Nguyen Van Ngo, a Luc Luong 66 Scout for Alpha Company, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry shows NVA coins to his American buddies. The coins were found among other enemy articles in a chache about 30 miles northwest of Tam Ky in the 196th Infantry Brigade AO. (U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Guy Winkler)

SOUTHERN CROSS
AMERICAL DIVISION

Vol. 4, No. 14 Chu Lai, Vietnam April 2, 1971

13A

Dead or alive

By SP5 Robert A. Spangler

LZ HAWK HILL (196th Inf. Bde. IO) -- WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE: $10,000 REWARD. That was the way the poster read and it didn't ease Joe Tarbell's nerves one bit.

Specialist Six Joe Tarbell (Security, Colo.) was one of seven men assigned to a United States Army Republic of Vietnam (USARV) Civil Afairs Team working with the 3rd Marine Division around the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) near Dong Ha, Republic of Vietnam during 1967-68.

"The wanted posters were plastered all over the place, on trees, in the villages, just everywhere!" exclaimed Tarbell. "We must have been doing something right with a "10,000 bounty riding on our heads."

Tarbell stated, "Civil Affairs operations consisted of resettlement of refugees and establishing secure villages and hamlets then, and I believe that that's the reason the Viet Cong and NVA (North Vietnamese Army) wanted to get rid of us."

He went on to say that the Viet Cong used terrorization to keep the local citizens away from the Americans and the GVN (Government of Vietnam) officials. The Viet Cong were attempting to prevent the success of the newly formed pacification programs.

Tarbell is presently serving with the 29th Civil Affairs Company which works throughout the XXIV Corps. He works in the 196th Infantry Brigade's AO (Area of Operation) with the government officials of Hiep Duc Territory, Quang Tin Province.

Tarbell is on his second tour, and things look a lot different to him this time. "This tour I'm working with the local officials and advising rather than actually setting up villages and working with refugees. The local officials handle all of that and we just work in an advisory position."

Tarbell evidently gets along with the citizenry extremely well. And day of the week one is likely to find him in any one of the local villages of the territory, eating, drinking and talking up a storm with the villagers. Tarbell speaks fluent Vietnamese and says that he has no fear of being in the villages alone.

"Even up north at Dong He when I had a bounty on my head, I was never really afraid because the local citizens would always warn me if the enemy was coming near the village," said Tarbell. "When you have friends around, what is there to be afraid of?" Just the same Tarbell says he will be happy to return to the Security of Colorado.

Enemy is his own worst enemy

By SGT Louis Miller

LZ STINSON, (198th Inf. Bde. IO) -- There was a showdown in "Dodge City" and, when the smoke cleared, Viet Cong and NVA soldiers in the area found they had another enemy besides allied forces. The other enemy was their own booby traps.

"Dodge City", an area south of Chu Lai worked by the 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry, 198th Infantry Brigade, received its nickname from the "Ready Rifles" who expect--and often receive--a shoot-out whenever they ride into town.

Through a captured enemy soldier, the men of Company C of the battalion recently learned that over a period of several weeks 11 enemy soldiers had been killed by their own booby traps after combat assaults by the company had cut off all other enemy routes when the enemy was forced to "get outta town."

"We combat assaulted into this area for the third time in several weeks," said Captain Lee C. Basnar of Lyndenville, Vt., the company commander. "We were on the ground for about an hour when we heard an explosion from an area where one of our platoons was located."

Basnar radioed the platoon and learned that it was not involved in the explosion. A patrol was sent out to sweep the area, but darkness hindered the search. The next morning, however, two Vietnamese brought a wounded enemy to the "Ready Rifles" position and the mystery of the explosion was solved after questioning the enemy.

"We found out that when we had assaulted into this area, we had cut off the only route of escape for the enemy" said the Captain. "They were forced to go through an area they had previously booby trapped themselves. The enemy told us that, in last night's explosion, one Viet Cong was killed by his own booby trap."

Another patrol was sent to the explosion site and the body of the Viet Cong was found.

"Later the enemy told us that on two previous insertions into this area, we had also blocked enemy escape routes, forcing them through their own booby-trapped areas," Basnar said. "In the first incident, the enemy said six Viet Cong were killed, and in the second incident, he told us four more enemy had been killed by their own booby traps."

That brought the total to 11 enemy killed by their own weapons over a period of several weeks near "Dodge City"--all without a single allied shot fired.

NFL visitors

By PFC Fred Abatemarco

CHU LAI (23rd Inf. Div. IO) -- A group of six National Football League (NFL) players visited with men in the 91st Evacuation Hospital and the 27th Surgical Hospital here recently.

The group included Fred Hoaglin, Cleveland Browns' Center; Butch Byrd, Buffalo Bills' Cornerback; John Brown, Pittsburg Steelers' Tackle; George Kunz, Atlanta Falcons' Tackle; Tom Woodeshick, Philadelphia Eagles' Running Back; and Jerry Smith, Washington Redskins' Tight End.

The pro football players talked with the men in numerous wards, autographed pictures, and showed movies highlighting the 1971 Super Bowl.

The NFL stars seemed genuinely pleased to talk and meet with the soldiers of the 23rd Infantry Division.

Perfect strikes nail 3

By SP4 James Tabata

FSB SAN JUAN HILL (11th Inf. Bde. IO) -- Throwing from home to second base was performed hundreds of times by Specialist Four Douglas Beachboard, who was a catcher for a Triple-A baseball team in North Carolina. Little did Beachboard know his golden arm would help the "Mountainmen" from the 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry net two Viet Cong, northwest of Ba To.

A member of the 3rd Platoon of Alpha Company, the high school all-star and semi-pro ball player from Ashville, N.C., found his squad moving down a sparsely vegetated ridgeline when the pointman called the element to a halt. Sixty meters in the valley below five VC were spotted behind a large rock eating their noon meal. "The pointman called the M-60 machine gunner up to the front along with the grenadier; however, both of them were unable to get a clear shot at the clustered VC. I was close to the front so I told the squad leader I thought I could reach them with a grenade," reported Specialist Beachboard.

A small opening in the trees permitted ample room for the grenade to be thrown, as Specialist Beachboard reared back and hurled the grenade to his target. A perfect strike surprised the VC as another grenade followed, hitting the same location.

Project Holp Question of the Week:

My wife is going to file for divorce and I need a compassionate leave. Can I get one?

Under the soldiers and sailors relief act, your wife may file only with your consent. Upon presentation of documentary evidence that your situation can be corrected you may submit to Personnel Actions your request for a compassionate leave.

Troops from Bravo Company, 5th Battalion, 46th Infantry move up a hill while on a mission 14 miles west of Chu Lai. (U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Guy Winkler)

54 months in Nam and not 'short'

By SP4 John Szaynowski

LZ MARY ANN (196th Inf. Bde. 10)–At some point in a soldier's 12 month tour in Vietnam, he makes the transition from a "newfer" to an "old guy". Although this point is rather arbitrary, depending upon either the nature of his experiences in Vietnam of just his amount of time "in country," there is one soldier in Vietnam today who, without a doube, is one of the "oldies". He is Staff Sergeant Terry H. Price (Salt Lake City), a "Professional" from Company C, 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry, 196th Infantry Brigade. He has spent a total, to date, of 54 months in Vietnam.

After joining the Army in 1963, Price began his first Vietnam tour in 1965 with the 52nd Aviation Battalion 1st Aviation Brigade, in Pleiku. He served with the unit as an aircraft engine repairman for 34 months until his return to stateside in August, 1968.

He came back within six months, however, and was assigned to the 701st Maintenance Bn., 1st Inf. Div., near Dai An.

During early April that year, he transferred to his old unit the 52nd Aviation Bn.

Price ended his second tour in January, 1970, and finally arrived in this unit in June, 1970.

"I wanted to return to my old unit," stated SSG price, "but the 23rd Inf. Div. was understrength at the time I returned, so I was assigned here."

While serving with Co. C, 1st Bn., 46th Inf., Price, currently the platoon sergeant of second platoon, has held every position from squad leader to platoon leader and field first sergeant.

He said there were several reasons why he returned to Vietnam so often. "The money is good, but that was never the primary incentive for returning. I felt I had a responsibility both to the Americans here and to the Vietnamese people. Throughout all my experiences here, I felt the Vietnamese were really trying to help themselves."

"My most gratifying experience occurred during my first tour," continued Price. "I had a 15 year old hootch girl whom I got to know quite well. She liked and trusted me and asked me to come home with her to meet her family in Pleiku."

"Her family was very kind and sort of adopted me. I visited them as often as I could and soon became acquainted with the Vietnamese way of life. I always enjoyed visiting them and brigning gifts of candy to the children."

While assigned to the assault holicopter company, whenever there was a shortage of trained flight personnel, SSG Price volunteered to fly as a doorgunner or crew chief.

"The question I always asked myself," said price, "whenever I had a chance to fly out on a resupply to troops in the field was, 'How do these guys keep going from day to day?'

"Then, when I got to the field, I found that the hardships you endure tend to draw you closer and cause you to appreciate the small and normally insignificant things of life. The following day always seems better than the one just completed.

"I think the most important thing in the field is morale, along with a good sense of humor to help keep your spirits up." continued Price.

In four months, SSG Price will have completed almost five years in Vietnam. When asked if he planned to return, he replied, "At the end of each tour, I said I wouldn't return, but I always have. If I do come back, however, I'd like it to be as a civilian.

The 23rd Infantry Division color guard stands at erect attention as the division receives the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm from the 2nd ARVN Division at a recent ceremony in Quang Ngai City. (U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Guy Winkler)

VRB pot o'gold

By SGM Paul J. Haddox

There is a "pot of gold" awaiting those who reenlist for the first time and hold one of the 179 Military Occupational Specialties designated as critical by the Army.

The pot of gold is in the form of the variable reenlistment bonus (vrb). It can add as much as $8,000 to the regular reenlistment bonus, and in Vietnam this is tax free money. It is difficult to receive that kind of bonus in the civilian world.

The vrb is only available to individuals reenlisting for the first time and who meet the following requirements: 1) You must have at least 21 months of active service in your current enlistment; 2) Be an E-3 or higher; 3) Be classified in accordance with chapter 2, AR 600-200 and have an awarded MOS listed in section II, chapter 10, Ar 600-200 (vrb list); and 4) Reenlist for at least 48 additional months from the expiration date of your prior term of service.

If a man meets all of the above requirements, he can collect a vrb in addition to his regular reenlistment bonus.

How is the vrb figured? At this time there are 279 critical MOS's divided into three categories: Multiplier of four, multiplier of three and multiplier of two.

First, the reenlistment bonus is calculated. Then it is multiplied by the proper vrb multiplier. Thus, if a man is in the "multiplier of four" bracket, his bonus would be multiplied by four which constitutes the vrb bonus.

As an example, an E-4 with four years of service has a primary MOS of 12 E. Upon reenlisting for six years, he gets a regular bonus of $2,000, while his vrb multiplier is three, giving him a vrb bonus of $6,000 and a total bonus of $8,000.

For more information, stop by and see your career counselor, or call the 23rd Infantry Division Reenlistment Office at 2519.

4 Protestant church leaders visit

By PFC Ronald Howard

CHU LAI, (23rd Inf. Div. 10)--Four Protestant church leaders and military personnel from the General Commission on chaplains recently visited with the 23rd Infantry Division to meet with chaplains and men of their own faiths. Their visit included a round-table discussion, a visit with Brigadier General Theodore C. Mataxis, and a trip to LZ Stinson.

Their intinerary included an early morning briefing at the Commanding General's Mess in which an open discussion on the problems of chaplaincy was held. The discussion was led by Dr. Edward Brubaker, Chairman of the General Commission of Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel.

"Why didn't you come sooner?" expresses the greatest need of the chaplaincy, one chaplain said. "There just simply isn't enough chaplains to fill all posts. Men in the field are always asking you to stay with them and it is always hard to say, "No, there are other men I have to be with today."

The chaplain is becoming a more integral part of each unit. After being in a combat situation, soldiers come to realize all too well how human they are and how much people depend upon each other. The concept of working as a unit functioning as a team becomes a vital part of their lives which will determine field," states Captain J. D. Masteller, from Aden Heights, N.J., the 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry Battalion Chaplain. "Realization of who you are in relation to the world and to God becomes very evident. You realize your purpose in life. How significant one is and really isn't. And the importance of you to your unit.

After the morning briefing the chaplains met with Brigadier General Mataxis and were given a briefing on the Americal's mission in the 1st Military Region.

DISCOM gets new CO

By SP4 Guy Winkler

CHU LAI (23rd Inf. Div. 10)--Colonel George P. Tilson (McLean, Va.) assumed command of the 23rd Infantry Division Support Command (DISCOM) March 5 in a ceremony here. He replaces Colonel Paul B. McDaniels who will become the new J-3 for the Military Assistance Group, ThaiLand.

Promoted to colonel on 15 November 1968, Tilson is serving his first tour of Vietnam. His awards include the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit and Purple Heart.

SOUTHERN CROSS
AMERICAL DIVISION

THE SOUTHERN CROSS is an authorized, unofficial weekly publication of the Americal Division Information Office for division units in the Republic of Vietnam. Ir is printed by the photo- offset process by Pacific Stars and Stripes. Tokyo, Japan. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Contributions are encouraged and may be sent to the Information Office, Americal Division APO SF 96374. Tel: Chu Lai 2414. The editors reserve the right to edit all contributions.

Major General James L. Baldwin . . . . . Commanding General
Major Robert D. Bailey . . . . . Information Officer
Second Lieutenant Henry G. Grambergu . . . . . Officer-in-charge
Specialist Five Thomas J. Neville . . . . . Production Editor
Specialist Four David P. Goodrich . . . . . Editor
Specialist Four Steven L. Elschlager . . . . . Assistant Editor

In a recent ceremony here, the 198th Infantry Brigade receives meritorious service awards from Major General Nguyen Van Toan, commanding general of the 2nd ARVN Division. Major General James L. Baldwin, commanding general of the 23rd Infantry Division looks on at left. (U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Guy Winkler)

Comforts boggle troopers' minds

By SP4 Don Newton

LZ HAWK HILL, (196th Inf. Bde. IO) – Several modern comforts recently became part of a cleared patch of mountain top west of Tam Ky, home of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry, 196th Infantry Brigade. New additions for these soldiers include hot showers, a barber shop (complete with candy-striped pole), a private booth for Mars calls and a mess hall.

"I call the area just outside our operations center the 'commercial section' of the hill," mused Lieutenant Colonel William C. Hammill of Atlanta, battalion commander. "There, we'll set up the Mars booth next to the already completed barber shop."

Sergeant Major George E. Lane of Gainesville, Fla., the battalion's sergeant Major, completed most of the work on the one-seater, plywood barber shop by himself. "I can't claim the red striped barber's pole," said Sergeant Major Lane. "An artist on the hill did that. But I did complete most of the rest of the shop. It took me a little over a week, working part time."

Currently working as a full-time barber in the shop is Specialist 4 Alvin E. Edwards of Gainesville, Fla., who previously served with Company B of the "Polar Bears" as an RTO.

"It's great for me," explained Edwards who worked in civilian life as a barber. "I definitely appreciate this work after being in the bush for four months. And I'm sure most everyone on this firebase appreciates their own barber shop, too. The novelty is wearing off now, but the first day we opened, it seemed like everyone on the hill stood in line."

Alongside the barber shop stands a telephone booth, set up to allow personnel on the firebase to make their Mars call in privacy. It's only a conex," points out Hammill, "but they used to call from anywhere they could borrow a phone. This eliminates that hassle."

Hot showers may be considered the most pleasurable innovation by the men here. On this firebase, as on many others throughout Vietnam, cold showers have been obtained by carrying adequate water from a main outlet to a makeshift waterfall.

"We often pull bunker line duty on one end of this hill, while the water point is located on the other," said Sergeant Rusty E. Scott of Wichita, Kan., platoon sergeant for the reconnaissance platoon of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry.

"Many times I've humped two five gallon cans of water from the water trailer, across the firebase, and to my bunker," said Scott. "We then poured the water into a 55 gallon drum and showered under it. This new hot water deal seems too good to be true."

Personnel in Company A of the 26th Engineers Battalion are responsible for construction of both the shower facility and the mess hall.

"This mess hall will be nicer than many in the rear," stated Staff Sergeant Bruce E. Meyers of Orlando, Fla., squad leader with Company A of the 26th Engineers Battalion. "Its concrete floor internal drainage means easy maintenance. And its bunker-type construction insures relative safety."

The 20-foot by 74-foot, concrete-floored mess hall represents indoor eating for the first time for the battalion. "There's really no problem for us to eat in our hootch or where ever we please," commented Private Fierst Class Quinones of Corpus Christi, Tex., pointman for Company C of the "Polar Bears". "But it's always nice to sit on a chair and eat at a table."

Hammill said he is especially grateful for the help by men from the battalion. "I expect all this new construction will be good for morale," he said.

Jonas and Alfred Worsham who serve together in the 59th Scout Dog Platoon of the 11th Infantry Brigade pause during a training session with Alfred's dog, Fritz. (U.S. Army Photo)

Scout dogs' brothers

FSB BRONCO, (11th Inf. Bde. IO) – Not too long ago Private First Class Jonas Worsham of Lubbock, Tex., was a company commander's driver in Germany. It was an easy job, and he knew by Army regulation he would not have to accept an assignment to Vietnam where his brother was stationed.

But in January Jonas volunteered for Vietnam duty because he felt "It just wasn't fair with him over here and me there." Now, after talking with several Army officials when arriving in-country, Jonas has joined his brother Alfred as a scout dog handler in the 59th Scout Dog Platoon of the 11th Infantry Brigade.

"We've been close for the past three or four years, but I tried to persuade him not to come," said Alfred who has since changed his mind.

Alfred, an acting sergeant, has been in Vietnam for six months and was trained as a scout dog handler. Jonas had virtually no experience but has managed remarkable well in training.

"I don't know if it's the same scent, in the family or what," said platoon leader, 1st Lieutenant Tom Prisoc, but these guys are naturals with dogs." He added Jonas will be ready soon for his first mission, but the brothers will not pull any missions together.

Jonas and Alfred explained they have had a special attachment to dogs since childhood and they enjoy their work. "Saving lives with these dogs is principally our job, and that's what counts," they said.

There are similarities between the Worshams, even though they are a year apart in age. Both sport a matache, have the same build, smoke the same cigarettes and are able to exhange clothes.

In the future Jonas and Alfred hope to put their training to use in a large city police department as police-dog handlers.

"Whatever we do, though," said Jonas, "we'll figure out some way to be together."

Company E chalks up 8

By SP4 Zin Balaban

LZ HAWK HILL (196th Inf. Bde. IO) – Over a period of four days, an element from 3rd Battalion, 1st Infantry, 196th Infantry Brigade accounted for six enemy kills and two wounded, one of which was detained, and the capture of two weapons.

One morning, while sitting on an OP (Obseveration Post) on top of a hill, men from Company E's reconaissance element spotted two VC carrying heavy packs, crossing a small clearing about 350 meters from their position. A few well aimed shots by the 23rd Infantry Division soldiers brought both of the enemy down.

"We didn't check the area out, because the undergrowth between us and them was pretty thick," explained Sergeant Donald Bailey (Denver), a team leader with the element. "Also, we were going to move in a different direction and couldn't spare the time."

That same evening, while in their night defensive perimeter. Sgt. Bailey sighted and enemy soldier through his starlight scope. By taking careful aim, he killed the enemy.

Two days later, shortly before noon, the element spotted three enemy soldiers walking along a woodline. The infantrymen opened up, killing two. The third evaded into the woodline.

A check of the captured equipment revealed packs filled with rice. Apparently, they were part of a food-carrying party. On the following afternoon, the Recon Platoon set up two OPs on both sides of a stream. One of the OPs saw four NVA soldiers moving toward the other's position. A radio warning alerted the other OP, and the men quickly prepared a trap for the enemy.

One NVA walked into the ambush and was killed by small arms fire. Captured in the action was an AK-47 rifle and ammunition.

"It looked like the four NVA noticed by the other guys scattered before they reached us," commented Specialist Four Gary Benjamin (Grand Forks, Neb.), who walked second for the element.

However about a half hour later, Benjamin spotted two more NVA in the distance. A few well aimed shots stopped both. A check of the area uncovered one enemy wounded and a blood trail which disappeared into some thick brush.

The wounded man turned out to be an enemy officer. He carried a pistol. The weapon was claimed by Benjamin, as a war trophy and he plans to take it home as a souvenir.

"The enemy officer was yelling at us to keep away because the area was full of VC," added Sgt. Bailey. "It's a good thing we didn't understand him since we were nervous enough as it was. Our Luc Luong Scout translated for us after the incident was over."

In spite of all his shouting, the enemy officer quietly surrendered when the infantrymen reached him. He was subsequently MEDEVACED.

"All in all, I would say we had a successful mission," summarized Sergeant First Class J. T. Wristpus (Fort Wayne, Ind.), recon's platoon sergeant, "especially capturing that officer. Intelligence may possible gain some useful information."

Pro football player Joe Scibelli of the Los Angeles Rams signs his autograph for one of the patients he visited at Bravo Company, 23rd Medical Battalion, FSB Bronco. (U.S. Army Photo)

Football stars cheer Jungle Warriors

By SP4 Greg Wright

CHU LAI, (11th Inf. Bde. IO) – Patients of Bravo Company, 23rd Medical Battalion, didn't really need to be told that the five solid looking men striding into their ward were football players. If anyone failed to recognize a face the size of the visitors alone hinted at their profession.

National Football League players visiting the "Jungle Warriors" were Jon Morris, Boston Patriots; Clint Jones, Minnesota Vikings; Greg Landry, Detroit Lions; Joe Scibelli, Los Angeles Rams; and Larry Csonka, Miami Dolphins.

After a short tour of the medical facilities, a visit with the patients, and a flurry of autograph requests the athletes boarded their helicopter for visits to other firebases of the 11th Infantry Brigade.

Up north is where it's all happening

They wake you up one morning and tell you to pack your things and get ready to move out. They don't tell you where you are going. As you begin to pack your few possessions, you begin to wonder and as all the possibilites flood into your mind, you become a little afraid and you try to quit thinking about it.

You load on trucks and start for Chu Lai. Maybe the division's going home. But this idea doesn't feel right so you disregard it and continue searching and probbing your mind for a logical answer.

At Chu Lai they assemble you and tell you to wait. For what? No answer. The rest of your unit begins to arrive, some straight from the field, others from your unit headquarters and you realize that the whole unit is going somewhere. "Hey, there's Joe!" "Hey, man, what's happening?" "Boy, I wish I knew. They just woke me up and told me to..."

Again you load on trucks and this time they take you to a dock with ships and huge stacks of ammunition and building materials and tell you to get on one of the ships, which is already loaded with tanks and trucks. Your unit lines up and files aboard and you pass through the hatches and up the narrow ladders and through more hatches, so narrow that you have to remove your pack and hand it through to the man who went before you. And finally you are on the upper deck and back in the fresh air.

And the ship sails and they finally tell you that you are going to Quang Tri Province near the DMZ and Laos. You eat and sleep on the cold, wet, uneven steel deck and you think and it scares you, so you turn to cleaning your rifle and rapping with the other guys, who are scared, too.

The ship docks and the trucks are there again and you file aboard. You wait as the tanks and trucks line up and at last you move. The concrete blocks beside the road tell you its QL1 and some of the fear passes. QL1--you have moved on this road before-many times before.

The sun beats down and your naked arms and face feel the heat and you turn away and roll down your sleeves. You try to slump in the truck to avoid the exhaust fumes from the truck and the other vehicles, but you know you have to see the land and the people as they pass by you. They look the same, but...somehow different. Something feels different and fear begins to creep back.

Your mind begins to grow numb from looking through the fumes and the bright sunlight at the houses and trees and people. And finally as the brightness of day turns to the gray of night, the trucks stop and you file off and they tell you to find a place to sleep---"but stay together, we'll be leaving early tomorrow."

You blew your air-mattress up and pull your poncho liner up over your head and try to sleep. The huddle of bodies makes you feel secure and you sleep.

Again they wake you up and you sit up on your air-mattress and look around. You aren't scared anymore, maybe you're still asleep, and besides everything feels good in the morning except getting up in the cool, damp dawn. But something is the same after all. Maybe it's the earth. Maybe it's your buddies. But you aren't scared anymore.

Captain David M. Gusman of Pleasant Ridge, Mich, artillery liaison officer with the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry, demonstrates the proper procedure for washing clothes in an ammunition can near Lang Vei in Quang Tri Province.

Photos by

Major R. D. Bailey

Story by

1Lt. James Jordan

Specialist 4 Michael Klarman of Copiague, N.Y., 1st Squadron, 1s Cavalry, concentrates while Captain Steven May of Louisvill grimaces as he receives a battlefield haircut at Lang Vei. Ma recently returned from a two week leave and his honeymoon.

An Americal trooper from Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Artillery, takes a break in the shade of 155mm rounds to read a recent newspaper. The rounds are earmaed for targets in support of Vietnamese operations in Laos.

There is nothing better short of being there than mail from home. Private First Class Paul Cassidy of Philadelphia, a member of the 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry eagerly tears into a letter during a free moment.

Major General James L. Baldwin, 23rd Infantry Division commander, visits the forward Tactical Operations Center of the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry, at Lang Vei on the Laotian border. Accompanying Major General Baldwin is Lieutenant Colonel Gene L. Breeding, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry commander, and Captain James T. Baird, aide-de-camp.

The crew of a 155mm Howitzer prepares to fire in support of operations from FSB VAndergriff in Quang Tri Province. These men are a part of Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Artillery.

An Americal soldier stands ready to take cover as he drops a "frag" into an enemy tunnel. (U.S. Army Photo by PFC James Dunn)

Newfer has close call

By SP4 Don Newton

LZ HAWK HILL (196th Inf. Bde. I0) – When a bullet recently ripped through his dog-tag chain, Captain Gastright had worked on his new job only five days.

"It left its mark here on my shirt, too," said Captain Stephen A. Gastright (Florence, Ky.,) as he lifted up on his lapel exposing two holes bordered by powder burns. Four hours earlier the chain lay intact over his lapel in place of one of the holes.

"At the time, I felt like someone had slapped my chest, but I was too busy to think about it," said the Assistant Intelligence Officer for the 196th Infantry Brigade, 23rd Infantry Division. "I could only guess something broke off from the aircraft and hit me."

The incident occurred during a visual reconnaissance mission west of Tam Ky aboard a light observation helicopter (LOH). It was Gastright's third such mission on his new job, although he has already served six months in the Republic of Vietnam as company commander for two units in 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry of the 196th.

Action began shortly after the small aircraft passed over scattered foothills and was flying up a valley, where the pilot and passenger spotted several old bunkers.

A burst of AK-47 rounds cracked past the LOH, causing its pilot to immediately ascend and circle. Muzzle flashes indicated four automatic weapon positions on a nearby ridgeline.

As the helicopter circled evasively above, Gastright leaned out of the passenger's side and within 20 minutes emptied about 25 magazines from his M-16 rifle into the four enemy machine guns pits. He watched one of his tracer rounds strike down an enemy soldier.

"It was during this exchange that the bullet penetrated my collar and broke the chain," said Capt. Gastright. "I also remember the chin strap on my helmet spinning around from the impact."

Meanwhile, the pilot requested artillery from nearby Tien Phuoc and Landing Zone (LZ) Young. Artillery answered with a barrage of well-placed rounds from their eight-inch guns, 105 and 155mm howitzers.

The man who can measure his life by inches said their LOH flew high, as the big guns scored five or six direct hits creating three secondary explosions. A later body count confirmed four NVA killed and credited to artillery.

"As I stepped off the chopper afterwards, I looked down at my shirt and realized what happened," said Capt. Gastright. "That's as close as I ever want to come."

Toe popper isn't that hot

By SGT Terry Williamson

KY TRA, (198th Inf. Bde. I0) – All infantrymen know about the Viet Cong's "toe popper" booby traps and what they can do when detonated, but a soldier from the 198th Infantry Brigade recently stepped on one and ended up with just a war story instead of a wound.

Private First Class Thomas E. Smith of Dover, Pa., with Company C, 5th Battalion, 46th Infantry was helping his platoon check out a suspected enemy location northwest of Chu Lai when he stepped on the small toe popper. The ensuing blast knocked him down, but failed even to put a dent in his steel-plated boot.

"At first I didn't know what happened," said PFC Smith. "I was on my back before I could do anything. It's for sure I never saw what almost hit me."

The toe popper consisted of an AK-47 rifle round which had been placed in a plastic container had been placed in the ground. When a foot steps on the round, the nail strikes the primer, thus creating a rifle shot effect from point blank range.

Smith lay on the ground trying to figure out what happened to him. The blast had left his foot and lower leg numb temporarily, but, there was no real damage.

"I was afraid to look down," he said. "I couldn't feel any pain, but that was part of the problem–I couldn't feel anything."

Staff Sergeant Reynaldo Gonzales of San Benito, Tex., saw the whole thing and rushed to the rescue of the private. Gonzales took Smith's boot off and searched for the non-existent wound.

"The round must have gone off to the side," said Gonzales. "I saw what happened, and it really knocked him down. For a moment I thought it might be serious."

PFC Smith, a former pointman, was not walking point during his close call but said, "I might take it up again after this. In fact, I think I'll go talk to my platoon leader about it right now."

Booby trap is a game of inches

By SGT Louis Miller

KY TRA (23rd Inf. Div. I0) – Two infantrymen from the 198th Infantry Brigade recently learned that the difference between detonating a booby trap and finding one is very small – like about three inches.

An element of Company C, 5th Battalion, 46th Infantry, had just move into their night defensive position in Dragon Valley, northwest of Chu Lai, when Specialist Four George Fuentes (Naranjito, P.R.) and Specialist Four Earl Chaplain (Beaufort, S.C.), both riflemen, were assigned a spot to set up their position.

"There weren't any trees around our area, just a few bushes about three or four feet high, so we decided to use the branches off the bushes to help camouflage our positions," said Spec Chaplin. "We found a bush that would suit our purposes, so Spec Fuentes got out his machete and we went over to begin work."

Spec Fuentos found the branch he liked, stood back, and took a good swing at it. The first swipe wasn't powerful enough so he raised his arm and prepared to swing again. He got as far as his arm in the air.

"I was standing next to him and saw where his first swing was, said Spec Chaplin. "I looked closer to see how much more cutting he had to do and saw a mortar round suspended in the bush. I grabbed his arm before he could swing again and it's a good thing I did because his next swing would have set off the round."

Spec Chaplin immediately yelled "booby trap" and everyone cleared the area. Then the two infantrymen returned to inspect the round and saw that the first swipe of the machete had come within three inches of the round.

"We didn't bother looking for anymore branches that night," Spec Chaplin said.

Hard-hitting Jungle Warriors kill 3 and capture weapons

By SGT Louis Miller

LZ DOTTIE (198th Inf. Bde. I0) – An element of the 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry, 196th Infantry Brigade, caught an enemy patrol and took advantage of their mistake by killing one, capturing another, and taking three automatic weapons and five grenades in a recent encounter southeast of Chu Lai.

A platoon from Charlie Company, 1-6th Inf., was moving to a day laager position when the point element spotted a group of Viet Cong soldiers in a rice paddy directly below. The point element reacted immediately.

"Our people up front laid down a base of fire while the rest of us maneuvered into better firing positions," said Private First Class Harold Harmon of Rockford, Ill., a rifleman with the "Regulars." "At first the enemy had to figure out where the fire was coming from, and as soon as they did, they began to evade in three different directions."

The infantrymen swept over the area of contact and found one Viet Cong killed and another wounded. The wounded enemy was evacuated to a Chu Lai hospital.

During the sweep, the "Regulars" conducted a thorough search. The search turned up five Chicom hand grenades, two automatic rifles, and several items of enemy field gear. Nearby, the infantrymen found a tunnel.

"We brought the captured equipment next to the tunnel and then set up security to search the tunnel," Harmon said.

Inside the tunnel, the "Regulars" found eight Viet Cong field packs. A short distance from the tunnel, another automatic rifle was turned up.

Enemy's mistake costs two men

By SP/4 Kenneth Perry

FSB 4-11, (11th Inf. Bde. I0) – Hard-hitting 11th Inf. Bde. Jungle Warriors and a district rifle platoon from Quang Ngai recently pushed through rugged mountain terrain at night and assaulted an enemy basecamp and killed three VC and captured weapons and supplies south of FSB 4-11.

A squad leader from Alpha Co., 3rd Bn., 1st Inf., Sgt. Chester Roney of Flint, Mich. told of moving over two kilometers into a vallery before finding a suitable rallying point for the raid.

"At this point, the Vietnamese platoon leader divided his unit into two, eight-man teams," Roney said. "While he and one RTO remained with my squad, the teams continued towards the base camp."

At daybreak, the assault elements hit the camp, killing three defenders and capturing three automatic weapons and two carbines. Fighting intensified as the surprised VC reacted with a large force.

"The platoon leader informed that his people were in heavy contact with over 30 personnel and were in danger of being cut off," related Roney. A heavy overcast prevented use of gunships, so Roney said he called in artillery and adjusted the fire on the mountainside, hoping to release the endangered teams.

The artillery diversion had worked, and by the time the two elements returned to Roney's position, the remainder of Alpha and two platoons of Bravo Co. had reinforced the squad.

In a sweep of the contact area, the units found three VC KIA, one WIA, one AK-47, assorted ammunition, four hand grenades, approximately 1,000 pounds of polished rice, enough clothing for 50 people, and 15-20 pounds of medical supplies.

A little chop-chop after a long "hump" sure does hit the spot as this platoon sergeant from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry shows how to down a can of pears. (U.S. Army Photo by SP5 Robert A. Spangler)

Margaret Markov plays Polly in MGM's "Pretty Maids All In A Row." She was recently named pin-up girl of the year by 850 Royal Marine Commandos who serve in England. We hereby proclaim her our pin up girl of the week, since we have better taste than the English. (Photo courtesy of MGM)

The Dr. Kildare of the Montagnards

By 1Lt John W. Peterson

FSB 4-11, (11th Inf. Bde. I0) – Nothing about Private First Class Jake W. Greudiger stirs thoughts of a Dr. Kildare or Ben Casey, but the curly-haired medic is "Doc" to more than 300 Montagnards atop that 500-foot outpost (OP) north of Quang Ngai City.

The 19-year-old medic from the 3rd Battalion, 1st Infantry, 11th Infantry Brigade volunteered for the OP duty three months ago and has since lived in a small combination aid station-hootch overlooking the Song Tra Khuc River that winds its way from the mountains into the flatlands near Fire Support Base 4-11.

"I like it up here," he said. "These are great people and I think we can do a lot for them." In January alone the Fort Worth native treated or examined 600 Montagnards, of which about half came from a small village below the hill.

On the hill there is a mixture of ARVN and American forces. Most of the 300 Montagnards have constructed thatched hootches in the rocks within a French meat which surrounds the hilltop. The Montagnards man defensive positions, and many of the women and children Freudiger examines are their families.

Usually Freudiger sees about 120 people every week with ailments ranging from stomach aches to the greatest problem, Cellutitas–better known as Jungle rot.

"The elderly come at night and the kids during the day," he said. "The older people wait until they're real sick and won't come in right away."

Freudiger's remedies include everything from supplying a 78-year-old man with crackers because he cannot eat anything else, to patching up victims of VC booby traps or small arms fire. The aid station is equipped as well as those on firebases, related Freudiger.

Freudiger has little formal training but knows his work as well as those who have been school trained, according to fellow medics. "When I was out in the field, I took over the medic bags when our medic left," he explained. "I had watched him work, and when we were back on the firebases I always hung around the aid station and paid attention to what went on."

Freudiger makes what he calls about 20 "house calls" every day. "You have to, because some of these people don't realize they're sick or just won't come in for help. Besides that, I can get a general idea of their health."

He carries a tongue depressor and apparatus for the blood pressure test which he says "They don't understand, but that doesn't matter, just as long as I find out they're ok." It is not unusual to see Freudiger grab a youngster and take him to his mother for a bath or keep a watchful eye on newborn during his visits.

His day is long. Those Montagnards who work the fields usually come to the aid station after dark with their complaints. At any time villagers from the flatlands will trudge up the 500-foot-long path carrying a patient on a stretcher made from bamboo poles and a hammock.

He noted the Montagnard have a set religious custom of sacrificing a dog or pig frequently, and laughingly said, "A lot of times they will get me up at three in the morning when they get a stomach ache or headache from eating or drinking too much."

Even though he came directly from the field where he had no contact with Montagnards, Greudiger said he didn't have much trouble adjusting to the customs or language. "We don't have any trouble communicating because they just point to where the problem bothers them."

"Some of the customs are funny," he continued, "but I really respect them. One is when you receive something from an old man, you accept it with both hands."

Freudiger says some of his roughest days come when he gets several medevac patients. Montagnards with illnesses or wounds beyond the medic's capability of treating, are medevaced to Chu Lai or Quang Ngai City.

"You know, it's a little different up here from just pulling a Medcap. Sometimes on a Medcap you can bandage a kid's arm and two hours later he will rip it off and let the injury get dirty. Here I make sure they follow instructions and try to keep them clean and well," he emphasized.

"These people don't ask for anything, but I give the kids my supply of MO-CO which is a mixture of chocolate and coffee that helps to give them a little more nutrition. They help me, too. The kids come in once a day and clean the aid station and a mama-san washes my clothes. They know you'll be there when they need you."

The Montagnards have also expressed their appreciation by giving Freudiger a wrist band made of common household string. "It's pretty symbolic," he said, pointing to three small balls of string hooked to the bracelet.

"Each ball stands for each time you have attended a sacrifice and inside each is a piece of intestine from the sacrificed animal. It really is quite an honor."

In five months his enlistment is over and he hopes to get training as a laboratory or X-ray technician. Meanwhile, he says "The more we work for these people the better off we will be."

"Doc" Freudiger is a tangible example of that philosophy.

Tent poles are hazardous

By SGT Louis Miller

KY TRA, (198th Inf. Bde. I0) – Hunting tent poles can become hazardous to your health as one infantryman from the 198th Infantry Brigade recently found out. He found several poles that were suitable for his tent, but each one had a real hang-up--booby trap!

A platoon from Bravo Company, 5th Battalion, 46th Infantry had moved into a night defensive position northwest of Chu Lai when Staff Sergeant Michael P. Gracey of Chicago, platoon sergeant, moved off down a trail to look for some kind of support for his make-shift tent. Gracey found the ideal pole. It was five feet long and airly straight, but he didn't realize that his search was just beginning.

"When I picked the stick up, I felt pressure on the other end, so I laid it back down, and took a closer look," he said. "There was a wire tied to the end of the stick, and it didn't take long to realize that the wire was also connected to a mortar round."

In this case the booby trap would have gone off if the pole had been moved in any direction but up. Gracey slowly placed the pole back on the trail, and informed Specialist 4 Ronald Lee of Moline, Ill., acting squad leader, that there was a booby trap down the trail.

The platoon carefully checked the area, and decided to blow the round in place. After the round was destroyed, the "Professionals" returned to their night laager position, but Gracey was still faced with the same problem of finding a pole for his tent.

"I decided to go back down the trail again to find a pole," remembered the staff sergeant. "After all, I was still getting wet form the rain that was pouring down."

About ten feet past the spot of the first booby trap Gracey found another perfect pole, but it looked too much like the first one he had found. Carefully checking the pole before touching it, he found it to be booby-trapped in the same way as the first.

This time the "Professionals" roped off the area and waited for morning to destroy the booby trap. Gracey gave up looking for a tent pole. The next morning the booby trap was destroyed, and the platoon headed for their new day laager site.

Gracey's talent for finding booby traps seemed to be catching because the platoon found three more that morning, and all of them were constructed in the same manner.

Specialist Lee found two booby traps on a small trail and another was found by the platoon in a small clearing. Specialist Lee disarmed the two booby traps on the trail and brought them to the clearing.

The "Professionals" blew the booby traps, and cleared out the re-supply landing zone very effectively.

An honest goodness barber's chair takes shape on San Juan Hill as an Infantryman turned carpenter produces yet another ammo box creation. (U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Greg Wright)

Major General James L. Baldwin, Commanding General, 23rd Infantry Division looks over one of the largest caches found in the Division's history in the Republic of Vietnam. Lieutenant Colonel William Doyle, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry explains the cache to the General. (U.S. Army Photo by SP5 Robert A. Spangler)

Enemy camp destroyed

By SGT Louis Miller

LZ STINSON (198th Inf. Div. 10) – An enemy rest area was destroyed and one enemy soldier killed as a unit of the 23rd Infantry Division's 198th Infantry Brigade conducted an on-line sweep after finding signs of enemy activity in an area southwest of Chu Lai. Captured in the skirmish were an AK-47 rifle, a 9mm pistol, and five Chicom hand grenades.

An element of Company D, 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry was patrolling a densly vegetated area when the pointman, Specialist Four Ronald Allen (Ozark, Mo), spotted a large structure, The patrol searched the building and came up with the 9mm pistol. Nearby, a small trail with fresh footprints was found.

"After we found the trail and the footprints, we knew there were enemy in the area," said Private First Class George Cumberland (Baltimore, Md.), a rifleman with Company D. "We decided to follow the footprints down the trail."

After moving a short distance, the "Ready Rifles" found six more structures, each large enough to hold about 40 people. The infantrymen heard talking from within the buildings and moved into a line formation to assault the enemy.

"As we moved towards the buildings," said PFC cumberland, "We spotted two NVA soldiers just outside them. One was carrying an AK-47. When he saw us he opened fire and some other enemy soldiers began firing at us with small arms, grenades and rifle-propelled grenades.

The "Ready Rifles" took no casualties but returned fire and then maneuvered towards the structures. A search turned up an NVA killed in the contact. In the other structures, an AK-47 rifle, AK-47 ammunition, five Chicom hand grenades, and enemy clothing were found. The infantrymen then destroyed the enemy rest area.