

# THERE IT IS . . . . .



## *The Sky Soldier*

*a special issue*



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A paratrooper of the 173d Airborne Brigade makes his way across a muddied rice dike near Bong Son. He is neither white nor black. He is airborne.

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The brigade has one of the shortest yet most colorful histories of any Army unit. While others live off the history of men long gone from World Wars I and II and Korea, the 173d continues to make history.

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It would be impossible to feature the 7,000-odd men in the brigade. Each man is unique, in every one there is a story. We tried to select a group of men that, when together, typify you—the American fighting man.

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# Sky Soldier

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96250

1 June 1970

Dear Sky Soldier:

Five years have passed since the 173d Airborne Brigade came to Vietnam. In that time we have proved and we continue to prove the unequalled, aggressive spirit of the airborne soldier with his ability to fight and win.

There are volumes of statistics in war. But the cold, calculated columns of figures are void of the personality, dedication, and sacrifice made by the paratrooper of this brigade. Charts and reports fail to communicate the tension of the man who strains his eyes searching for the hidden enemy. They fail to picture the blood and sweat that soak and stain. . . . the heat, the rain, the rocks and mud, the jungle and mountains that wear and grate on the man with the rifle.

But—a Sky Soldier knows.

Tam Quan, Phu My, Bong Son, My Binh, Hoai An, Phu Thu, Hoai Nhon, An Lao, Nui Mieu, and Binh Dinh are familiar names to you. You have been there. You have been a part of these places. And in each you have left your mark of excellence.

It is clear that you have done your job well. Your magnificent performance is the direct result of the indomitable spirit of the airborne soldier who has confidence in himself, his weapons, and his fellow paratroopers.

You have demonstrated a readiness for all competition and proved you can win. Your skill magnifies the legacy of every Sky Soldier.

The following pages seek to record your unique personality.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "H.S. Cunningham".

AIRBORNE, ALL THE WAY  
H.S. CUNNINGHAM  
Brigadier General, USA  
Commanding



## FINDING AND KILLING THE ENEMY

General William C. Westmoreland, in late 1967, saluted the 173d Airborne Brigade as "one of the finest units in the history of the American fighting man."

Indeed, the first Army ground combat unit in Vietnam, the first to make a helicopter assault, the first to engage the enemy, and the only unit to make a combat jump, the 173d has attained a stunning battle record from cracking the infamous Iron Triangle to reaching the summit of Hill 875 at Dak To. Seven Sky Soldiers have earned the Medal of Honor and two infantry battalions, the Presidential Unit Citation.

Organized June 25, 1963, from the 2nd Airborne Battle Group, 503d Infantry, the 173d inherited the proud tradition of the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment that jumped on Corregidor in 1945. The brigade was originally organized as a "quick reaction" strike force for troubled areas in the Far East. And, for two years before coming to Vietnam, the brigade trained extensively in airborne, guerrilla, and jungle warfare. Countless training jumps on Taiwan earned the paratroopers the name of Sky Soldier.

Upon arrival in Vietnam May 3, 1965, the brigade defended the Bien Hoa Air Base while moving battalion size elements into War Zone D for patrolling and clearing operations.

In July 1965, the paratroopers saw

their first big action north of the Dong Nai River where they trapped a main force VC Regiment against the river and killed 400, apprehended 28, and captured 300 tons of rice.

During the months of September and October the brigade conducted operations north of Ben Cat in War Zone D in preparation for the safe introduction of the 1st Infantry Division. The Sky Soldiers destroyed 23 Viet Cong base camps during that period.

In November, 1965, 1st Battalion troopers caught a VC Main Force Regi-



TAKING A BREAK

ment in the vicinity of the Song Be and Dong Nai River near Bien Hoa and killed 403 in a six hour battle at close quarters in triple-canopy jungle. For that action, the battalion was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

December of that year, the brigade captured 300 confirmed VC, destroyed the local guerilla battalion near Vo Dat and secured the rice harvest in the area.

During the first month of 1966, Sky Soldiers surrounded the Viet Cong 506th Local Force Battalion, destroyed their base camp, and killed more than 100. During Operation Crimp, shortly after that, troopers discovered a tunnel complex in the Ho Bo Woods three miles long, six levels deep which yielded weapons, equipment, supplies and over 100,000 documents.

Operation Silver City in March, had 2nd Battalion troopers killing 343 VC after finding their military region headquarters in War Zone D. In addition, 38 crew-served weapons, 188 small arms weapons and 11,500 documents were captured. It was this operation for which the 2nd Battalion received the Presidential Unit Citation.

In June the 4th Battalion joined the brigade.

In late summer, paratroopers of the brigade moved into previously uncontested VC sanctuaries on Operations Yorktown and Aurora.

In October 1966, the brigade secured Highway 1 from Phu My to Bear Cat and insured safe passage of convoys

# IN THE MAKING...

## PACIFICATION

introducing 4th Infantry Division troops into their first operation.

January, 1967 saw the beginning of Operation Cedar Falls (the largest multi-division operation until Cambodia), resulting in the death of 110 enemy soldiers.

The next month began Junction City where, for the first time since the Korean War, paratroopers made a combat jump.

In June, 4th Battalion Sky Soldiers moved into the Central Highlands to assist 4th Infantry Division soldiers in Operation Greely. Other brigade elements followed at the start of Operation Marion.

In October, the 3rd Battalion arrived at Da Nang, becoming the first Army troops to conduct an operation in the I Corps area, which formerly had been the exclusive hunting ground of U.S. Marines.

November, 1967. The largest and most widely publicized battle of the war began—Dak To! After 20 days of continuous fighting, brigade elements locked horns with an entrenched NVA Regiment on Hill 875, and in one of the most bitter battles of Vietnam, captured the Hill on Thanksgiving Day. Over 800 enemy bodies were counted, at a cost of over 300 troopers killed.

The brigade moved in and out of the II and III Corps area, conducting numerous operations. One significant battle came when Company D, 16th Armor, now inactivated, accidentally got into it with a large NVA unit. In a four hour battle the troopers killed over 200.

Washington Green began April 15, 1969 and became the longest and most difficult operation the brigade has been given.

In the four northern districts of Binh Dinh Province, the 173d tackled the complex job of saturating a population of more than 300,000, most of which was openly hostile.

Security, working with Vietnamese forces and simultaneously conducting combat operations has been difficult, but highly effective. The brigade, as a combat unit, has successfully accomplished the "Vietnamization" policy of the President.



THE SEARCH GOES ON

Fighting the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese requires a highly mobile combat force able to adapt to an elusive enemy on its own ground and conduct successful operations in low plains, rice paddies, dense jungles and mountainous terrain. The 173d Airborne Brigade in recent months has had a double, and difficult, mission—pacification and combat operations.

Half the brigade, along with a battalion task force from the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) has swept the An Lao and An Do Valleys, climbed the steep Tiger Mountains, and even ventured up into the I Corps area, bent on finding and destroying the 3d North Vietnamese Army Division.

While the 2nd and 3rd battalions conducted search and destroy missions, the 1st and 4th battalions had to content themselves with a more docile kind of operation—working with the people. Although many men wanted out of the more tedious pacification mission, the success of the program demanded that it not be interrupted.

Men like Plat. Sgt. Barrios, 4th Battalion, remember Bong Son from the early part of the war when there was nothing on the plains but enemy. Now, with the brigade in its second year here, Bong Son has come up in Vietnamese standards the way Tulsa, Oklahoma blossomed after the wildcat oil strikes. To keep it this way has taken a lot of paratroopers (who had formerly known only those Vietnamese who were determined to eliminate them).

Charlie has not stood still. A major upset of the brigade's pacification would have been a major tactical and political victory. Nearly two thousand troopers have felt the pain of boobytraps, ambushes, mortar barrages and sniper fire.

But Charlie has been thwarted. The Regional Forces in Binh Dinh Province are rated among the very best in Vietnam, and, some troopers maintain, outclass regular Vietnamese Army units.

The paratrooper is responsible for this. In his own, unconventional and harsh way, he has proved to be something of a gentleman. He has helped the people build churches and schools and, as expected, has quite often griped about it. No matter—he did the job and stepped on the small enemy units who dared stand in his way.

Thus, he has killed his fair share of enemy, and, for a combat trooper trained to fight, he has done more than his fair share of helping the people. So, even though the brigade is now engaged in a different war from the first four years, it has accomplished more than at the battles of Dak To, Hamburger Hill and 881. We have finally brought the people into the fight by instilling confidence in their government and themselves and we have provided them with the security to let them build their own communities

and a new life.

Before it was not like that. It was battle after battle, too often in the same terrain. Like Dak To, one of the most widely publicized battles of the entire war, where over 300 G.I.'s lost their lives on terrain where, two years earlier, another American brigade fought and brought fame to their unit.

Now we have Charlie on the run. We couldn't do it by search and destroy. He is too elusive, too smart to lock horns with large U.S. units. He was frustrating us. The tables are turned now—primarily because of Operation Washington Green, the pacification which so many troopers find tough to take.

The enemy has been denied access to the population; ruining his mission of turning the people against the Saigon government. And, he is still being pursued by the Americans—not in large operations, but by small mobile teams which fight the way he does.

The 173d's casualties have been kept to



"5TH Bn" PACIFIES

a minimum, another defeat of Charlie's mission.

We kept Hill 474 from being turned into a mass graveyard for American soldiers by pulling back and letting airstrikes do the work rather than trying a costly assault against the caves that hid a battalion of hardened NVA. In one week on 474, we rendered ineffective an entire battalion. We suffered less than 20 casualties.

Now, by securing a formerly heavy pro-Viet Cong area from that enemy, we've plugged his supply lines leading from I Corps down into our area and heading farther south.

While American combat forces are pressing the NVA's precious sanctuaries in Cambodia, the 173d maintains a block in the An Lao Valley, keeping NVA units from moving "en masse" into that newly opened battle zone.

The brigade's mission remains much the same as it was a year ago. Only now it is easier. The hardest part, getting airborne soldiers to work among the people, has been accomplished.

# TROOPERS ARE REAL PEOPLE

## 111 FOR 'TAD'

Eight North Vietnamese soldiers wait patiently in their well camouflaged ambush position, eagerly anticipating an American patrol that might happen into their killing zone.

One NVA motions his comrades for complete silence. They ready their rifles. The soft swish of jungle brush tells them someone is coming.

Suddenly, six feet away, a small bronze figure comes into view. He is wearing black pajamas and a flop hat. He has rubber sandals on his feet. In his hands he carries an AK-47.

They hold their fire. One NVA leans



TADINA IN BATTLE DRESS

out of his concealment to get a better look.

A quick thirty round burst sends him and two of his comrades to their graves. The surprised NVA retreat into the thickness of the jungle, but not before sending a few short bursts into the attacker's position.

Hit through both calves, Staff Sgt. Patrick Tadina, Honolulu, directs his team's fire into the retreating enemy. Tadina has fooled the NVA again.

Standing only five-foot five and weighing but 130 pounds, Tadina carries a 60 pound rucksack and a communist rifle. He dresses in either North Vietnamese khakis or the black pajamas of the Viet Cong, depending upon the mission. In the nearly 60 months he has served in Vietnam, he has sent 111 enemy soldiers to the grave.

The quiet spoken and modest paratrooper of Co. N, 75th Infantry (Rangers), has led more than 200 fellow Americans in combat since he first arrived in Vietnam in 1965. Not one of

He has been hit three times.

Decorated twelve times for heroism, the small giant of a man always walks point for his team and it is this, along with his dress and long black hair that has kept him from being killed or any of his team members from being hit.

"Several times I have come face to face with NVA but they always hesitate when they see me," he explains. "In those short seconds I have the complete advantage over them."

Seventy-five per cent of his personal body count of 111 carried weapons. All the rest had been wearing webbed gear and rucksacks, leaving no doubt they were enemy, and not just "innocent civilians" who might have wandered into "no man's land."

Because of the troop withdrawals, Tadina can no longer extend. He will go home in August, be discharged from the Army in October.

A lot of NVA will be glad when he leaves.

## UNUSUAL PATIENTS

"Open wide and say 'ah,'" are not common words of Sgt. Iva Moses, St. Johns, Virgin Islands, even though he is a medic.

Possibly because his patients wouldn't understand him.

Probably because if they did, they wouldn't comply. Not without force anyway. Even then he wouldn't get an "ah." Maybe just a rush of hot breath. Or maybe a growl.

Moses is a veterinary technician who mans his own "B-Med" for the 24 German Shepards assigned to the 39th Scout Dog Platoon. He literally has his "paws" full, applying first aid to his patients by treating them for cuts and bruises and wounds as well as performing many preventive medicine type functions to keep the dogs working and healthy.

Moses maintains a health and dental record on each dog not unlike the ones kept on soldiers. Every dog is different and as such, an individual analysis must be kept up to date on shot reactions, working conditions and organ ailments.

If an animal gets wounded badly he qualifies for an "automatic dust off" with his handler to the 176th Veterinary Hospital in Qui Nhon or the 936th Veterinary Hospital in Cam Ranh Bay where we have the same capabilities and equipment for animals that regular hospitals have for humans.

Time, training, and money are the ingredients that prepare a scout dog for his job. Expert medical care, from preventive medicine to complicated surgery, from the lowest level of medical attention to the highest is what keeps the dogs on the job.

Moses doesn't take all the credit. He emphasizes the handler's responsibility for keeping the dog healthy through a vigorous general hygiene program.

His efforts have not gone unrewarded. For stopping a rabies epidemic last year

he received an Army Commendation Medal.

His biggest reward however, as he puts it, is having patients who never talk back or complain about his work.

## DEDICATED

Everyone who has ever been in, associated with, been around or known U.S. paratroopers will agree there are a lot of unusual characters in the airborne.

They do a lot of strange things not normally attributed to the average American.

Like jumping.

One of the most unusual in the 173d Airborne Brigade is Capt. Buddy M. Allgood, the administration officer for the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry.

He went to jump school.

With one leg.

On his last tour in Vietnam the Columbus, Ga., native had one leg blown off by a mine. Most people would accept disability pay and get out of the Army. Most people would be required to do just that. That, is Army policy.

But Allgood fought it. He said he was able to perform any duty the Army assigned him. The Army gave him his chance, after one hell of a lot of paperwork, physicals and interviews.

He finished jump school. Then, he said he wanted to go back to Vietnam.

No one told him he couldn't finish jump school and no one told him he couldn't come back to Vietnam. Which is all to the better—he made believers of the skeptics.

He likes the Army and he likes his job.

With the guts he's shown he has, chances are pretty good he'll be around for some time. He's just another Sky Soldier.

## FORGOT HIS CAMERA

He had long hair, wore camouflaged fatigues, and had a totally unauthorized "combat correspondent" scroll on his uniform. But that was one of his few faults, and compared with his assets it was indeed trivial.

Spec. 5 Rafael Santos was a native of Guam who was raised and educated in the United States. Totally untrained for his job as a writer and photographer, he came to the information office a little more than a year ago from his job at AG Forward. He proved to be one of the best men to serve in the office anyone can remember.

Everyone knew him. The infantry, artillery, and especially the men of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry. His uncle was the first sergeant and Santos spent most of his time with that company, living and working there. He turned out stories and photographs that immortalized the American paratrooper's difficult and hazardous job in this, the most unpopular of wars.

But all that ended April 12, when he was the only casualty in his uncle's company.

Santos, ignoring his job as a military correspondent, was killed charging a North Vietnamese machinegun position.

## WALKING TARGET

He comes in all shapes and sizes but his load is the same. Not to mention the risk.

He's one of the most critically needed men of any operation, whether it's a fire team on a night ambush, or a battalion in the field. His is one of the least desirable of jobs.

The radio operator wears an uncomfortable load and poses a beautiful target for snipers. His long, whip antenna tells everyone who he is, and the most basic instruction of any military force is the importance of radio communications. Charlie desperately tries to get the RTO.

But, in spite of his load and the risk he runs, once a trooper becomes accustomed to his radio, he sticks faithfully to it and, in many cases, would not swap jobs with anyone. He knows how important he is.

Spec 4 Patrick F. Smith, of the 1st Platoon, Company B, 3rd Battalion is one of these guys.

"My rucksack weighs up to 85 pounds on resupply day," says the native of Sacramento.

"At first it was really hard on me but, after I got used to the weight and settled my mind to the fact that there really wasn't any way of getting out of carrying it, I became interested in the job. Now, after having humped it up and down the mountains I feel strange without it."

On one particular mission in the An Lao, Smith found out how hazardous it was to carry the radio.

"There weren't more than four or five NVA firing at us, but it seemed all the rounds were either cracking over my head or hitting near me. Several times I almost panicked. I felt like I wanted to throw down my radio and start using my rifle."

But, he stayed "on the horn."

He caused more damage than the thirty-odd men in his platoon.

He directed the devastating fire of two Cobra gunships against the enemy with his own particular weapon—that damned heavy radio.

## THE STRANGE ONE

Medics do a lot of strange things.

At least that's what it looks like to an infantryman. They pass out funny looking little colored pills and collect urine samples. They make cute remarks to the people they serve, sometimes causing the average trooper to question their credibility. Many of them carry twice the amount of C-rations a normal man can eat. More remarkable is the fact that they eat it all. And there, unreasonably, are no fat medics.

The strangest bit of medic mania to hit the 4th Battalion in recent memory came near the village of Cui Loi.

An elderly Vietnamese civilian was being brought up to the Company B command post right after the paratroopers had a brief firefight with several Viet Cong. The Vietnamese civilian had been shot through the neck.

Spec. 5 John Foltz, Stanton, Va.,

glanced casually at the man. Suddenly, with lightning like speed and urgency in his eyes he jumped up, tripped the old man to the ground and with one quick sweep of his knife, slit his throat.

Troopers thought he'd gone mad.

Foltz broke off his ball point pen, and stuck it in the Vietnamese's throat.

Another medic called in for a dust-off helicopter.

Foltz, a Special Forces trained medic, had just performed an emergency tracheotomy that saved the man's life.

The old man was rushed off to the hospital in Qui Nhon, where he made a complete recovery.

Foltz cleaned his knife, lit a cigarette, and prepared a can of beans and franks for his lunch.

Medics do a lot of wonderfully strange things.

## BAGPIPES

A terrible wail not unlike that associated with ghosts, often breaks the early morning stillness around LZ English. For newly assigned men it is a horrible thing that causes them to wonder at the sanity of being here. Accustomed to rockets, mortars and outgoing artillery they have become immune to just about all the noises of combat.

But not the bagpipes.

Plat. Sgt. Rick Hanbury, Company N, 75th Infantry (Rangers), plays the bagpipes like a native Scotsman, which he is. But you can't tell it by talking to him. He sounds just like any 173d trooper. He speaks their language with all the coarseness and slang.

And when he hits those bagpipes he causes quite a few hearts to flutter.

Many of the Rangers, who would never have listened to such noises before they came to Vietnam, welcome the unusual form of music.

It breaks up their day—at five in the "wee eers eh din."

## A BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY

It seems as if everyone is trying to help us put down the communists. The Air Force, artillery—even naval gunships. In the last year we had a "straight leg" battalion, the 1st of the 50th Inf, with us. More recently, the 3rd Battalion,

506th Infantry.

But a new kind of assist came from the 4th Infantry Division in the form of a staff sergeant.

Earl Waterman Jr., Santa Barbara, Calif., enjoyed teaching sniper tactics so much at An Khe that he couldn't relax during a four day break in training. He came to the 173d to teach the art of "long range contact."

His instruction paid off well.

During his time as an honorary Sky Soldier, he and three paratroopers knocked off eight surprised North Vietnamese soldiers.

A real busman's holiday.

## EX-COMMANDO

"Righto sport, get that bloody ship in, one of me mates is down, over."

Yes, you're hearing right. It's just Miller, an ex-commando of the Australian Army.

Sgt. Douglas A. Miller, Orange, New South Wales, Australia, is one of the team leaders in November Company, 75th Infantry (Rangers).

Prior to coming into the U.S. Army, Miller was with the 1st Royal New South Wales Commando Regiment, where, as he put it, "I was just doing my national service."

His first year was spent in training, the second as a light machinegunner. He "humped" a .303, very similar to an M-60 but much heavier.

After basic and a course in demolitions, Miller went to the Australian jump school, similar to the U.S. Army's in training and identical in length. But, instead of the five jumps required to qualify American paratroopers, Australians make 14.

Once he completed his hitch with the Aussies Miller worked for a short time in the desert on an iron ore project, then went to England where he was on an oil rig in the North Sea.

In 1967 he hit the United States, and, because of the Vietnam War, immediately volunteered for the draft.

Comparing the training to what he received with the commandoes, Miller remarked: "The training is a lot easier in the 'Yank' Army than what we went through and there's a lot more freedom."



HE CAME TO TEACH AND THEY LEARNED QUICKLY

# RURAL DEVELOPMENT — THE

The Rural Development Cadre (RDC) is one of the Republic of Vietnam's little known and most misunderstood government agencies. On it, however, rests the outcome of the war here. The success or failure of pacification depends on the RDC.

The power base of the government of Vietnam rests in the hamlets and villages scattered over the countryside. It is here that the RDC does its work. Operating in teams of approximately 30 men each, the RDC is sent into partially pacified hamlets (ones controlled by the govern-

hamlet from scratch.

Following training, the teams are assigned to provinces and from there to districts and hamlets. The government makes an effort to place men in the same district their homes are in. In most instances the men are at least assigned to their home province.

The RDC is a relative newcomer to northern Binh Dinh Province. The first teams arrived in late 1968 and early 1969. Then there were 59 men in each team. The extra men were needed because of security requirements. Now the

we get information on who has relatives that are VC, who is supporting the VC, who the sympathizers are, and who might be part of the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI)," he continued.

"This information helps the team determine who should be issued ID cards," Vera went on. "The team passes on all its information on the VCI to district headquarters. One of the big tasks the RD has in a hamlet is eliminating the VCI.

"This hamlet is now showing signs of becoming pro-government," Vera stated. "The villagers are telling the RD team members when the VC are going to throw in mortars and such. When the team came here three months ago that didn't happen."

With the intelligence section of the team busy with the VCI, the military advisors concentrate on organizing a hamlet defense. First, the hamlet residents are encouraged to participate actively in the People's Self Defense Force (PSDF). The military advisors give training to the PSDF and direct them in constructing hamlet fortifications.

The hamlet, under ideal conditions, is made into a fortress, denying access to all Viet Cong. In the hamlet of Phu Nhieu, in Phu My District, the residents have set up booby traps, directed not at allied troops, but at the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese.

There tends to be a great deal of confusion among U.S. troops concerning the Rural Development Cadre. Many people tend to confuse them with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) or the RF's and PF's. The cadre is not a fighting unit, however. It is designed to defend itself and to advise the PSDF in military operations.

Despite their mainly non-combat role, some teams take an active part in the shooting war. One team in Phu My District killed more enemy than the conventional forces operating in the same area during a recent month. This is, of course, an isolated exception.

The most important part of the RD's mission is to bring democratic government to the hamlets. When a cadre team moves into a hamlet, the officials of that hamlet have usually been appointed by the district government, rather than elected by the people of the hamlet. The cadre team works to organize the local government into an efficient organization and pave the way for elections. Everyone with ability and prestige is encouraged to run for public office in these elections. In addition, the people are encouraged to vote on every issue.

In some cases, the hamlet residents pick someone from the RD team for a position in the hamlet. When this happens the team member is given a leave of absence from the RDC.

In the more secure hamlets closer to highway QL #1 the RDC is obviously more readily accepted than in the D class hamlets. One man who runs a coke



PREPARING TO FIGHT THE NVA

ment of Vietnam during the day, and the Viet Cong at night) with two basic missions.

The first of these is restoring hamlet security and establishing an effective local government. The second mission concentrates on improvement of the local government and the unification of the people through a common sense of involvement. This involvement comes in the form of self help projects and self defense of the hamlet.

The two missions are broken down into 25 special tasks. Team members are trained in various specialties so they can deal with these tasks. Specialties in the military field include militia advisors, intelligence specialists, weapons specialists, and communications personnel. There are also school teachers, construction engineers, medics, and political cadre.

Rural Development personnel are trained at Vung Tau in their various specialties. One part of the training sees an entire team left in a completely undeveloped and unpopulated area. The men are required to build and fortify a

teams work in conjunction with local Regional and Popular Forces (RF/PF), who provide security. The teams have been reduced to about 30 men.

The cadre's progress varies from hamlet to hamlet. In the more secure areas the people tend to be more receptive. In areas where allied troops classify the communities as 'D' hamlets, meaning about 75 per cent of the people are Viet Cong, progress is much slower.

Hy Van Hamlet in the An Do Valley is an example of a hamlet the RDC has only recently moved into. It is a D hamlet, and the RF compound where the cadre team stays at night still gets occasional sniper fire from Hy Van.

"One of the first things an RD team does when it moves into a hamlet," explained Staff Sgt. Raul Vera, Jr., Weslaco, Tex., the RD advisor for Tam Quan district, "is to make a 'map' of the hamlet. This is really a diagram showing the relation of everyone in the hamlet to everyone else. From this map, the intelligence section of the team figures out just who's who in the hamlet. From informers

# GOOD GUYS WITH BLACK HATS



IMPORTANT PART OF MISSION IS PROVIDING SECURITY FOR FARMERS

stand near the highway says he is glad the RD team came, because now he can sleep at night. He stated he had moved out of the hamlet to a more secure area because the Viet Cong were terrorizing it. But when the RD team came, he moved back. Now he is a member of the hamlet council and is working to improve the hamlet, and if the council needs advice, they can get it very easily:

"RD man is always there," he said.

Reaction in the hamlets where RD teams have been the longest is the same. Many of the people are happy the RD teams are there, because it gives the children a chance to go to school. One woman in Ngoc An Hamlet near LZ North English said her only regret was that there was no higher education availa-

ble closer than Bong Son, and she could not afford to send her two teenage daughters there to go to school.

The 173d Abn Bde's Operation Washington Green has provided the four northern districts of Binh Dinh Province with enough security for the many Rural Development Cadre teams here to go on with their second mission. Dispensaries and schools are springing up as fast as materials to build them and supply them can be obtained. New wells are being dug, and life is improving. Some of the cadre's work on these projects has confused American soldiers.

"We had one company commander who really got upset when he tried to help build a school at Tuy Thanh Hamlet," Vera explained. "He com-

plained that the RD people wouldn't put up the tarp he had gotten for use as a temporary school. Instead they got the hamlet chief to send men out to do it, and had the chief send the hamlet carpenters to make desks out of the ammo boxes that had been provided, instead of the RD men doing it themselves.

"He couldn't understand," Vera continued, "why the people were getting paid for sitting on their rears. I tried to explain that the Cadre's job was getting the hamlet chief to have the people do the work. Otherwise, the school or anything else that was built in the hamlet, wouldn't mean anything to the people," he concluded.

And that's the whole idea.



KEEPING THE WATER RUNNING

## SCOUT DOGS

One of the saddest parts of the Vietnam War is the fate of the loyal scout dog who serves the brigade. Unlike the paratroopers he has no DEROS. He is here until death relieves him of his duties.

"Buddha" has risked his life daily for four years. In that time, he has gone through eight handlers and has been wounded five times. Buddha has been through the fire fights of the old search and destroy days and has detected many boobytraps during pacification that would probably have killed an unwary trooper.

Buddha is luckier than other dogs. Many of the dogs in the 39th Scout Dog Platoon and 75th Combat Tracker Team have died in combat or from disease. But, in the long run, Buddha's fate will be just about the same.

This is unfortunate, because the large dog has allowed eight handlers to go home alive and saved countless others because of his skill and alertness in the jungles, mountains and plains.

He has made his mark on the enemy

too. Since 1966 he has "personally" killed five communists.

Buddha won't get any medals. The only thing going for him now is the gratitude of those few men in the brigade who know him.

## TIPTOE WITH ME

Softshoe through the mortar rounds, through the mortar rounds with me, is the now sound of Staff Sgt. Jerry K. Lenz, of Detroit Mich. The medical platoon sgt. of 3d Battalion 503d Infantry at LZ Uplift has won the award as the best softshoer in the brigade.

The award came early the morning of April Fools Day when the landing zone was hit with rocket and mortar rounds. Lenz, with his army issue ballerina boots especially made for the stage floor of the LZ, began dancing through the incoming rounds helping the wounded.

The self proclaimed Carnegie Hall entertainer claims "it was the hardest performance I'd ever made, and the holes in the stage floor made it extremely difficult to come out of my Swan Dive."

The climax to his performance came when he was administering first aid to a wounded paratrooper. On cue from his musical accompaniment, a sharp whistle, Lenz, with total disregard for his own safety, threw himself on the man as the mortar round landed in front of the aid station. Taking shrapnel wounds, he continued to give aid to the man.

Recalling the incident, Lenz could only say, "I guess they forgot to replace me with the stunt man."

## OVER HILL, OVER DALE, THROUGH THE BRUSH, ALONG THE TRAIL

Opening new roads to friendship are the 173d Airborne Brigade Engineers. One such project is the recently completed 13 mile stretch of road from the Bong Son bridge to Lo Dieu hamlet on the coast.

"We are really proud of this project," said 1st Lt. Antone C. Cerne, the operations officer. The road was started last June and was worked on till August when the dreaded monsoons hit. "That put a crimp on our operations and confined us more or less to the LZ and direct combat operations," said Cerne who hails from Lorain, Ohio. In February after the monsoons had let up, the work resumed.

"We started this gigantic operation from scratch," the lieutenant explained. "When we started there was only a small footpath. Most of the area was under VC control at the time, and we had to fight as well as work our way through." So far route 173 (as it was appropriately named) has cost the engineers three five ton trucks and several casualties.

"Our biggest problem at first was the booby traps and mines," said the company commander, Capt. Thomas M. Deputy.

Presently there are two platoons working on the project; putting in the finishing touches and extensions to the road and connecting nearby hamlets and villages. A platoon of RFs and a squad of U.S. infantry, along with the engineers, provide the security for the project. "We have used almost all our heavy equipment on this operation. The genuine interest and individual efforts of the men played a large part in this accomplishment. The Vietnamese farmers even pitched in and helped us," said the operations officer. "We have cut off Charlie's food source and cut down on his activities. With the road open, the VC know the villagers can get help immediately," commented another soldier.

The engineers maintain a mini-base near Lo Dieu. At present they have a platoon on LZ English working on the new special services swimming pool. As one man puts it, "We do anything and everything. A short while back we even built a duck pond for the general.

"Whatever the 173d engineers are called on to do, they do in a professional manner—keeping with their motto, "To Gain the Ultimate."



TAKING A BREAK FROM BOOBYTRAPS

# BRIDGE SECURITY

## TOP SOLDIER



KEEPING THE HIGHWAYS OPEN

## NIGHT IS WORST

One of the loneliest and most frightening jobs in combat is that of an outpost bridge security team.

By day bridge guards keep traffic flowing smoothly over a bridge nearly three football fields long. They must be quick and alert, looking for tell-tale bulges hidden within wagons and goods villagers carry across the river.

One such security outpost is manned by a paratrooper platoon of the 173d Airborne Brigade. The platoon is the obstacle between Bong Son, where the Sky Soldiers are busy in the Pacification Program, and V.C. Valley, a heavily vegetated area. The enemy is denied access to the highway.

The Regional and Popular Forces keep a constant watch on the river banks near the town and the paratroopers man both ends of the bridge. Other platoons secure the Highway from the I Corps border to the Korean sector of Binh Dinh near Phu Cat Air Base. The bunkers are all fixed shelters, and are more open to enemy fire at night because Charlie already has the range and location measured. And it is at night when the security team sweats.

Near the town of Bong Son the bridge sites have bright lights that completely illuminate the surrounding area and buildings for 100 meters. Other outposts have to depend on the individual trooper's senses and trip flares.

Occasionally a small child will wander into an off limits area heavily laden with claymore mines and cause a soldier's

heart to quicken. Every paratrooper in the brigade knows that the NVA and VC will often use women and children as decoys in order to escape their eyes. Communist units maneuver around the sites and unexpectedly throw in sniper rounds and B-40 rockets.

Bridge security is not an easy job. It can be compared with pulling targets for an airstrike.

You sit and wait.

When Charlie fires you are his target.

When he attacks, it is his mistake.

You may take some lumps—but you will never be beaten.

## KEEPING READY

Many a person has flinched at LZ English when the sharp staccato of machine gun fire breaks through the routine stillness of daylight duty. A few of the newcomers look suspiciously at one another.

It is just D Company, Maintenance.

But "just" hardly fits the description of their importance.

They keep the battalions functioning. Not the men, but the equipment, weapons, heavy armament, stencil machines, you name it. Without its continuous efforts to keep all of the gear of the brigade working, the paratrooper's hands would be tied.

Oh, they would have their grenades. And web gear. And ammunition.

But they would have nothing to fire it with.

And we would be in Charlie's place.

The mama of the company. . . . .

If he had to make sure you put your pants on correctly, he'd do it. If you needed something, he'd try to make sure you got it. And if you screw up, he'll make sure you get what's coming to you too. That's why he's like a mama; but the line doggies makes sure they don't call him mama, but first sergeant.

He's the man that stands between any request or problem that an individual may have and the subject confronted by the individual. Sometimes it's the matter of a person wanting an R&R or leave, or someone wanting to make out an allotment or wanting to see a dentist. He comes between them to make sure it's justified.

But sometimes wearing the pants puts him in some unusual situations or situations where he begins to feel as though he was the mama for the company. Cause like kids, paratroopers have their days too. Breaking up a fight between two troopers over a beef and rice LRRP ration can bring out some gruesome language. But mama is always there to settle the situation. Mama's got another beef and rice LRRP.

He doesn't nag you about taking a bath or cleaning up, but he does make sure you keep your weapon clean. If you need a hair cut. . . he always has a pair of clippers handy.

And when night comes around, he really gets on you. Making sure a "peach" is out, checking the perimeter; roll down those sleeves, insect repellent on so the mosquitos don't get at you; even coming to make sure everything is all right before turning in.

Oh! And he makes sure you're up early in the morning to make sure you're up in time for stand-to. He even makes sure you clean up your area.

He watches over you so much like a mother, you'd think he was your own. But all he is is the first sergeant.



COMBAT ADMINISTRATION

## FIGHTING HIS WAY

Hawk teams are among the most effective methods for dealing with the 3d North Vietnamese Army Division which specializes in sending small groups of men into Binh Dinh Province to harrass and upset the GVN pacification program.

The NVA have found out about the 173d's hawk teams the hard way. By walking into their ambushes and trying to confront the small groups, they discovered it can be just as hazardous as trying to bump heads with the larger force of a platoon or a company. Although working in groups of seven or less, the hawk teams have available all the air support and artillery that is allotted to a battalion.

The 173d has now augmented the hawk teams with Vietnamese to give them some practice in dealing with the enemy. It has worked well.

The 3d Battalion, 503d Infantry, sent a special multi-platoon force to Tuy Hoa in April to teach the Regional and Popular Forces there how to combat NVA forces trying to take over that large rice producing region.

Dubbed Task Force Talon, the mission was a complete success.

One hawk team, led by Staff Sgt. Charles Martin, Lordsburg, New Mex., was typical of those formed for Tuy Hoa.

"We had a five man team and were given five Vietnamese to work with," recalled the second tour veteran. "At first they were reluctant to go into some areas because of heavy communist activity, but after three night ambushes, they saw how effective a well disciplined hawk team can be. They caught on quickly.

"We taught them how to move, what to look for and, most important, we got them to overcome their fear of the North Vietnamese."

The mission was simply—teach the Regional and Popular Forces to effectively protect the rice harvest. Less than two months later, the task force was returned to LZ Uplift, leaving our allies with an enormously effective new tactic to carry on.



A 'GOD SQUAD' LEADER

### "THERE IT IS..."

Accented with a deep Carolina drawl, a reenactment of "The Sermon On The Mount" took place on one of the 4th Battalion's Delta Company command posts, high above the An Do Valley.

Chaplain (Capt.) Roy N. Mathis, from Gaffny, S.C., gave his Geronimos a break from their normal duties, to gather in prayer—prayer which sounded a little strange to the ear. He talked to his men in their own language, the language of the line-doggie.

Reading from the Scriptures of Matthew, Mathis transferred the meaning of the passages into words that even a paratrooper who was awake all night on a mission, could enjoy and understand.

Taken from the Sky Parson's sermon as he thought a discussion between the Lord and his disciples would be: "And how can we, Lord, do our thing, and yet serve You?" Answering the question, "It is so

very easy—do your thing with honor and do it in My name." They replied: "There it is, Lord, dig it, Hootch!"

Unexpectedly, there was a low laugh from the paratroopers. It was not because of any irreverence, but merely signified that the field men had comprehended the chaplain's implied meaning. It was truly meant for them. The message was delivered with the utmost reverence, but to break a language barrier, Mathis knew just how to tell them.

The old saying goes that "you can't fool everyone all the time," holds true with the language and habits of the enlisted infantrymen. But for Mathis, there is nothing false. He served many years as an enlisted man in the Infantry. He knows the linedog and hangs right in there with them.

## CRISPY CRITTERS

Burning up in the Vietnam sun is just an expression for some, but for the 173d Airborne's 51st Chemical Detachment it is a matter of fact—and method.

When the 3rd Battalion, 506th Infantry ran across an entrenched enemy battalion on Hill 474, they pulled back to avoid American casualties. The Air Force was called in to drop thousands of pounds of bombs against the enemy. But, the bunkers were too thick, the boulders too big. All they did, for the most part, was give the NVA a bad headache.

Most of the rocks protecting the caves were bigger than the buildings on LZ English. The tunnels were hundreds of feet deep. The NVA had the complete advantage. All they had to do was sit back and wait for the Americans to poke their heads in, then appropriately blow them off.

So, 51st was called in. Using Chinooks, they dropped hundreds of barrels of thickened fuel, then set it off with a thermite grenade. The fuel seeped down into the caves before the thermite ignited it.

Countless American lives were saved. An NVA battalion was destroyed.

The brigade's manufacturer of "crispy critters," put in for a bombardier's badge.



# E TROOP, 17th CAVALRY



MECHANIZED AND INSTANT DEATH ON THE MOVE

The rumbling growl of awaiting death echos through the An Lao Valley as tanks and armored personnel carriers push the elusive North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers into the awaiting ambushes of the 173d Airborne Brigade's rifle companies.

Thick brush crunches under the awesome weight of tons of ammo-laden armor as the mechanized fury seeks out its prey. Every corner of the sprawling valley feels the thunderous reverberation, for the troop leaves no area virgin from its symmetrical tracks in the sand. "Charlie" cannot find much asylum from his predators.

To control the vast valley's enemy movement at night would be impossible for many, but the Cav has an "ace in its pocket" to deal a losing hand to an overconfident foe. Armed with 152mm cannons and .50 cal. machineguns, the mechanized troop can extend its coverage, at night, to cover the entire valley in a line of defense. Aided by their cannon's flechette rounds, they put a halt to any enemy movement between their tracks. If any venturesome NVA tries to infiltrate their zone, a blast and a screaming cannon's flechettes "literally nail him (NVA) to the trees."

Troopers deliver the explosive ordnance from their death-dealing Sheridan Assault Vehicle, which was reported on captured NVA field radios, as being "the enemy's thorn-in-the-side."

Having infantry rifle companies under operational control to them helps tremendously to search out NVA positions hidden in the crevices and caves of the surrounding mountains, some of II Corps' most treacherous. Infantrymen are supported by the heavy weaponry and the Cav's mobile mortars as they ascend the

steep slopes searching for enemy complexes.

The mighty Cav is frequently called to augment ground forces in all areas of track accessible territory in the brigade's area of operation, but has always returned to slam the door shut on the enemy's entry to the life-sustaining Bong Son Plains.

## SEARCH AND CLEAR

Early morning.

The jungle, cool before the sun streams above the surrounding mountains, awakens with the buzzing of insects.

In the dense brush of a hilltop, members of the 173d Airborne rifle company stir from their poncho liners, grumbling. "Good morning, Vietnam," bellows one trooper. "Thirty-one days," mutters another.

Rations are heated and eaten, gear is packed, weapons and radio checked. The men, their soiled fatigues damp from the mist, move out. Another day in Vietnam has begun.

The mission for the day? The same as yesterday. Find Victor Charlie. Find him, capture or kill him, take his rice and weapon, keep him running. All morning the company moves waist-deep through a wide stream at the base of a towering fertile mountain, coldly named Hill 803. From below it looks beautiful, reflecting the sun from its cloak of green jungle growth, perfect covering for the watching eyes of the enemy.

Someone wonders aloud what everyone is thinking: "Damn, I feel like some one's watching me."

The men stop for chow. The morning

is gone, but a trail up the mountain has been found. They lunch where the mountain pours its water into a stream. Drenched with sweat, some strip to the waist and plunge their heads and torsos into the cool, rushing water. Others prepare a quick meal. Some sleep. All rest.

That afternoon they are going up the mountain.

"Put it on!" commands the lieutenant, newly arrived in country.

"We ain't going up there I hope," thinks one trooper.

They go.

Again the backs strain beneath rucksack straps as they follow the falling stream, cautious on the loose rocks. Boulders block the way. Machetes are used to hack through the jungle. Thorns tear clothing. Beneath the green cloak the beauty of the jungle is forgotten.

Several times men fall. One wrenches his knee. He climbs, leaning on his buddy.

Halfway up the mountain, the men must return to the jungle. Stopping their climb is a 200-foot waterfall, splashing through the rock and foliage like a majestic fountain from an invisible source. Few notice it, as they cut a new trail in the jungle. Vision is limited in the thick growth. One sees only the knees and feet of the men climbing ahead of him. The stream, in its flowing haste, still can be heard. Dry mouths are grating; water is available.

A break is given. Those with dry cigarettes smoke. Others sit and wonder if there is a top to the mountain.

Again they move. Back to the stream above the waterfall. Back to the scraping rocks and swarming insects. Slowly they progress upward, pushing as fast as the terrain allows. For security they must reach the top by dusk. Still no trace of the enemy.

Finally they reach the top.

No enemy today except the mountain.

Tomorrow will be the same.

Another day in Vietnam.



BREAKS ARE OFTEN TENSE

# BRIGADE SUPPORTING ELEMENTS

## REMINGTON WAR

The most glamorous units in Vietnam are those which actually do the fighting. They receive the most publicity. Rightly so. But where do these men on the line get those all important supplies and administrative support that is so vital in an army which is so dependent on the Disposition Form and the supply requisition, just to name two of thousands of papers?

For this brigade, such support comes from the 173d Airborne Brigade Support Battalion. These pushers of supplies and papers do those things which the infantry just doesn't have the training or manpower to do.

Working from Phu Tai and Cha Rang Valley, the support battalion moves everything from C-rations to malaria pills through its depots.

Co. C (S&S) has this responsibility. It is a big one. First Lieutenant Graig Hall of San Francisco, Calif., is a platoon leader with "C S&S." He runs the huge warehouse which marshalls so many of the supplies destined for the men in the field. "We always kid the infantry saying that if it wasn't for us, he couldn't survive. It's all in jest, though, for our job is to support the men out there, and we do just that," says Hall.

Another aspect which comes under the control of the support battalion is Company B (Medical). This collection of doctors, optometrists, dentists, technicians, medics, and a myriad of other dedicated professionals takes care of our health. They patch up the wounded and fill cavities of those with toothaches. The field medic—well, what can one say about the courage and dedication of these men? They're great.

Then, there is the administrative center. These are the guys who process orders of all kinds, awards and decorations, and the ever-popular Congressional Inquiries, of course. The bulk of the admin people are stationed in Phu Tai where they act as the nerve center paper shuffling for the brigade.

Most of the time, the men of the support battalion are an overlooked part of the brigade. This is unfortunate; for they work long and tedious hours for us. Their work at times is unrewarded and unglamorous, but the rewards are there. When the boonie rat opens a can of C's, the men at the support battalion know they've done their job. A damn good job.

## BUZZZZ.....

"Parachute Main Sir!"

This familiar answer can be heard 10,000 to 13,000 times every day at the 173d Airborne Brigade's 534th Signal Company.

The signal company is set up at LZ English and is divided into two platoons. One consists of wire and cablemen while the other is made up of radio technicians. The wire and cablemen operate the brigade switchboard, lay and install tele-

phone lines, run the operational communications center, and do a number of other things.

The company set-up consists of a multi-channel radio network which utilizes FM, VHF, and microwave radio systems. All are direct line-of-sight radio systems, each using different frequencies.

Probably the most important and busy area is the main switchboard which has a total of 120 local circuits and 53 trunk lines from one switchboard to another. There is also a separate switchboard (tactical switch) which consists of 24 tactical circuits to the brigade tactical operations center (TOC).

"The MTA three main is where you route your calls. We can reroute calls throughout Vietnam and anywhere in the world by connecting with other switchboards," explained Sgt. Leon Slocumb of Macon, Ga., the switchboard NCO.

"It's a hard job, and you have to have all the patience in the world. We get chewed out quite a bit by callers and have to take it. A lot of people just don't realize that we are human too."

During an alert at LZ English the operators have to call 78 different switches and tell them to clear the lines till the alert is over. This usually takes them only 10 minutes to do.

Probably the biggest achievement for the company is the Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS). This is the high powered radio that transmits telephone calls to and from the states, allowing the Sky Soldiers to call home when they want to.

## AT YOUR SERVICE

Keeping the Sky Soldiers' wallets fat and their intricate financial records up to date, the Forward Finance Team on Landing Zone English stays on call 24 hours a day.

A forward service team of two men, branched from Co. A (Admin) of the 173d Airborne Brigade, the team was inaugurated in July of 1969.

Dedicated to give service to the many troops out in the field and to their support elements in the brigade's area of operation, the team handles up to forty paratroopers a day on a normal day. On or shortly after payday, they average about seventy men with every kind of financial question, from a change in pay grade to how to initiate a vital allotment to a wife.

Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Perry, from Cambridge, Maryland, is serving his fourth tour in Vietnam, working in Finance. He is assisted by Sgt. William Brent III, Pensacola, Fla., and he is going on his third tour with the 173d.

Among their numerous duties are—to convert Military Payment Certificates (MPC) to Vietnamese piasters; to cash checks; to start and change supporting allotments; and handle any pay inquiry that the soldier may have.

Since the trooper in the field cannot always leave the field to get his finances

squared away, Perry goes out to them regularly. If a worried paratrooper can make it to him only in the late hours, Perry will open shop around-the-clock for the soldiers' convenience.

Brent admits that it does get monotonous having to be in the office all the time, awaiting inquiries, but he said, "If that is what it takes to keep the troop's pay coming, then that's what I'll do!"

With about 75 partial payments and 95 pay change inquiries per month, the team burns the midnight oil many a night to insure that all inquiries are promptly answered. Like most military functions, mounds of paperwork must be typed daily and submitted for approval to the main office in Phu Tai.

Their mission has paid off, for the amount of financial difficulties that the troops had is greatly reduced. And for the field troops, it is imperative that they be kept free from these worries so that they can better concentrate on their dangerous duties.

## THE ASSOCIATION

Just about every unit in Vietnam has some sort of organization for the troops to join—it has been said that even the 3rd North Vietnamese Army Division has one.

As a member of the 173d Airborne Brigade, you have one too. It is the Sky Soldier Association. Unlike many military extracurricular organizations, the Sky Soldier Association has a great deal to offer its members.

The Sky Soldiers pay for the brigade's magazine "Sky Soldier" (naturally), and the brigade's yearbook which is sold for a mere \$5.00.

By joining the Sky Soldier Association, the 173d paratrooper gets a wallet, a pin, and unlimited stationery with the brigade's patch and address on it.

So what? Well, they also have the Sky Soldier of the Month program. The man who is chosen in tough competition gets an Army Commendation Medal, an engraved plaque, a cash award of \$50.00, a \$25.00 U.S. Savings Bond, a promotion to the next higher grade (only E-4 and below qualify), a trip to Japan (no R&R charged), and one day as the CG's aide. Not bad for being a good soldier.

The association does other less tangible things for the troops also—like giving a wounded man a cigarette lighter. Maybe not something that makes up for the wound, but something that tells you that there are guys around that care.

The Sky Soldier Association is for you. Join it—it's a pretty good deal.

## GETTING READY

Getting men ready for the brigade is an important job, one that demands a high calibre of instruction and a strong training program. Missions and objectives change periodically and replacements must learn the methods the brigade currently uses.

Pacification, Hawk Teams, night fring,

patrolling, all are a part of the week's training each replacement must go through, in addition to straightening out financial affairs and personnel management problems.

But replacements are only part of the school's function. It conducts training for Vietnamese military and paramilitary organizations, trains Regional and Popular Forces, Rural Development Teams and, Kit Carson Scouts.

All instructors have finished at least one complete tour on line before they are selected. Second, third and fourth tour sergeants are given the option of staying on at the school as instructors, because experience is a strong additive to book learning.

## SAVING LIVES

Skilled fingers with the benevolence of a mother and the startling quickness of a blackjack dealer quarrel with Mother Nature to gain rights to a 173d paratrooper's life.

Dedicated to "preserve the fighting strength," these fingers are mastered by a tall, robust Chicagoan and his Irish born assistant.

Capt. John W. Smith, surgeon and commander, along with Spec. 5 Timothy L. McNally operate a team effort in a sparkling clean room, that affords maximum lighting, and catches the nose with a distinctive medicinal aroma. Here, working with gleaming scissors and precision instruments, the dynamic team hassles under tedious conditions to keep the brigade at full strength.

It may be a patient with a gunshot wound, desperately fighting against time to achieve recovery, it may be the agonizing pain of appendicitis, or routinely may be just the discomfort of protruding moles that are continually cut by the vicious, razor-edge Elephant Grass as the paratrooper moves down the trail. Any and all problems are tackled by the doctor and his assistant in their complex and cross-trained profession.

Like the enormous ratio of time for maintenance, over time for flying, the surgical team spends countless hours in the preparation of its duties and the sterilization of literally everything that comes in contact with the patient. Many hours must be spent reviewing the patient's medical history and like an Infantry leader's plan of attack, the team must plot the maneuvers and alternate plans necessary to achieve success.

Like all sciences, Dr. Smith must keep up with all new advances in his profession, and burn the midnight oil to learn them in case someone's misfortune demands his daylight hours. McNally is continually striving to learn his commander's technique, thus becoming better able to support him.

Not only must Smith perform these ultimate tasks, but he is also the commanding officer of the medical company. Here, he must insure that all phases of medical treatment for the soldier are kept up to par. Through constant supervision and instruction, he searches for better ways to give our soldiers quicker recovery, in greater comfort, in support

of his life decisive work.

Many soldiers will return home, their enemy no longer facing them, but for the doctor and his assistant from Co. B (Med), their enemy will loom wherever they go. The skilled hands with the quick minds are battling for the 173d's lives.



JUST DOING HIS JOB

## UNAPPRECIATED

With a crack force of trained paratroopers and backed by the military law enforcement's finest investigators, the 173d boasts a proud platoon of Military Police.

Taught to react with split-second decision, the mike pappas use every modern means to aid in enforcing their decisions.

This could range from mob-defying Armored Scout Vehicles (the duck) to the most advanced procedure of radio communications available.

The platoon's decisions directly affect each and every one of the brigade's Sky Soldiers, for the MPs bear this unit's patch. Being organic to the brigade alone offers them the initiative to better serve their own. This is reflected by their courtesy and even their motto, brightly painted in bold green and gold, "Of the troops, and for the troops".

They also must serve to protect the population's innocent civilians against their common enemy, the Viet Cong terrorists, and to some extent, the indiscreet soldier.

The MPs work very closely with the surrounding, indigenous National Police to insure that there is an equal representation of each nationality involved. By doing this, a mission in itself, the brigade police also serve to better train the district's militia. Under the brigade's present efforts of Pacification, there is a more critical need for constant vigilance among the villagers and the locally assigned troops.

In the tradition of all law enforcement agencies, our law-backing force must protect us from ourselves. Patrolling Highway 1 during the on limits time provides the patrols with the task to slow down the hurried motorist and to put a check on the use of the busy highway to a disguised foe from North Vietnam. Nothing says that the enemy can't pick out a policeman for his target, for to the enemy a GI is a GI.

It may seem to be to the dismay of all, from the terrorist to the ticketed paratrooper, that the MP single handedly does his job, but because of his efforts, we can feel better security of our living areas and the areas that we travel. Maybe one tends to take these secure areas for granted, evidence of a thankless job. But without the ever vigilant eyes of "the man", we may be the victims of either of our two enemies- the Viet Cong and ourselves.



BRINGING IN THE RESUPPLY



LENDING DIGNITY

## ON THE WAY!

"The artillery lends dignity to what otherwise would be a vulgar brawl."

—Anon

While the dignity of combat or the vulgarity of war is debated in congenial rivalry by infantry and artillery, no infantryman in the 173d Airborne will challenge the contribution the "Redlegs" of the 3rd Battalion, 319th Artillery, have made to Sky Soldier success on the battlefield.

Anyone who has ever had to call in artillery close to his position can readily appreciate the destructive power of the 319th's 105mm rounds. Many a soldier has buried his face in the mud and quivered inwardly as jagged pieces of shrapnel whistled close over his head—when the contact became so close the unit was forced to drop rounds in to within 50 meters.

It was at 875 the artillery proved its worth, dropping rounds in with remarkable accuracy against concentrations of NVA and weapons positions. In War Zones C and D, where the 173d became the first American unit to encounter full scale VC battalions, the artillery helped the paratroopers to hold the upper hand.

Weather can stop troopers from getting heavy air support, but there is very little to keep the artillery out of the heat of battle.

There have been times when artillerymen have found themselves fighting the North Vietnamese attacking their perimeter while continuing to fire missions for infantry units in the field.

Many a North Vietnamese unit has found how foolish it is to attack an artillery firebase. They can attack in tens, twenties, or hundreds. It doesn't matter to the 319th Artillery. Sky Soldier Redlegs defend their own firebases with no infantry attached. Other Divisions in Vietnam have an infantry company defending each 105 battery. Not our guys—we're airborne.

## 'PSY' EM OUT'

Fighting right beside American and

Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) team has provided us with over a hundred live enemy soldiers each month with no bloodshed on either side.

Each time that these teams go out into the "boonies" to tell the enemy what benefits they would find with the GVN (Chieu Hoi), it means certain victory. Maybe not as far as bringing back another Hoi Chanh, but with the team's efforts of psychological persuasion, if he doesn't rally, then he surely must be thinking. And when the enemy's thinking, he starts to open his mind to the better way of life that PSYOPS offers him.

The task to persuade the enemy seems to be an everlasting struggle. The PSYOPS Team must burn the midnight oil to author newer and more persuasive messages and continue to hump the hills and valleys to deliver those messages. But the team realizes their apparent success and drives on even harder to gain more support for our side without bloodshed for any—just a lot of sweat!

## G.I GUMSHOES

"Working in military intelligence is like trying to solve a big puzzle," mused Capt. William Lipke, head of the order of battle section of the 172d MI Detachment.

"You pore thru mountains of material to glean one small tidbit of useful information. You file it for future use and, when the time comes, you fit it into your puzzle. The result is military intelligence.

Maj. Tom Minnehan commands the detachment's four sections: Counter-intelligence (CI), Order of Battle (OB), Image Interpretation (II), and POW interrogation (IPW).

CI is concerned with denying useful information to the enemy, preventing and investigating sabotage, and keeping detailed information on the VC Infrastructure in the brigade AO.

OB keeps tabs on the enemy's strength, location, mission, and capabilities.

The effort pays off. Last fall, the OB section predicted a VC mortar attack several nights before it occurred.

CW2 Donald Leonard is chief of the II section. Visual and photo reconnaissance are the section's main mission.

The IPW section deals with enemy suspects, POWs, Hoi Chanhs, captured weapons, and documents. Capt. John Johnson is in charge of this section which uses 13 Vietnamese interpreters.

"We depend on the other sections and units in the field to supply us with the information we need to ask the questions most likely to get useful answers from detainees," he said.

Out of the never ending flow of information, misinformation, weapons, photos, and documents comes a useful commodity—military intelligence. It's worth the effort, though, because it could spell the difference between life or death for the Sky Soldiers who wage war against a determined and clever Charlie.

## GROUND SURVEILLANCE

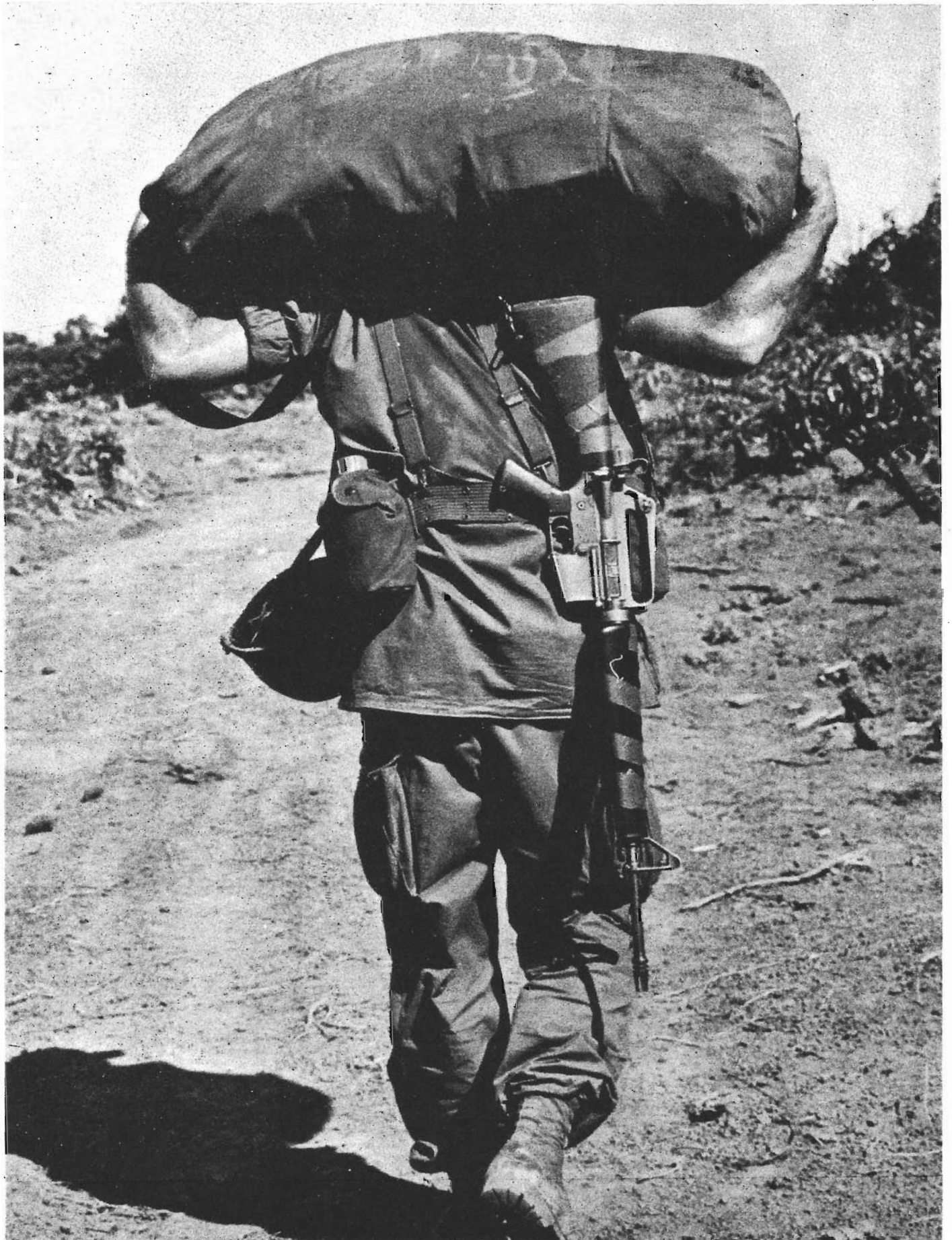




I SAID IT'S MY ROCK.



THAT'S A LICK



**GOING HOME**



*To stand at last on that unknown ground,  
Is a thing that soldiers can understand,  
When the battle is over and friends are down,  
He knows—I can cry, I am a man.*

*D. J. —*