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TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS

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635 Viet Cong Killed in 4-Hour Battle

Reactionary Drill Saves Artillerymen

A battlefield dress-rehearsal is credited with preventing the enemy from completely overrunning the fire support base of the 3rd Bde., 4th Inf. Div., during the massive Viet Cong attack at Soui Da, March 21.

Lt. Col. John W. Vessey, commander of the 2nd Bn., 77th Arty., reported that the night before the attack, the artillery reactionary force of 50 men had rehearsed in what turned out to be the exact area where they were needed during the attack.

His comment to the rehearsal was, "It sure paid off."

Co. B, 3rd Bn., 22nd Inf., was in danger of losing its position.

"They had pulled back into a tight circle and hand-to-hand combat had flared up in many places," stated one officer. The 105mm howitzers were firing at point blank range and the rounds were landing "about 75 meters to our front and we couldn't lower the tubes anymore," Col. Vessey stated.

It was at this point of the battle that the reactionary force was committed.

As the battle raged, units of the 3rd Bde., 4th Inf. Div., were rushing through heavy jungle in an attempt to reinforce the beleaguered infantry and artillery. The 2nd Bn. (Mech), 22nd Inf., and the 2nd Bn., 34th Armor, were pushing in from the west and the 2nd Bn., 12th Inf., was moving in from the northwest.

"It was the closest thing to the 'Late-Late Show' I have ever seen - it was the cavalry coming to the rescue and we were sure happy to see those tracks come out of the woodline," said one officer.

The armored personnel carriers and tanks moved across the clearing using all available firepower to save the hard-pressed U.S. troopers. They were able to perform to the maximum of their ability in the clear flat terrain where the battle was being fought. A tremendous attack through the support base area and directly into the VC lines drove the enemy back across a huge field where the VC were rendered helpless against the armored

vehicles.

Leaving behind all of the dead and wounded they could not drag, the defeated VC sought the cover of dense jungle where heavy pounding by artillery and airstrikes killed more of the badly mauled and surprised crack VC regiment.

Documents found showed that intensive planning was involved in the massive attack on elements of the 25th Inf. Div. The documents indicated that three battalions of the enemy were from the 272nd Main Force Regt. regarded as one of the best organized and equipped VC units.

BATTLEFIELD - Aerial view of the besieged fire support base shortly after enemy troops broke contact and fled, leaving 635 of their dead behind. A few hours earlier, troops of the crack VC 272nd Main Force Regiment attempted to overrun this position with human wave assaults. (Photo By SP4 Adrian E. Wecer)



Patrol's Find Signals Start Of Big Fight

The 3rd Bde., 4th Inf. Div., under operational control of the 25th Inf. Div., routed an estimated Viet Cong Regiment recently 30 km north of Tay Ninh during Operation "Junction City."

A total of 635 Viet Cong were killed in the four-hour, pre-dawn battle. It was believed to be the largest number of enemy soldiers killed in a single engagement during the Vietnam war.

A patrol sweeping an area near the perimeter of a fire support base in War Zone C made contact with the enemy at 6:40 a.m., touching off one of the fiercest battles of the Vietnam war. The enemy struck back with mortar, automatic weapons and small arms fire.

See Pictures Pages 4 & 5

The 3rd Bde. troopers held their ground, throwing back several human wave attacks. Using direct fire from the artillery guns, the U.S. soldiers also called in close air strikes, helicopter gunships, and other artillery.

After several hours of fierce fighting, the Viet Cong broke contact, fleeing into the heavy jungle with other elements of the brigade in hot pursuit. As the battle area moved into the jungle, 3rd Bde. troopers counted 635 enemy dead around the fire support base perimeter. In addition, more than 150 enemy weapons have been found including small arms, heavy machine guns and machine guns.

A military spokesman said 31 U.S. soldiers were killed in action and 109 wounded.

'Wolfhounds' Use 'VC Detectors'

"VC detectors" were used with great success by the 2nd Bn., 27th Inf., "Wolfhounds" during Operation

“Junction City.”

Not a mechanical device, these VC detectors were a soldier and his scout dog, from the 38th Scout Dog Platoon.

Working as a team, the keen senses of the dog coupled with the equally alert handler invariably provided an early warning that “Charlie” was in the vicinity.

In the dense jungle of War Zone C the dogs proved to be especially valuable. Their ability to detect by scent what the men could not see in the lush undergrowth effectively countered any ideas of surprise the VC may have had.

Taking part in all sweeps conducted by the “Tropic Lightning” infantrymen, the handler and his scout dog take the point position. The handler remains alert for any sign from his dog that would indicate enemy nearby. As soon as the dog alerts the team, their job is done and the Wolfhounds take over to close with and destroy the VC.

In the dangerous point position many of the handlers and their dogs have been wounded. The men of the 38th Scout Dog Platoon have been awarded eleven Purple Hearts and one of the dogs, Ceaser, has been wounded twice.

On one recent operation, Sp4 Donald Tiener and his dog were both wounded and evacuated to the Cu Chi base camp. SFC Arthur L. Porter, platoon sergeant of the scout dogs, said, “Specialist Tiener saw to it that his dog was in the hospital before he would attend to his own wound.”

When asked how a handler knows his dog has alerted, Sp4 Glen Hutchins, 23, commented, “My dog, Troop, will perk up his ears and look in the suspected direction. If it is a really strong scent he will close his mouth and breathe through his nose, so as to be quieter.”

1st Lt. Ralph Harrison, commander of the platoon, stated, “The dogs are treated as well as the men. They go through the same conditioning together,” Lt. Harrison continued, “We thought we might have a problem with the dogs overheating, but training and conditioning prevented this.”

The men and dogs of the 38th Scout Dog Platoon have a dangerous job, but are always ready to lead the infantryman in a mission where their skills will prevent casualties and save lives.

2nd Bde. Forward Camp Hit

Machinegun, rifle grenade, and small arms fire raked the combat forward base camp of the 2nd Bde. recently.

The action took place during the brigade-conducted Operation “Waialua” southwest of Cu Chi.

The attack, beginning shortly after 9 p.m., rocked the base area soon after the brigade elements had moved in and begun to prepare defensive positions

The soldiers attempted to take cover in partially completed shelters as bullets spattered the ground around them. Six men were injured in the attack, one seriously.

Communications platoon leader, 1st Lt. Peter McGuire, said, “We were just beginning to set things up when the first rounds came in. The fire grew very intense and lasted for nearly a half-hour.”

1 /27th Uncovers Weapons Cache

Moving along the swampy banks of the Oriental River southwest of Cu Chi, the 1st Bn., 27th Inf, “Wolfhounds” uncovered a VC weapons and ammunition cache recently. The action took place as part of Operation “Waialua,” a 2nd Bde. search and destroy operation aimed at eliminating VC forces and facilities west of Duc Hoa.

The find included Chinese Claymore mines, 60mm mortar rounds, recoilless rifle rounds, and ammunition for the Chicom RPG-2. One .45 caliber “grease gun” and 7.62mm ammunition were also uncovered.

Want to Win an R&R?

Want to win an R&R? It's simple. We're looking for a new name for AMBUSH magazine - just come up with a new one and you can be the winner. Send your suggestions to the

Information Office, 25th Inf. Div. APO SF 96225. Sorry, only 25th Division soldiers may participate.

Include on your written suggestion sheet your full name, rank, service number and complete military address.

All entries must be submitted prior to 5 p.m. April 15, 1967. None will be accepted after that time. All entries must include the date and time submitted, in the event of a tie the earliest recorded suggestion wins. The decision of the judges (the division's sergeants-major) is final.

SO - WIN YOURSELF A TRIP TO THE R&R CENTER OF YOUR CHOICE. DON'T DELAY, PUT THAT SUGGESTION IN TODAY!

Decorated

SILVER STAR

Col. Francis S. Conaty Jr., HHC, 1st Bde.

Lt. Col. Henry R. Shelton, HHC, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf.

Capt. William H. Pelfrey, Co. A, 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf.

SFC Patrick J. Campbell, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 1st Inf.

SSgt. Kenneth D. Roberts, Co. A, 4th Bn. (Mech), 23rd Inf. (Post.)

Sp4 Ray G. Murchison, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf.

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

Maj. Victor J. Buttner, Co. A, 25th Avn. Bn.

Maj. George F. Newton, Co. A, 25th Avn. Bn.

Capt. Gary L. Hatfield, Trp. D, 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav.

BRONZE STAR MEDAL (VALOR)

Maj. James B. Colson Jr., HHC, 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf.

Maj. Julian Villarreal Jr., 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf.

Capt. Robert E. Fuller, HHC, 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf.

Capt. Richard G. Jones, Co. B, 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf.

Capt. Charles P. Rea, HH&S Btry., 1st Bn., 8th Arty.

1st Lt. David F. Arizu, Btry. A, 7th Bn., 11th Arty.

1st Lt. Richard H. Brislin, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf.

1st Lt. James D. Montavon, Co. A, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf.

1st Lt. Paul T. Short Jr., Co. B, 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf. (Post.)

1st Lt. John C. Thompson, B Trp., 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav.

1st Sgt. Bobby L. Sturgeon, Co. A, 1st Bn., 27th Inf.

SFC Fred S. King, Co. A, 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf.

PSgt. John T. Fitzgerald, Co. B, 4th Bn., 9th Inf.

SSgt. Patrick L. Lacy, Trp. D, 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav.

SSgt. Howard E. Redding Jr., Co. A, 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf.

Sgt. William R. Robb, Trp., B, 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav.

Sgt. Randolph Davis, Co. C, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. (Post.)

Sgt. Charles M. Douglas, Co. A, 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf.

Sgt. Burt R. Jackson, Co. A, 2nd Bn., 12th Inf.

Sgt. Herman Pride, Trp. D, 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav.

Sgt. Jose A. Oquendo, Co. C, 1st Bn., 27th Inf.

Sgt. Robert E. Taylor, Co. A, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. (Post.)

Sp4 Jerry D. Byers, HHC, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor (Post.)

Sp4 James E. Cradic, HHC, 2nd Bn., 12th Inf.

Sp4 William C. Frank, Co. B, 6th Engr. Bn.

Sp4 Raymond P. Howard, Co. A, 3rd Bn., 22nd Inf.

Sp4 Gerald E. Jones, Co. A, 3rd Bn., 22nd Inf.

Sp4 Larry McIntosh, Trp. D, 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav.

Sp4 William O. McNew, Co. A, 1st Bn., 27th Inf.

Sp4 Robert A. Schultz, Co. A, 4th Bn. (Mech), 23rd Inf.

Sp4 Frederick C. Tarwater, Co. B, 3rd Bn., 22nd Inf.

Sp4 John J. Vindish, Co. A, 1st Bn., 27th Inf..

Sp4 James L. Wilkes, Co. A, 25th Avn. Bn.

PFC George F. Brannon, Co. C, 1st Bn., 27th Inf.

PFC Robert M. Boyle, Co. A, 4th Bn. (Mech), 23rd Inf.

PFC R. L. Bush, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 14th Inf.

PFC John Cartwright, HHC, 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf.

PFC David R. Gary, Co. A, 2nd Bn. (Mech), 22nd Inf.

PFC John R. Heslep III, Trp. B, 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav.

PFC Aubrey L. Hewitt, Co. A, 1st Bn., 27th Inf.

PFC Wade W. Leech, Co. A, 3rd Bn., 22nd Inf.

PFC Daniel Ochoa, HHC, 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf.

PFC Luis A. Perez-Cruz, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf.

PFC Ronald M. Rhea, Co. A, 1st Bn. (Mech), 5th Inf.

PFC Carlos Ugarte, HHC, 2nd Bn. (Mech), 22nd Inf. (Post.)

AIR MEDAL

Lt. Col. Felix Salvador, HH&S Btry., 7th Bn., 11th Arty.

Maj. Richard H. Edes, HH&S Btry., 7th Bn., 11th Arty.

SSgt. William K. Amina, HHC, 1st Bde.

Sp4 Melchoir Gonzales, Co. B, 25th Avn. Bn.

1st Lt. James D. Martin, Co. A, 25th Avn. Bn.
WO Arthur P. Lancy, Co. B, 25th Avn. Bn.

Sp4 Richard O. Nash, Co. B, 25th Avn. Bn.

ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL

1st Lt. George S. Mason, Btry. A, 7th Bn., 11th Arty.
WO William S. Moore, 25th MP Co.
PSgt. Louis A. Anderson, Co. C, 65th Engr. Bn.

SSgt. Joe L. Bankston, 25th Admin. Co.
Sp4 John H. Kirkland, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 14th Inf.

Nguyen Tuong Huong Dies Trying to Aid Freedom Fight

(Editor's Note: This article is reprinted from the March 9 issue of the Saigon Post. It clearly demonstrates the courage and determination of the Vietnamese people in their fight against communism.)

Nguyen Tuong Huong, a nephew of the late Nhat-Linh Tuong Tani who killed himself to protest against President Ngo Dinh Diem's dictatorial rule, Thursday joined his ancestors. He was 26.

Huong's death, caused by the explosion of a Viet Cong mine near Cao-Tho, is only one among the many such occurrences. Indeed, only for the week ending February 25, VC terror accounts for 81 dead, 195 wounded, and 99 kidnapped. A breakdown of the death tolls gives the following line-up: two policemen, two hamlet chiefs, three returnees, 10 hamlet administrative personnel, one Revolutionary Development cadre, one village chief, and combatant youth.

What makes things all the more tragic is that such personal sacrifices are rarely mentioned in the press. Should Nguyen Tuong Huong be not personally known to us, his passing away, if at all reported, would simply be mentioned as a numerical component in a list of casualty figures, and his family and friends would not even have the consolation of a public acknowledgment of what he had done for the cause of a nation he had been serving with total abnegation.

Indeed, born of a well-to-do family which could pretty well send him abroad for higher education, Huong decided to stay at home and share the fate of his nation. He joined the army in 1965, was declared eligible for military service deferment, but requested and obtained permission to attend the Thu-Duc Military Academy. He graduated the following year from the Armor School and instead of pursuing the Viet Cong in the relative safety of a tank or an armored car, volunteered for service with a Revolutionary Development unit because, he said, "I should like to be in close contact with the people in the boondocks, understanding their aspirations, and do something to alleviate their sufferings."

The land mine planted by the communists in a village lane south of Can-Tho terminated Nguyen Tuong Huong's career as a defender of freedom. But contrary to the Viet Cong's expectations, the elimination of Huong and those like him shall never deplete the ranks of freedom fighters whose number seems to expand at least as fast as the rate of VC terrorist incidents.

Editorial

Legal Insurance

Most people have insurance of one type or another. There is life, automobile, fire, health and mortgage insurance - many different types covering just about anything you can imagine.

But for those of us in the military, there is another kind of insurance. There's no written policy and we don't pay annual premiums, but it is there just the same.

It can be called legal insurance and it is offered daily by legal assistance officers the world over. This insurance comes in the form of qualified, professional advice to help you understand wills, mortgages, sale contracts, powers of attorney, tax problems - the whole range of civil legal matters that might give you trouble or raise questions in your mind.

The legal assistance officer is an attorney whose job is to act as your legal adviser and consultant. He will give you the advice you seek to keep your personal affairs in good order. He won't advise on criminal matters, nor will he represent you before a civil court. If your problem requires the services of a civilian lawyer, he can refer you to civilian legal advisers or legal aid bureaus through cooperating bar associations.

He can't advise you concerning court-martial investigations or charges and he won't be your collection agent or process server.

But he will give you the benefit of many years of intensive study and training to keep you out of trouble when you have a legal problem.

Vietnamese Elections Upcoming

Elections to restore self-government at the local level will be held in the villages and hamlets of the Republic of Vietnam during April, May and June.

Village councils, hamlet chiefs and deputy chiefs are among the village administrative officials to be elected. Each village council will elect one of its members as the village chief.

Depending on the size of the village, the council will include from six to 12 members. The system of local self-government was abolished early in the Diem administration.

The spring elections will be held in some 1300 villages and 5500 hamlets throughout the country. The village elections will be held on five consecutive Sundays beginning April 2. The hamlet elections will start May 14 and also run five consecutive Sundays.

Since the Viet Cong consider the development of representative government a threat to their political survival, a campaign of terror and intimidation against the elections is expected.

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THE HARD WAY - 25th Infantrymen find traveling most unusual in War Zone C during Operation "Junction City."

'Cacti Green' Score on Operation 'Pershing'

The 1st Bn., 35th Inf., "Cacti Green," in conjunction with elements of the 1st Air Cav, conducted the most successful search and destroy maneuver thus far in Operation "Pershing," killing 84 NVA and seizing 34 weapons.

Col. James G. Shanahan, the brigade commander and combat veteran of two previous wars, praised the battalion's action. "The execution of the 'Hammer and Anvil' operation was a tactical masterpiece," he said.

A reconnaissance helicopter from Trp. C of the 9th Cav. initiated the contact when it spotted a man enter a bunker near Hoa Tan. When the chopper landed to pick up the man for questioning, it received enemy fire, and a platoon of cavalrymen were brought in.

Trps A and B from 2nd of the 5th Cav. and Cos. A and C of the "Cacti Green" were placed on key terrain to block the escape of the enemy force while Co. B maneuvered to sweep the area.

In applying the "Hammer and Anvil" operation with Co. B as the hammer, the "Cacti Green" launched an attack that overwhelmed the enemy.

With darkness approaching, the lack of visibility forced Co. B to withdraw, and establish blocking positions. All during the night, artillery and air strikes continued to "hammer" the village. More than 600 rounds of artillery landed on the village during the operation.

At daylight, Co. B moved in again, but encountered only sniper fire. A complete sweep of the village was made and 80 villagers were evacuated for questioning. A police of the battlefield revealed 84 NVA bodies and indications that many more had been dragged away.

Maj. James Moore, Jr., the "Cacti Green" commander, praised the aggressive fighting spirit of the "Cacti Green" and constant support from Trp. C of the 9th Cav.

Maj. Moore stated that a battalion size force had probably been put out of action, and all the men of the "Cacti Green" are to be congratulated on their outstanding accomplishment.

Tennis Anyone? Try Tay Ninh

By Capt. Marshall Randall Jr.

To a student who had just made an excellent execution of a stroke, "that backhand was beautiful", and to a young girl who was probably hampered in her movements by flopping sandals, "No! No! Footwork! Turn to the side and step!"

Play stops. This fundamental, like all the others, must be mastered. The students on the court gather around, watching. The demonstration of this, like all other techniques, seems so easy and smooth.

Shy smiles of approval spread across their faces, a new glow of confidence fills their eyes, his understanding, patience and professional manner have gained the respect of all.

Even before he arrived at the base camp of the 196th Lt. Inf. Bde., the young lieutenant knew he would be involved in a different type of war. His battle would be that of winning the hearts, minds, and support of the people to their government through civic action projects. Tay Ninh, Republic of Vietnam, located deep within War Zone C, was to be his battlefield.

Within two weeks, 1st Lt. Lewis A. Stein of Chicago, leader of the 8th Plt., 2nd Civil Affairs Co., attached to the 196th, had undertaken small projects to improve the health and education standards within the area.

While supervising a school renovation project several miles from the 196th base camp, in East Tay Ninh, Lt. Stein spotted a large open area with thatched huts on three sides and wooden beams evenly spaced around the area. What was once chicken wire, hung lazily to the beams. If his eyes weren't playing tricks, if he could sell his idea, a new dimension could be added to his civic action program.

To Lt. Stein, a former professional tennis instructor, here was heaven - two cement tennis courts, constructed

by the French during their occupation, badly in need of repair. These two courts could bring tennis to Tay Ninh and provide the people with a civic action program in physical education.

He had no trouble selling his idea. The province chief shared his enthusiasm for the sport and the next week, with help from the local people and his own men, work was started to improve the courts. Water buffalo lazily roamed over the courts, on their way to a nearby waterhole, and chickens scratched nonchalantly from one service box to the other.

Anticipating a large turnout on opening day, Lt. Stein requested 25 racquets and a gross of balls from the Don Kerbis Tennis Club In Highland Park, Ill., where he had been an instructor.

Racquets and balls arrived on time to meet 41 curious Vietnamese to the new "Tay Ninh Bath and Tennis Club". "Bath" was used in honor of the buffalos whose water hole was nearby.

After only six weeks, the club had grown to a membership of 67 enthusiastic men, women, and children. Six hours of clinics are held on Sundays, with practice sessions during the week. Students, eager to learn and wanting to improve their skills, plead with Lt. Stein to be included in both of the three-hour clinics on Sunday.

"Dan Banh", or. translated - "Don't push the ball," is one of the few phrases Lt. Stein can say in the native language, but there has been no problem in communicating. Using a combination of English, Vietnamese, and sign language, every mistake is corrected, every movement critiqued.

Through his combination of sign and verbal language, tennis talk like "Get your racquet back!", "Where's your weight?", "Keep your eye on it!", "No wrist" and "Lean and bend!", are just as effective as speaking in the native language. An extremely bad stroke occasionally prompts him to say, "Number ten!"

As for the game, the chickens continue to have their way, strolling in and around the bouncing balls while the clinics are in session. Little brothers and sisters race madly for the ball in motion, darting in and out, sometimes through the player's legs. Realizing that it takes time to develop a full appreciation for the game, Lt. Stein has made no changes. Already one 10-year-old is "excellent and his footwork and stroking are really coming along. He could go all the way as far as Vietnamese tennis is concerned," Lt. Stein said.

No standard uniform has yet been adopted, and it is common to see black pajamas, sandals and quite a few other combinations not yet sanctioned by the U.S. Lawn Tennis Association. The black pajamas caused Lt. Stein some concern at first, since they are also worn by the Viet Cong. But the concern soon vanished as he watched the enthusiastic people in their black pajamas turn the tennis court into their private battlefield.

The future of tennis in Tay Ninh looks great. Already plans are being completed to construct new facilities in the province which will introduce an additional 400 or more persons to the game.

Wanting not only to "stimulate an interest in tennis, but also to develop a healthy attitude in sportsmanship and fair play," tennis didn't just come to Tay Ninh, Lt. Stein brought it.



IN THE SWING - 1st Lt. Lewis Stein warms up before starting his next tennis lesson with the local Vietnamese as part of a civic action program.

Third Brigade Goes All Out To Recover A Lost Engineer

The high value placed on an American soldier's life was again demonstrated by the 3rd Bde. Task Force, 25th Inf. Div., as the brigade dispatched helicopters and a search party to look for a PFC who failed to show up at his unit's location by nightfall.

PFC Gerald Sundermeier, a driver with Co. D, 65th Engr., had accompanied a cavalry platoon searching a village near the engineers' road construction project, after an ARVN soldier stumbled into their camp and reported being wounded by a VC patrol nearby.

As darkness approached, PFC Sundermeier left the cavalymen of Trp. A, 1st Sqdn., 7th Cav., to return to his unit on the road. On his way back he spotted three VC run into a hut.

Entering the hut, PFC Sundermeier found only three women and a tunnel entrance under some rugs. Not knowing exactly what to do he tried guarding both the tunnel entrance and the women. Before he could come up with a solution to the situation, it was too dark to find his way back to the engineers' location.

When he heard a chopper fly over the area, he decided to let the women go and warn the chopper of his position by firing tracer rounds. The helicopter observed the tracers, and was able to drop flares, allowing PFC Sundermeier to make it back to the road.

Reflecting on his three-hour experience, PFC Sundermeier termed it "the scare of my life."

Unbeknownst to the young private, the search for him involved many of the brigade's higher staff officers including the 3rd Bde. commander, Col. James G. Shanahan.

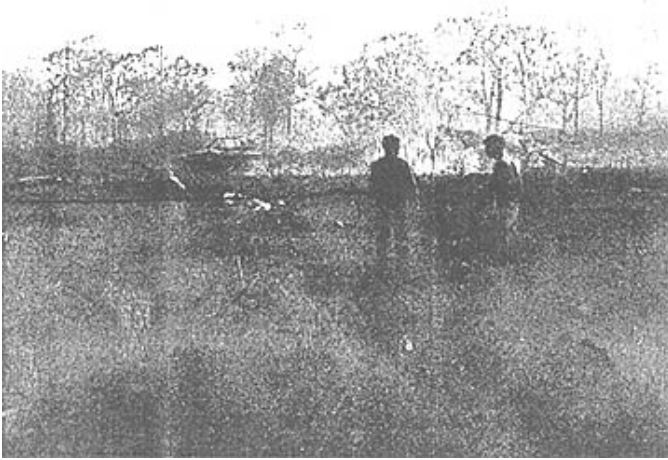
196th Infantryman Awarded The BSM

For his actions in Operation "Attleboro," Sp4 Gary M. Scothon of Co. C, 3rd Bn., 21st Inf., 196th Lt. Inf. Bde., has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal with "V" device.

Specialist Scothon, a rifleman, moved with his platoon to support another company when his unit came under heavy fire. Specialist Scothon's platoon was ordered to maneuver to the right of the hostile force, and he assumed the lead, inspiring the men of his platoon to assault the fixed emplacements and overrun the Viet Cong force.

1st Day of Spring – Helluva Day At Artillery Base

SMOKE - The smoke from thousands of rounds of small arms, machinegun, automatic weapons and artillery fire hangs over the scene of the U.S. victory.



WEARY DEFENDERS - Capt. George Shoemaker, Co. B Commander, and two of his men wearily rest following the four hour battle.



[3 Other photos on this page were not able to be reproduced from the Xerox copy.]

Sergeant Tells How Scout Dog Saved His Life

“... About ten meters further on, Prince jumped up on his hind legs, straining and pulling at the leash for all he was worth. I could hardly hold him, and I knew the VC were very close. It was the strongest alert he could give. I yelled to the guys around me to get down, and then the Cong opened up from about ten feet away. . .”

The only casualty of this brief fire fight in a VC base camp was a dog, Prince. Prince was rather special, however. He was a scout dog with the 48th Inf. Plt. (Scout Dog), attached to the 196th Lt. Inf. Bde.

He and his handler, Sgt. Karl J. Brandenburg of Dayton, Ohio, were with companies A and B of the brigade's 4th Bn., 31st Inf., sweeping the jungle near the Cambodian border on Operation “Junction City.”

The companies had been in the area before and knew it to be infested with Viet Cong. The purpose of the mission was to find and destroy a VC base camp thought to be located there. After sweeping 1000 meters through heavy jungle, the companies found the base camp.

Sgt. Brandenburg and Prince were walking in the front of the companies, as usual, so that Prince would have a clear scent of any VC around. As they entered the group of bunkers and huts that made up the base camp, Prince gave an alert.

The companies held up while a fire team was sent forward to find what had caused Prince to signal danger. They were unable to find anything, and the companies advanced. Ten meters further, Prince gave a second alert, and the companies were again halted. Three men were sent forward, and again could not find whatever was bothering the dog.

After moving about ten meters further, Prince gave the strongest alert he could. Sgt. Brandenburg knew the VC were very close and yelled for the people around him to hit the dirt.

"Just as I yelled," recalled Sgt. Brandenburg, "an automatic weapon opened up about ten feet to my front. Prince was hit, but he jumped up and knocked me to the ground. A second burst from the bushes in front of me killed him."

"I kill always believe, as do the men who saw it happen, that when Prince was hit the first time, he sensed that I could be hurt too. He knocked me down to save me, and took another bullet that killed him."

Sgt. Brandenburg was assigned to Prince while at Fort Benning, Ga., where the dog was almost rejected because of over-aggressiveness. Through Sgt. Brandenburg's patient handling and attention, however, Prince calmed down and passed the course.

In action Prince was a fast and thorough worker, intensely interested in scouting. The sergeant and the dog had been together in the States and Vietnam since early October, 1966.



A HERO - Prince, the scout dog who gave his life to alert men of the 196th Lt. Inf. Bde.'s 4th Bn., 31st Inf., to a VC ambush, is shown going through an early training exercise with his handler, Sgt. Karl Brandenburg.

FDC Takes 'Teamwork And Skill'

"Enemy platoon in woodline . . . Fire for effect!"

To the men of the Fire Direction Center (FDC), 3rd Bn., 82nd Arty., 196th Lt. Inf. Bde., these words cracking over the radio mean only two things - fast work and intense concentration.

To handle fire missions against the Viet Cong during the day, and control Harassment and Interdiction (IM) fires at night, the battalion FDC has two teams of nine men each.

Included on each shift are a fire direction officer, a team chief, two computers, two chart operators, two radio-telephone operators, and a switchboard operator.

To process fire missions against the enemy, teamwork and skill are the first essentials. Next, is speed.

The speed with which a fire mission is processed could often mean the lives of the forward observer requesting the mission and the infantrymen with whom he is operating. But at no time can speed mean recklessness.

Before a single round leaves the tube of one of the battalion's 105mm howitzers, the men of the FDC have plotted the location of all friendly units in the area and have made sure the forward observer is exactly where he thinks he is. A mistake by the forward observer in the report of his position could mean calling down an artillery barrage directly on himself.

To safeguard against this, the FDC has perfected a method called the "navigational round," which can be requested by the FO to pinpoint his locations. Traveling through thick jungles and rugged terrain with no distinguishable landmarks could disorient the FO.

To "find" himself on the map again, he merely picks a landmark he believes to be nearby, but which he cannot visually see, and request a "navigational round" fired at that location.

The round detonates 200 meters above the coordinates the FO gave, emitting a puff of white smoke. When the "nav" round explodes, the FO can then take an azimuth to the air burst and reorient himself.

When the FO calls in a fire mission, the FDC must be able to quickly and accurately take the information from him, convert it into degrees of elevation and deflection, and then pass the sight settings on to the gun crews. An error in calculation of only ten miles (approximately two-thirds of one degree) can result in disaster in the close-quarter fire fights common in Vietnam.

The computer and chart operators know that one slip of the slide rule, or a plot in the wrong place on the map may mean firing hundreds of meters from the desired location.

It is challenging work for the FDC of the 3rd Bn., 82nd Arty., but each man is fully trained and skilled in his job. Functioning together, these "men behind the men behind the guns" are one of the reasons the VC greatly fear the artillery.

New Dispensary For Manchus

"Built by aidmen for all men reads a sign that hangs above the door of the recently opened 4th Bn., 9th Inf., "Manchu" dispensary.

On opening day, Lt. Col. Robert Hyatt of Fairfax, Va., the battalion commander, cut the traditional ribbon which formally began the battalion's new, improved medical service.

"The dispensary," says SFC Raymond Trotter, platoon sergeant for the battalion's medical section, "will enable three times as many patients to be treated at once as the old aid station.

"In case of emergency," continued the sergeant, "Minor operations call now be performed within the battalion area."

The new dispensary was built by four medics in their spare time. The entire job took three weeks and three days to complete, but is expected to give months of reliable service.

Lt. Col. Hannon Returns To 25th Unit for 3rd Time

Lt. Col. Joseph L. Hannon of Salinas, Calif., the commanding officer of the 12th Evacuation Hospital, is now spending his third tour with the 25th Inf. Div. or one of its units.

Col. Hannon took basic training with the 14th Inf. while it was a training regiment at Camp Fannin, Texas, in 1943. The regiment is now broken down into two battalions.

The 1st Bn. is stationed with the division's 3rd Bde. in Pleiku and the 2nd Bn. is with division's 1st Bde, at Cu Chi.

After completing his basic training course, he was sent to Notre Dame, Yale, and the University of St. Louis School of Medicine to complete his studies.

He again met the 14th and was introduced to the 25th Inf. Div. in Korea in 1952 while assigned as the "Golden Dragons" Regimental Surgeon.

"I liked the 14th Inf. right from the start," said Col. Hannon, "and became very proud of them as I am now.

"They are the best unit I have ever served with and every time I speak of them or my assignment with them, there is a lump of pride in my throat."

The colonel's departure from the "Tropic Lightning" Div. and the 14th Inf. came at the close of the Korean War. But in September of 1963 he worked closely with the division while in Hawaii.

Col. Hannon was stationed at Tripler Army Hospital in Honolulu and during this time he accompanied the

division, and frequently the 14th, on many of its training maneuvers. In most cases, he worked as liaison officer between the 25th Med. Bn. and Tripler.

After leaving Hawaii, he was assigned as 12th Evacuation Hospital commanding officer at Fort Lewis, Wash., and brought the large medical unit to Vietnam last September.

Although the 12th Evac. is not directly assigned to the 25th, it is stationed in the division's Cu Chi base camp and furnishes direct support to the "Tropic Lightning" infantrymen. Asked how he likes being with the 25th Div. and the 14th Inf. again, Col. Hannon replied, "I feel at home."

Lt. Awarded Bronze Star

1st Lt. James G. Mikesell, Co. C, 3rd Bn., 21st Inf., 196th Lt. Inf. Bde., has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal with "V" device for his actions against a hardcore Viet Cong force.

Lt. Mikesell was serving as a platoon leader, when he ordered his platoon to attack a Viet Cong position that had previously halted another company with heavy automatic weapons fire, rifle grenades and small arms fire.

Although sustaining a chest wound from the fragments of exploding rifle grenades, he led the advance of the platoon until the Viet Cong had been routed.

Patrols Make Big Haul in 'Junction City'

Early one morning, three platoons left on a patrol during Operation "Junction City." Before those three platoons returned they would find a great deal more than they had expected.

After one uneventful day, the platoons from Co. C, 3rd Bn., 22nd Inf., 4th Div., moved out separately over War Zone C.

The 3rd Plt., commanded by 2nd Lt. Rudy Whitehead, patrolled along the river. The point man, Sp4 Garry Ducre, surprised three Viet Cong washing clothes, two of whom were killed. The third dove into the water, hoping to go unnoticed as four more enemy opened fire from concealed positions along the bank.

Finally the Viet Cong came up for air and SSgt. Robert Stark greeted him with a burst from his M-60 machinegun. The Cong went down again but didn't come back up.

The enemy firing from the bank fled. Lt. Whitehead called in artillery on the fleeing guerrillas. Capt. Peter J. McNaughton, Co. C commander, and 1st Lt. Eliseo Pacheco, forward observer for 2nd Bn., 77th Arty., called in air strikes and artillery.

The 3rd Plt. withdrew while the planes blasted the river bank. As the platoon withdrew, Sgt. Stark found a well-hidden salt cache. There were 24 sacks weighing 150 to 200 pounds each.

The 2nd Plt. was not about to be outdone. Commanded by 1st Lt. John H. Russell, the platoon found the wreckage of a B-57 bomber as it was setting up an ambush. The aircraft had been missing for three weeks. The debris was scattered over 5000 square meters.

The impact of the aircraft ripped a trench 2 meters deep and 25 meters long. A search of the area uncovered the bodies of the crew and evidence that the Viet Cong had found the plane first.

The 1st Plt., commanded by 1st Lt. Warren Orr, had its share of glory as it discovered a large VC base camp while patrolling in War Zone C. The find consisted of 29 bunkers, a mess kitchen, a number of fortified rifle pits and several barrels of fish. The platoon remained inside the camp that night.

Early the next day a squad led by Sgt. Lovern Shoeman searched the area around the camp. As the squad was searching, Sgt. Shoeman stepped on the edge of a wooden mine cover revealing the device.

As Lt. Orr headed for Sgt. Shoeman's position, he found his own mine. Soon a third mine was found. It was determined that they were plastic anti-tank mines. They were disarmed and taken back to camp.

Later on a patrol the 1st Plt. was situated on a riverbank. A lone VC, apparently the point man for a larger group, came into view. The VC was allowed to pass on the assumption the rest of the group would follow.

Just as the enemy soldier reached the river he spotted Sp4 Lester Robins. Specialist Robins killed the VC with a burst from his M-60. A VC squad with three automatic weapons and four semi-automatic weapons opened fire. Artillery and air strikes were called in. Later one dead VC and a large bunker system were found.

187th Avn. Supports 'Chargers'

The choppers swooped low over the base camp perimeter, their engines thundering and the dust swirling in clouds from the down blast of rotor blades. These are the Blackhawks of the 187th Avn. Co., who have added their 31 "Huey" helicopters to the 196th Lt. Inf. Bde.'s potent attack force.

The 187th is the first helicopter unit to be attached specifically to the brigade. Previously, the brigade had to depend on choppers attached to other units for aerial resupply, airmobile operations, and heliborne weapons support.

Assigned to the 269th Combat Avn. Bn. of the 1st Avn. Bde., the Blackhawks have been given the primary mission of supporting the 196th.

Commanded by Maj. Alfred McClintock of Fayetteville, N.C., the 300 officers and men of the Blackhawks and their supporting units began arriving at Tay Ninh in late February.

The 187th Avn. Co. was formed and activated at Fort Bragg, N. C., in September 1966. Intensive training began immediately to prepare the company for Vietnam. The Blackhawks even trained, on a reduced schedule, through the Christmas holidays.

Maj. William F. Bauman of Lincoln, Neb., the company's operations officer, explained, "The pilots had to learn how to fly in Vietnam, where nearly all flying is done at the maximum limit of the aircraft's capability. In the States, a helicopter is very seldom flown at maximum load, but in Vietnam it's done all the time. The pilots constantly practiced flying fast at treetop level and landing and taking off in small, tight landing zones."

'Manchu' Veterans Take Buckle Insignias Along

As the "old hands" of the 4th Bn., 9th Inf., "Manchus" make their exit from the 25th Inf. Div. this spring, they will be taking along with them the symbol of a proud unit - their battalion belt buckle.

The 9th Inf. is the only unit in the United States Army with a regimental coat of arms to be worn on a distinctive belt buckle.

The present distinctive insignia of the 9th Inf. is a gold badge depicting the Chinese imperial five-toed dragon, the numeral nine and the unit motto, "Keep Up the Fire."

The belt buckle was born out of a contest opened to members of the regiment in 1923. From the contest, the design was chosen and forwarded to the A.H. Dondero Company, a well-known manufacturer of military insignias.

The Dondero Company then made several hundred of the buckles and sent them to the "Manchus" where they were well received and worn, even though still disapproved by the military officials in Washington.

The story of gaining approval for the buckle is a story of disapproval after disapproval and of and of the perseverance of the commanders. In the early stages, the records of the Ninth indicate that Gen. John J. "Blackjack" Pershing was behind the approval of the belt buckle. But even with the famous general's backing the buckle was destined to vanish with the change over from the Sam Brown belt era to the era of the Web belt.

Ninth Infantry records show that the buckle was forgotten until April of 1959 when the unit was stationed in Alaska. At that time, the unit communicated with the N.S. Meyer Company about the possibility of obtaining the belt buckle for general wear by the infantrymen.

In March of 1964, Maj. Charles W. Peer, then the commander of the 1st Bn., 9th Inf., again wrote to the Meyer Company indicating interest in the distinctive belt buckle.

Subsequent communications between the unit and the Meyer Company indicated a difficulty in regaining approval for the belt buckle from Army officials. It wasn't until April 1965 that approval was finally obtained.

The belt buckle has since been worn by all of the men of the “Manchus.”

NVA Waves Pass, Surrenders to 3rd Bde., 4th Inf.

It was a hot afternoon in War Zone C. Three men from the 3rd Bn., 22nd Inf.’s reconnaissance platoon were keeping watch over a dusty road.

Sp4 Jack Caron was the first to spot the man coming down the road. The young specialist directed the attention of his two friends, Sp4 George Wilson and Sp4 Gene Van Dorn, to the man approaching their position.

At first the man appeared to be a Vietnamese who decided it was best to show he wasn’t carrying a weapon while approaching the soldier’s position.

“He looked almost comical until we noticed he was wearing a helmet and his clothes were those of a North Vietnamese soldier,” said Specialist Caron.

The three men from the Ivy Division’s 3rd Bde. waited until the man was 30 meters from their position before they halted him. The North Vietnamese displayed several Safe Conduct passes and made it known he wanted to surrender of his own free will. After being carefully searched by Specialist Van Dorn the man was brought to the battalion’s intelligence section.

Wanted: Postal Clerks

“WANTED: Postal clerks to sort and deliver mail to 1000 Viet Cong soldiers. QUALIFICATIONS: perseverance, diligence, and an 8-inch howitzer.”

The postal officer of the 3rd Bde, 4th Div., 1st Lt. Jesse Jackson, is thinking of putting this advertisement in several newspaper but he doubts there will be many takers.

Co. A, 2nd Bn., 12th Inf., on a search and destroy mission in Operation “Junction City” came upon a large Viet Cong base camp, assumed to be the central supply base for Viet Cong forces operating in War Zone C.

Weapons, ammunition, clothing and documents were found. Among the documents were approximately 1000 undelivered letters which the Viet Cong had left behind.

“We have enough trouble delivering our own mail,” said Lt. Jackson “However, we would be happy to deliver ‘Charlie’s’ mail tied to an 8-inch howitzer shell if he would just send us a forwarding address.”



2/27 Sgt. Compares Cong to Minh

SSgt. Michael Kontkowski has fought in Vietnam for two countries and against two enemies. He fought the Viet Minh in 1948 with the French Foreign Legion and fought the Viet Cong with the 2nd Bn., 27th Inf., “Wolfhounds.”

Sgt. Kontkowski was stationed at Tay Ninh with the Legion during the Indo-China War. His unit was battalion sized and mainly operated near the Cambodian border. He served with the Legion for five months before obtaining a medical discharge because a shrapnel wound received in 1941 in Poland from a German tank gun, started acting up and effected his combat efficiency.

After leaving Indo-China, he returned to France and worked two years in the coal mines in northern France. In 1950 Sgt. Kontkowski worked with a French labor service unit which worked for the U.S. Army. Finally in 1952 he joined the U.S. Army and was sent to Fort Devins, Mass. to the English Language School.

His second tour in Vietnam started in June of 1966 with the 25th Inf. Div. He was assigned to the 38th Inf. Plat. (Scout Dog) which is attached to the Wolfhounds. He served with the Scout Dog platoon for eight months before taking over as manager and custodian of the 2/27th's NCO Club.

Sgt. Kontkowski, asked if there were any differences between the Viet Minh and the Viet Cong, answered: "The VC are more afraid of the Americans than the Viet Minh were of the French. The VC don't seem as eager to stand and fight as the Viet Minh in 1948, because the French didn't have the artillery support and the air strikes we now have.

"Another big difference is that the VC have many more weapons than did the Viet Minh. The Viet Minh in 1948 very often were armed only with knives, bows and arrows, and spears.

"Our big problems were malaria, resupply, ammunition, and men. Whenever we were resupplied it was invariably by parachute. We could have been supplied by road, but the Viet Minh had them pretty well controlled."

Sgt. Kontkowski said that his unit went on few large-scale operations. "We usually set up listening posts just outside our perimeter and did very little else. I never saw a night ambush set up.

"The country as a whole has changed very little; there are more buildings and bigger towns, but in all, Vietnam has changed little. The people are different though, they don't seem as afraid of the VC as in '48. The people help the Americans more than they ever helped the French."

When asked about living conditions with the two forces, Sgt. Kontkowski replied: "The Americans definitely have more comforts, but the French had the food. Usually every dinner and supper we had a little bottle of wine to accompany our meal. I wouldn't mind seeing the U.S. Army start that."

196th Lt. Urges Self Help To Bridge 'MEDCAP Gap'

2nd Lt. Lewis Stein of Chicago, Ill., has hit upon an idea which could increase the effectiveness of Medical Civic Action Programs (MEDCAPs).

The lieutenant and his platoon from the 2nd Civil Affairs Co., have been on several MEDCAPs since becoming attached to the 196th Bde. in December.

"The MEDCAPs provide an excellent service to the people, and are well-conducted," he observed. "But quite often, there is a great time lapse between visits due to various commitments."

To bridge this treatment gap, the lieutenant has begun a program of "self-help," aimed at teaching the villagers to treat and care for themselves. The program is based on the use of models and exhibits which teach and stress the importance of such basics as sanitation and first aid.

"As far as I know," the lieutenant explained, "this is the first time this has been done. I thought it would be good to give the people something to look at, as well as something that will be beneficial to them, while they wait to see the doctor."

Lt. Stein accompanied a MEDCAP to put his idea to use. Co. C, 4th Bn., 31st Inf., conducted the MEDCAP at Cao Xa, near Tay Ninh city, and the lieutenant took four displays with matching posters written in Vietnamese, to illustrate good hygienic practices.

His working model of a water filter was the most popular display. Layers of sand, gravel, charcoal, and another layer of gravel could be seen through the transparent side in a gallon size tin can, to trap impurities from dirty water that emerged crystal clear. Several Vietnamese children ran water through the filter, as the people watched and convinced themselves that it really works.

A box of soap also drew the children's attention. The soap accompanied a poster that stressed the importance of staying clean. Lt. Stein distributed the bars of soap just before he departed.

Other displays were a papier-mache hand, which indicated a wound, and a miniature urinal. The model hand illustrated the need to know immediate first aid procedures to protect the wound from germs and infection. The urinal accompanied a poster explaining the basis of sanitation.

All members of the Civic Affairs group had a hand in building the models and exhibits. Materials for the displays were obtained from the 45th Surg. Hosp. and the Agency for International Development office in Tay Ninh city. Just recently, CARE has sent several visual aids for use in the program.

Lt. Stein now wants to extend the scope of the program, building up to a "library" of perhaps 40 different exhibits.

Plenty Action In Wrecker's Routine Work

Operating a five-ton wrecker may not seem to be the most thrilling job a soldier could have, but in Vietnam there is thrill and danger in almost any occupation.

A wrecker's job is one of several occupations which require readiness on a 24-hour basis. He may be called at some odd hour to rescue a truck carrying high explosives trapped in mud up to the fenders. Or he may start out to haul in a truck badly mangled by a hidden road mine, and end up being blown off the road himself.

These are just a few of the hazards the three wrecking crews of Co. B, 8th Supt. Bn., 196th Lt. Inf. Bde., must face day by day. Headed by WO Henry F. Lens of New Britain, Conn., the company's service and recovery leader, the wreckers recover everything from the common jeep to a downed helicopter. They also have an area of responsibility covering the roads between Tay Ninh and Cu Chi, and in the opposite direction clear to the Cambodian border.

On assignments that take the wreckers far out, the drivers are usually given a jeep escort from the brigade's Trp. F, 17th Cav. "There are times, though, when an escort is not possible," commented WO Lenz. "I remember one call that came at noon. At that time we had difficulty getting an escort. We had to go quite a distance, so I gathered up a few of the men, including two welders and a sewing machine operator, and with our M-16s we went along as security."



Sp4 Stephen Peck was a very unique individual and the men of Co. B, 1st Bn., 35th Inf., will miss him. Specialist Peck had courage; not the kind of courage that comes on all of a sudden when the going gets rough, but the kind of courage that keeps a man smiling over every miserable, thankless mile of the daily march from tedium to apathy and back again.

Specialist Peck's brand of courage was contagious. He infected everyone he met with his hope, his self-assurance, his lust for life. All these things he put into a poem that he liked to recite for his friends:

Do you fear the force of the wind,
Go face them and fight them,
Be savage again!
Go cold and hungry like the wolf;
Go wade in the streams like the crane.
The palms of your hands will thicken,
The cheeks of your face will tan.
You'll grow ragged and weary and swarthy,
But you'll walk like a man.

Stephen Peck was a young man, a poet and a soldier, and now he is dead, the victim of a sniper's bullet near Pleiku recently.

His life was neither bathed in riches, steeped in fame nor covered with glory, but he still walked like a man.

'Wolfhounds' Aid Sgt. Tin's Widow

The 2nd Bn., 27th Inf., "Wolfhounds" have once again extended their generous hand to someone with a

personal loss. The grateful recipient was the widow of Sgt. Vo Toan Tin. Tin was killed by a booby trap last December while working with the Wolfhounds as an Interpreter.

So many people knew Tin and admired him for his work as an interpreter that they wanted to do something for his widow, who was expecting a fourth child very shortly. Capt. Hector E. Sorrentini of Roosevelt, Puerto Rico, the S-2 officer at the time, organized a fund for all contributions.

The money came in quickly. The Wolfhounds' NCO club donated \$100. Capt. Sorrentini explained: "Sgt. Tin used to work at the NCO club and he was well liked by all the NCO's." While the money poured in, Capt. Sorrentini made plans to give the money to Tin's widow. There was one problem. Capt. Sorrentini could not locate Mrs. Tin.

Tin's parents were unable to supply any information as to her whereabouts and no one in the Wolfhounds knew where she lived.

At this time 60,000 piasters had been collected and were being held for Mrs. Tin. It was a coincidence that finally brought the 60,000 piasters to Mrs. Tin.

While Capt. Sorrentini was in Cu Chi with Sgt. Vu Vihn Luu, an interpreter with the Wolfhounds and a friend of Tin while they were at the English Language School together, a woman happened to overhear Capt. Sorrentini discuss his problem of finding Tin's widow. She approached Capt. Sorrentini and said that she knew Mrs. Tin and that they lived on the same street in Saigon.

Accompanying the woman to Saigon the next day, Capt. Sorrentini finally met Mrs. Tin, who by this time had had her fourth child. She was presented with the 60,000 piasters along with some clothing donated by the wife of Capt. Dale D. Bergsten of Clay Center, Kan.

Mrs. Tin gratefully accepted the gifts and thanked Capt. Sorrentini and the Wolfhounds.

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