still, dozens of grunts in the 3rd Brigade hump textbooks along with their ammo and canteens, settling down with a book for a few minutes when they get a break.

"We give them books, wish them good luck and hope they get a chance to finish the course," said PFC Cullinan.

Each week between 100 and 250 people stop by the education center, located in a trailer near the PX, and about 30 sign up for high school or college courses, 30 more take exams and 20 to 25 take the high school equivalency test.

"Our basic goal is to get GI's that high school diploma," Corporal Brown said. "We give them the GED (general education development) high school equivalency test and, if they need to study more to pass the five-part exam, we give them books and lessons."

The important part is to get



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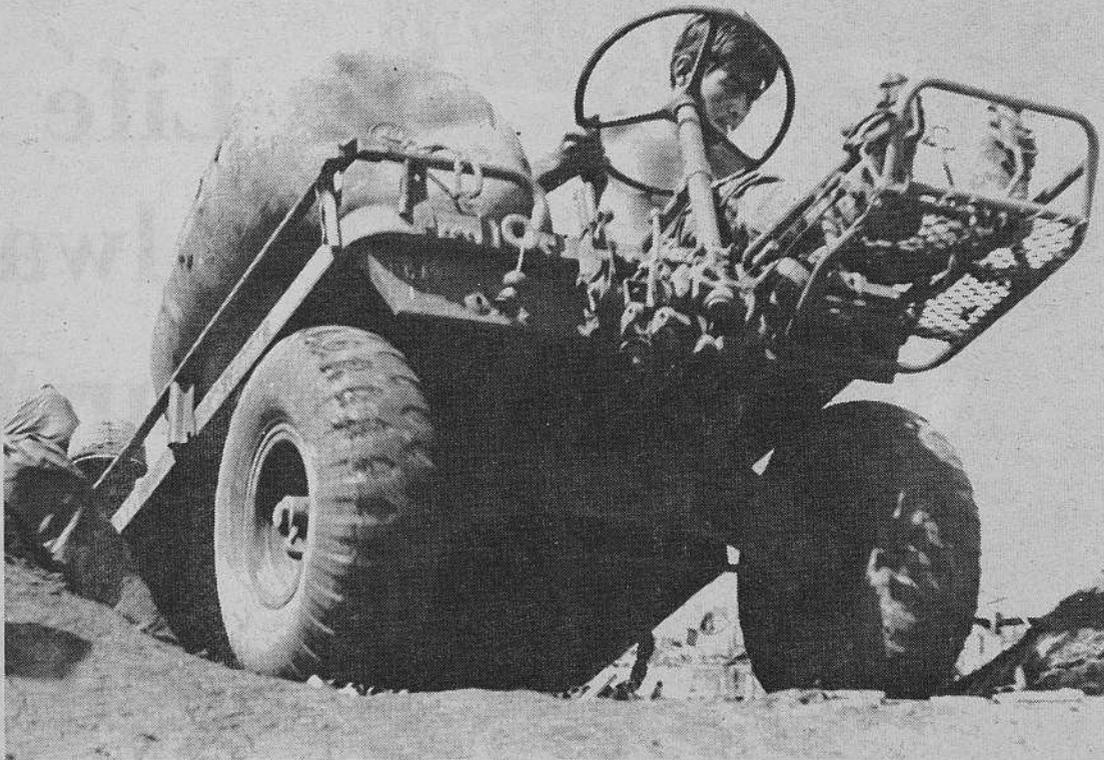
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Up and Over . . .



(U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Bill Ahrbeck)
The Mule, formally known as a one-quarter ton platform truck, is a familiar site on 1st Air Cav firebases. The maneuverable workhorse, er . . . mule, gets plenty of use in the airmobile Cav, which employs its versatility in establishing firebases with overnight quickness.

Grunt Wins Grid Contest

By SGT Roger Ruhl

PHUOC VINH — A ground-pounding 1st Air Cavalryman will be taking a three-day vacation at Cape Saint Jacques, thanks to his expert prognosticating.

Private First Class William R. Keys walked off with first prize in the Cav's FIRST TEAM Football Contest, an in-country R and R at Vung Tau (also known as Cape Saint Jacques).

The rifleman from Company C, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, may be far removed from state-side football fields, but his knowledge of the collegiate scene helped him correctly pick nine of the 10 major college football conference champions.

Four other Skytroopers picked nine winners, but PFC Keys came closest to predicting the exact score of the Army-Navy tie-breaker game.

The conference champions were: Big Ten, Michigan and Ohio State; Mid-American, Toledo; Ivy League, Dartmouth; Atlantic Coast, South Carolina; Big Eight, Missouri and Nebraska; Missouri Valley, Memphis State; Southwest, Texas; Southeastern, Tennessee and Louisiana State; Western Athletic, Arizona State; Pacific Eight, Southern California.

The football contest, run by the "Cavalair" in the Oct. 22 and 29 issues, attracted entries from nearly every unit.

Only one man picked co-cham-

pion Michigan to win the Big Ten, but he missed eight other conference races. Three men missed all 10.

First Lieutenant Robert Bishop, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, was the only man to call Army's 27-0 win over Navy on the nose, but that's not so hard to understand. He submitted 15 entries.

Only 12 men throughout the division picked Navy to defeat Army. One was a field grade officer, and the "Cavalair" has dutifully reported such traitorous thinking to the FIRST TEAM's Commanding General.

Beating the Heat

Ice House Line-Up Cools Quan Loi

By PFC Dave Roberts

QUAN LOI—Cooler than the Jets' Broadway Joe. More blocks than the Minnesota Vikings.

More bulk than Bubba, Karras, the Deacon and Nitschke—averaging 20 tons on the line.

No, Quan Loi won't be in the Super Bowl, but all the ingredients are there. The reference is to the coolest spot in the 1st Air Cav's 3rd Brigade, the ice station.

Five trucks full of ice wind their way daily from Hong Duck's ice plant in Binh Duong for distribution throughout the 3rd Brigade.

The 50,000 pounds of ice come in 100 hundred-pound blocks per truck. The trucks are covered with canvas to protect the chunks from dust and the scorching rays of the tropical sun.

"The ice is delivered in excellent condition," said Sergeant First Class Jimmie P. Guffey, in charge of class one food for the brigade. "By the time the ice arrives in Quan Loi, less than 10 per cent has melted."

From Quan Loi, most of the ice is ferried to firebases in huge canvas bags by Chinook helicopters and dumped into mess hall iceboxes to keep food cold. The rest is used to cool sodas—and every grunt will tell you what a luxury a cold drink is on a hot day.

Safety precautions are extensive in the ice operation. Army veterinarians check all water before it is frozen to make sure that it's safe to drink. Then, Vietnamese workers freeze and deliver it.

Admiral McCain Sends Message

PHUOC VINH — Admiral John S. McCain Jr., Commander in Chief, Pacific, sent the following message to servicemen in Vietnam.

"From the days of Concord and Lexington to the present, the American man in uniform — professional, careerist or citizen-soldier — has served the country with the highest sense of duty and honor.

"Demonstrating the most enviable qualities of courage, skill, dedication and determination during these nearly 200 years, United States military forces have successfully established the nation's independence and preserved the safety and integrity of its people and soil.

"For this, they have rightfully earned the loyalty and gratitude of the civil population at home as well as those of many liberated lands.

"But men and nations are fallible. Mistakes of judgment and purpose do occur, the nature and consequences of which may be obscured for a few men at a given moment by the ambiguity of circumstance, the intensity of a particular combat experience or the cumulative provocation of enemy excesses.

"It is at such times that American men in uniform — soldiers, sailors and airmen — need to reaffirm in word and action the values and traditions which have sustained them and their forebears-in-arms so magnificently for nearly two centuries, reflecting not only the highest sense of honor and justice but also that sense of compassion, understanding and tolerance that has consistently marked the American commitment.

"Men and nations must learn from mistakes, ever reaffirming their dedication to the highest standards of conduct and dis-

cipline, never faltering in determination and perseverance.

"The measure is less the occasional stumble than how quickly and sharply the common cadence of our heritage is restored.

"Commissioned and non-commissioned officers bear a special responsibility at such times. I have the highest confidence in and respect for the officers and men of this command.

"My loyalty and support remain unqualified. Let us get on with our duties."

Base Guards Nail Sappers

By SGT Ronald Miller

FSB GRANT — When Specialists Four John Spivey and Larry Darmour, both of Company B, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, went on guard at the 1st Cav's Fire Support Base Grant, they expected it to be another routine night.

It wasn't.

The guards they relieved shortly after midnight believed they had seen movement. So Specialist Spivey focused the starlight scope and scanned the area to his front.

"I could hardly believe my eyes," he said. "I saw two figures crawling toward our bunker. They were only about 30 meters out."

Both Skytroopers moved to the M-60 machine gun and opened fire. Later, a small patrol made a sweep of the area and discovered the bodies of two NVA sappers.

Each sapper carried 10 small explosive charges, 15 Chicom grenades and several B-40 rockets. Nearby, two bangalore torpedoes were found.

Christmas Turkey . . .



(U.S. Army Photo by PFC Len Fallscheer)
Tom Turkey looks good enough to eat—and that's just what Skytroopers of the 1st Air Cavalry did on Christmas day. Turkey with all the trimmings was served at basecamps and firebases throughout Cav Country.



'I was sent to the showers'

Life Isn't Always a Barrel of Fun

By G. I. Drum
(As told to SP5 Al Persons)

QUAN LOI—If you think arriving in Vietnam aboard the luxury of a jet liner is a depressing ordeal, you should try it strapped to your buddies aboard a cargo ship.

When we hit the docks in Cam Ranh Bay, everyone was in pretty good shape except for a few minor dents and scratches. Carted off the ship, we lined up in gigantic rows at "dress right, dress."

We stood there for nearly a week, looking brand spanking new (as do all FNDs—Funny New Drums) waiting to receive orders.

Finally, we were all parcelled out to our units. I was thrilled to be going to the 1st Air Cav.

Twenty of us boarded a C-130 and flew down to Quan Loi. We were hauled off the plane and lined up in formation again, waiting to go to our individual units within the Cav.

We were all given jobs pumping oil at first, but it was not long before we exhausted our supply. After that, they gave us new assignments in our secondary MOS.

Some of the "guys" drew bunker duty. It was their job to support the sandbags piled on top of them as well as protect the men inside from flying shrapnel.

They also guarded helicopters. Both jobs involved a great deal of pride and required lots of courage.

I, along with four others, was sent to the showers dotting Quan Loi basecamp. That job wasn't too bad unless, of course, you happened to be modest.

The five individuals in back of me were painted red and planted at strategic points throughout the post with the words "Fire Water Only" written on them. They silently guarded against any fire that might break out.

Some were given more menial jobs and looked down upon. They included collecting garbage, burning trash and policing up boxes. One "guy" even became a barbeque pit.

The other day, while on duty with the showers, I saw a "guy" who had come in-country with me. He had the worst job imaginable. He was cut in half and sitting on the ground next to a little grey building with flames and black smoke pouring from his top.

Some "guys" are just born losers.



'These buddies showed courage'



'He became a barbeque pit'



'Other guys burned trash'

Photos by SP4 Bill Ahrbeck



This deserted beach near Capetown, South Africa, won't last long when model Margo Galbraith leads the way for some summer sun and sand. The 22-year-old Margo says she wants to see the world. From a look at what she has to offer, it should be the other way around.

Switchboard Job Tests Tolerance

By SP4 William K. Block Jr.

TAY NINH—Which 1st Air Cavalryman sees no one on his job yet talks to anyone, needs a level head and 1,000 hands

Answer—a switchboard operator.

Isolated at the core of a complex communications center, he alone maintains landline communications among the 1st Cav's units and support units.

The nature of his job often makes him sound like a broken record: "Redwood, sir. Redwood, sir. Spruce, sir? Ringing Spruce. Redwood, sir working? Working? Working? Breaking!" Patience is the chief prerequisite virtue.

Santa Gives Stuffed Sock To 2/7 GI's

TAY NINH — Was Uncle Sam playing Santa Claus?

1st Air Cavalrymen in the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, were issued one Christmas stocking complete with candy, nuts, drink mix, pen, calendar, comb, toothbrush, yoyo and ball strung to a paddle.

The real benefactor, it turned out, was Mrs. Katie Smith of Los Angeles, who decided to adopt the battalion after her son died in action while serving with the Cav in 1966.

Since then, she has placed ads in the local newspapers for contributions of cookies, and every month she sends 800 to 1,000 dozen cookies to her battalion.

For the battalion's Christmas, she received some money from local organizations such as Kiwanis, Optimists and the American Legion.

"But most of the money," Mrs. Smith explained in a letter accompanying each stocking, "came from people who read about it in the paper and wanted to help. Some sent \$1 and some sent \$10 — whatever they could afford. One lady who asked us to pick up her donation lives on a small Social Security check.

It didn't take the Skytroopers long to get into the Christmas spirit. "They were having yoyo contests all over the firebase (Fire Support Base Judie)," remarked Specialist Four John Svendsen.

"That first day on the job can really be frustrating," recalled Specialist Four David H. Tapp, who works the Cav's 1st Brigade switchboard. "In stateside training, we had one line to learn procedures on. Here there are 80 lines.

"It really takes about three weeks to become familiar with the board, but no one on the other end of the line knows you're new on the job."

"Our main problem," observed Specialist Four Larry E. Petre, "is that most people don't like to wait. In other words, they're typical Americans."

The switchboard operators at 1st Brigade work six-hour shifts and change shifts every three days. The reason for the hours and the changes is obvious when the operator is seen in action. Hands are continually flying around the board — connecting lines, disconnecting lines, ringing lines.

Lights flash. A buzzer buzzes, followed by another and another. Sometimes a buzzer sticks and keeps on buzzing. When connections are weak, the operator has to yell, often is not heard anyway, and yells again.

The chief difficulty in Vietnam is that lines are occasionally cut, accidentally or by incoming enemy projectiles. When a line is out, the operator knows about it within 10 minutes and a wire team can usually have it fixed in less than an hour.

"We make a lot of friends on the switchboard," said Specialist Tapp. "The friendlier callers make up for the #@%&?*c\$ ones and make the job satisfying."

Basecamp Classes Keep Troops Alert

By PFC Robert Hackney

FSB JAMIE — The MEDEVAC helicopter hovered 100 feet above the ground as the jungle penetrator and its one-man cargo slowly moved upward.

Below, 100 1st Air Cavalrymen watched the conclusion of a class on rescue methods the MEDEVAC helicopter employs when it is unable to land.

The class is one of several in which each company participates during its six-day stay at Fire Support Base Jamie, home of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry.

Upon rotation to the base, a company follows a five-day training schedule developed to increase the soldier's capability to help his unit and himself while on base defense and in the field.

Emphasis on base defense includes maintenance and test-firing of individual weapons and practice in operation of the weapons organic to the firebase — the .50 caliber machine gun,

the 90mm recoilless rifle, and the M-72 Light Anti-Tank Weapon (LAW).

To prepare the cavalryman for his return to the field, classes are given incorporating lessons learned from previous operations. Each man is given the opportunity to adjust artillery and mortar fire, giving him the confidence to perform the mission under fire in the field.

Lessons in the tactics of deploying trip flares and claymores in ambush positions are reviewed, and the quick kill technique for ambushes is covered.

Practical application classes in first aid, field sanitation, communication procedures and security are designed to help the soldier take care of himself.

The instruction closes with a briefing from the battalion intelligence officer. He discusses enemy activities in the battalion's area of operation and tries to explain the company's role within the over-all battalion operation.

WAR ROOM: New Look Adds to Efficiency

PHUOC VINH — The War Room of the 1st Air Cav Division's DTOC (Division Tactical Operations Center) defines itself.

It's the nerve center of the Cav, where the men in charge chart the immediate and long range course of combat for the 20,000 men of the division.

Here the life or death decisions involving divisional units, from squads to battalions, are made . . . instantly . . . routinely . . . day and night.

From the moment the "Troops in Contact" sign flashes on the wall adjacent to the huge operations map, until the contact is broken, the men in the War Room are poised to make decisions that swiftly will move troop reinforcements, commit tactical firepower and augment logistical efforts.

It stands to reason then that this nerve center must be insulated from the noise and pressure of work-a-day administration. And it is.

But it wasn't always so. When the division headquarters first moved to Phuoc Vinh from I Corps, the War Room was part of a small bunker near the Commanding General's office.

Later, a new DTOC bunker was built, but the War Room remained part of a cavernous interior filled with heat, noise, dust and confusion.

Lieutenant Colonel Richard Wood, shortly after becoming G-3, made the decision to remodel.

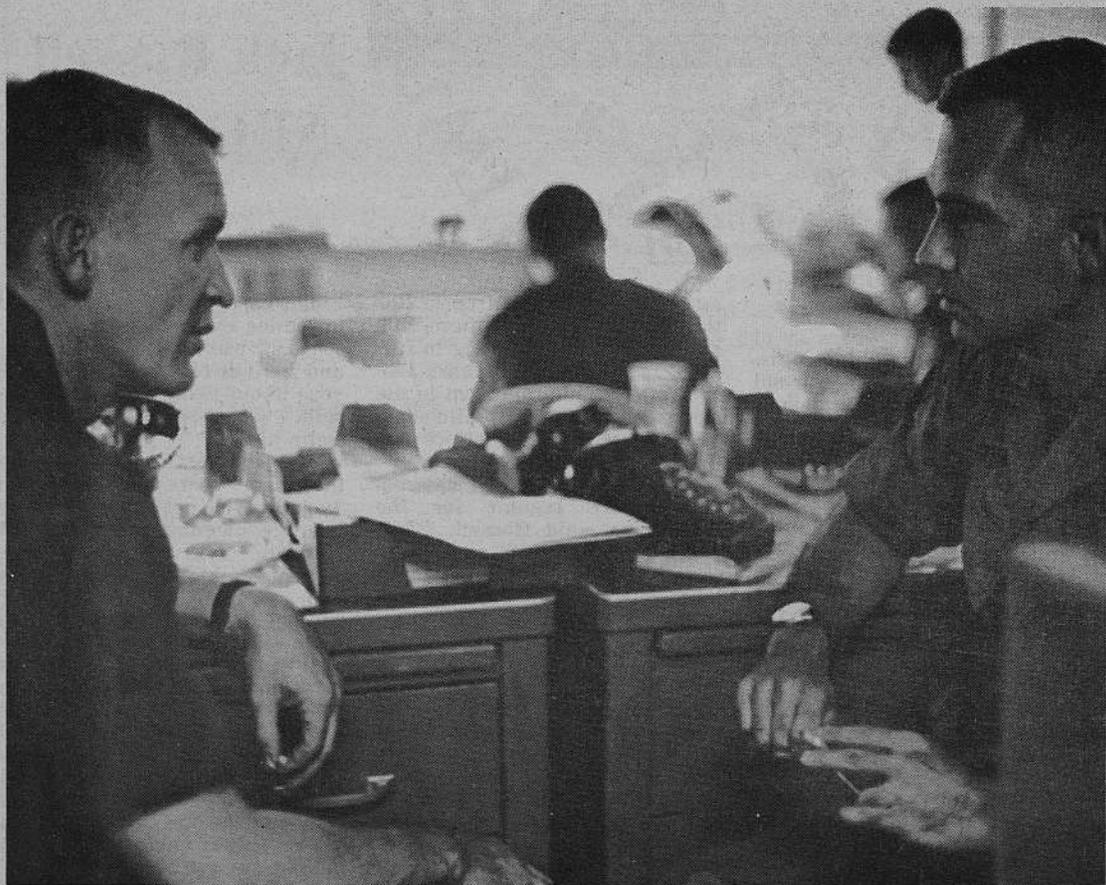
The massive reconstruction program, using mostly existing materials, began in late August with men from the 2nd Platoon of Company A, 8th Engineers, working at night and sleeping by day.

The night construction helped alleviate confusion and congestion during the day working hours. But at times, when shrieking power saws and thundering hammers drowned out vital radio conversations, War Room personnel often wondered if the cure wasn't worse than the illness.

But finally the hammering died away. The partitions were up, panels painted and new lights hung. The War Room finally had become a real War Room.



Lieutenant Colonel George Stotser (above middle), 1st Air Cav G-3, and Lieutenant Colonel Richard Wood, his predecessor, as Specialist Five Reuben Gonzales points to a "troops in contact" area on the operations map . . . Specialist Four Ed Morley (below) double checks information over the phone.



Majors Horace G. Taylor and William A. Hamilton discuss strategy in the 1st Air Cav War Room, which was recently redesigned by the 2nd Platoon of Company A, 8th Engineers.



(U.S. Army Photos by SP4 Tom Benic)

Fill It Up . . .



(U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Tom Benic)
Helicopters line-up at Quan Loi's self-service "gas" station to refuel before taking off on sorties over Cav Country. The station services some 250 helicopters each day.

Super Sapper Zapper

PFC Earns Silver Star

By SP4 Ron Merrill

FSB IKE — Private First Class Francisco Belmes probably won't ever forget the first three hours of "that" night.

The 21-year-old 1st Air Cavalryman, a native of the Philippines who was drafted in Guam, erased five enemy sappers when they penetrated the perimeter at Fire Support Base Ike, had four Chicom grenades tossed his way and won the Silver Star on his six-week anniversary in Vietnam.

"I was just getting to sleep next to Bunker No. 2 when it received a direct hit with a B-40," recalled PFC Belmes.

Crawling over the demolished bunker, he tried in vain to fire an M-60 machinegun, "but the barrel had been split open by the B-40."

By then the firebase was dimly lit by flares, and he found an M-16 rifle, but it, too, was pierced with shrapnel.

He recounted the events of the night.

"I noticed a turned over box

of frags (fragmentation grenades) next to a bunch of sandbags," said PFC Belmes, clad only in fatigue pants — no boots, shirt or steel pot — during the whole action. "I just kept throwing grenades out in front of Bunker No. 2."

Ten minutes after the attack was launched, while busy defending his own bunker, he "heard AK-47 fire coming from Bunker No. 3."

"I had started out with about 70 grenades, but when I saw the sappers firing out the next bunker I had only four left," shuddered PFC Belmes.

He first tried to lob grenades into the enemy-held bunker, but the NVA kept firing. He then crawled about 10 meters and threw a grenade directly into the bunker, killing five sappers.

As PFC Belmes crawled over debris trying to reach a wounded Skyrooper from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry, the first of four enemy grenades to be thrown his way landed next to him.

"I don't know whether they went off or what — there were all kinds of explosions going off — but I was lucky," he said.

The next morning PFC Belmes was presented the Silver Star by Major General E.B. Roberts, commander of the 1st Cav — not too far away from what was left of Bunkers No. 2 and 3.

Chuck's Spot Spices Entertainment Scene

By SP4 William K. Block Jr.

FSB GRANT — You don't need a scout dog to find Chuck's Place, and you don't need a .50 caliber machine gun to get in.

The door is always open.

Sergeant Chuck Ollar, a generator mechanic on Fire Support Base (FSB) Grant for the 1st Air Cav's 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, redesigned his bunker and moved out. It was clear from the start that there would be no room to sleep in Chuck's Place.

It does have room for a long table with benches, a bar, a good supply of cold drinks, a TV, a fan, a telephone and

sometimes about 20 people.

There is a beautiful girl behind the bar — well, a picture of one anyway. The walls are paneled in empty, green sandbag, offset by a ceiling draped in white illumination round parachute.

The "topless bartender," Specialist Four David A. Byrd tells you that Friday night is Ladies Night, though FSB Grant has never seen a female at night. Nonetheless, everyone agrees that it's a fine idea.

Obviously, Chuck's Place means more than a mortar-proof dayroom to the firebase's communications personnel.

Self-Service

Business Booms At Gas Station

By PFC Dennis Thornton

QUAN LOI—Self-service gas stations may be a new idea in the states, but the 1st Air Cav has operated one at Quan Loi for more than a year.

"We pump 40,000 to 60,000 gallons of fuel into helicopters on a busy day," said Sergeant Dennis C. Tarrance, who runs the POL (petroleum, oil and lubrication) point.

On an average day, between 150 and 200 LOHs (light observation helicopters), Hueys and Cobras stop for fuel, plus 35 to 40 Chinooks and Flying Cranes, he said.

Co-pilots or crew chiefs from the birds pump aviation fuel into the tanks while the blades continue to whirl overhead. As many as 10 helicopters can be refueled simultaneously.

"About all we have to do is keep the pumps running and keep everything clean so that contaminated fuel doesn't down any birds," said Specialist Four Donald R. Gaddis.

He is an old-timer at the job, with 19 months served in Vietnam while Sergeant Tarrance has 18 months and "I just extended again," he said.

Daily convoys bring 10 to 12 tank trucks into Quan Loi from the 64th Quartermasters in Long Binh to keep the huge tanks full. Quan Loi's "gas station" is run by the 15th Supplies and Services Battalion.

"If an emergency situation ever did arise where we're completely cut, C-130's would bring in loads of 500 gallon fuel bladders," Sergeant Tarrance said.

It's hard to imagine a gas shortage. One Chinook alone holds 1,100 gallons. And it can be filled quickly with a 350 gallon-per-minute pump.

Viet Teens Hired as Mechanics

By SP4 Ronald Wright

FSB BUTTONS — Hiring two Vietnamese teenagers as mechanic's helpers won't win the pacification war, but there are two Song Be youths who are learning a lot about motors.

"We started by letting them do odd jobs and watch as we worked," said Specialist Four Duncan MacRae, a mechanic at the 1st Air Cav's motorpool at Fire Support Base Buttons.

"They pick things up quickly as they watch and soon will be able to take an active hand in the maintenance work," he said.

Working for one dollar a day, the usual civilian pay rate, Hong and Dut from Song Be Village are learning the skills of a trade.

"At the start, language was the major barrier but we've reached a mutual understanding," Specialist MacRae said. "We feel that the training the boys receive here is the closest thing to a trade school they can get."

"It is actively preparing them for a productive adult life. We're glad to have the extra help."

THEY COVER the CAV

TIME

CBS

The New York Times

UPI

TIME

CBS

Jack Russell
NBC News

By SP5 Joe Kamalick

After putting five years in at NBC's Tokyo Bureau, Jack Russell, an experienced 41-year-old reporter, moved even deeper into the Orient to begin covering the Vietnam war in February of 1967.

Russell recalled that "when we first came here we were looking for action. But now our coverage is more interpretive. Now the people want stronger emphasis on the 'why' of the war."

Whatever the feeling about the war back home, he noted, the soldier's job here remains the same. It is still war, favored or unpopular.

"The GIs seem to go about their jobs in a professional way," he said. "You don't find too much bitching about the war out in the field — they're too busy fighting. Where you find the bitching is in the basecamps and rear areas."

"Even so, I don't think there's been too much misconduct

among the American troops. For the American soldier here, it's simply a matter of trying to survive. In the past two years I've seen a great improvement in the American combat efficiency. They waste a lot less effort now than they did two years ago."

The war apparently has become more regular for the Americans, said Russell. "Two years ago there was a stronger feeling of fighting against Communism. Now you get the feeling that it's time to get out."

"As far as the Vietnamese are concerned," he said, "I think they are tired of the war. They wish that we would all just go away. The ARVN troops have given a favorable over-all impression. They are more relaxed about the war, as if they don't have to get it done today. But that varies from unit to unit."

Russell has spent two years plus following the GI and his work in war. In the Mekong Delta with the 9th Infantry Division he got as close to being an actual infantryman as any man

would care to; he was wounded in the leg by shrapnel.

"That was my first wound, and I admit to being a little nervous about going out again," he said. "But I went back to the Delta again."

Over the years of exposure to the war, correspondents like Jack Russell get more than the average one-tour GI does of combat.

So it rankles reporters when men in the field think they are heading back to Saigon just to get away from the action.

"People in the field sometimes don't understand that we can complete our film story more quickly than they think. And when the film is shot it's important to get it out as quickly as possible. Time is vital. And, of course," he admitted, "when you're in a hot area you want to get out anyway."

But Russell and the others will be back again and again, month after month, long after the citizen soldier is back in the world and out of the war.