

RIPCORD REPORT

A NEWSLETTER

No. 1 JULY 1985

For Friends and Survivors of FSB RIPCORD, RVN

No: 4 JANUARY 1986

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SCREAMING EAGLE ARTICLE



Americans forced out of Vietnam base

Saigon, July 23.—American parachute troops abandoned a base camp 25 miles west of Hue today after three weeks of heavy communist pressure.

The helicopter evacuation was completed shortly after noon in face of intense mortar fire which killed three Americans and wounded 20. A large troop-carrying helicopter was shot down as it took off but there were no casualties.

At least 32 men of the United States 101st Airborne Division had been killed and 148 wounded since July 1 in action around the hilltop camp known as Ripcord. The fighting reached its peak yesterday when 12 paratroops died in an ambush and two helicopters were lost.

Ripcord, 11 miles from the Laotian border, is the first base in South Vietnam abandoned under communist pressure since last November. Some observers see its loss as one of the first clear-cut military victories for the Vietcong since the Americans withdrew from the remote Khe Sanh base in 1968.

About 500 troops had held Ripcord since the beginning of the dry season three and a half months ago. American artillery and heavy bombers started pounding the base and surrounding areas as soon as the last troops left.

A United States spokesman said there were several communist battalions of up to 600 men each in the area. They had suffered "very heavy casualties and material losses" from American air and artillery strikes.—U.P.I. and Reuter.

Phnom Penh, July 23.—Communist troops have virtually surrounded several Cambodian battalions on top of Mount Kirirom as the battle for the resort area moves into its thirteenth day, the Cambodian High Command indicated today.

The communists, who have

inflicted heavy casualties on three Cambodian battalions so far, sent demolition teams out of the mountain area last night and partially destroyed a bridge along the main supply route to the battlefield, 55 miles south-west of Phnom Penh.

Damage to the bridge prevented heavy traffic, including military convoys, from reaching Kirirom.

A supply column on its way to Kirirom with badly needed food was caught in an ambush on Tuesday and driven back in confusion. But a military spokesman said the Cambodians managed to burn their lorries to prevent the supplies being used by the Vietcong.

All roads to Kirirom are controlled by the Vietcong and North Vietnamese, who apparently also control all slopes leading to the summit of the mountain. Government troops are being supplied entirely by air.

One Cambodian battalion was sent fleeing for its life when the communists overran the hill nearly two weeks ago, but the most serious Government casualties have come during attempts to retake and now hold the mountain.—A.P. and Reuter.

CONTACTS:

New contacts include;

- GARY STEELE C 2/506 [REDACTED]. Gary was a point-man and carried the XM 203 rifle and grenade weapon with 2nd platoon. On July 2, C 2/506 was on Hill 501 next to the Coc Mien ridgeline not far from Ripcord when they were practically decimated by a sapper attack that found their CO blown in two by a huge satchel charge. During that night Gary was first to be wounded by an RPG and two satchel charges. Just before dawn while low crawling to a more secure position he was shot once in the back and once in the right knee. Needless to say it's a wonder Gary survived but we're glad to have him aboard our group. Gary is officially listed as 180% disabled by the VA and has been physically retired by the army.
 - Col Charles Garwood, Pathfinders [REDACTED] "Chuck" was a 2nd lieutenant pathfinder at the time Ripcord came down. He readily admits his involvement with Ripcord was limited as he spent 24 hours there taking a radio out to a pathfinder team. Irregardless of the brevity of the task the memories remain etched in his mind. As you can see he has remained in service and suprisingly enough reports that he has yet to meet anyone else that was on Ripcord at the time.
- The following are E 2/506 Recon Contacts
- Robert Granberry [REDACTED]. Robert is the infamous "Junior" mentioned in last months retrospective by J. Mihalko.
 - John Schnarr [REDACTED] Many remember John as "the Nose"
 - Lenny Long [REDACTED] Lenny was known as "Ranger" at Recon and served during that period as platoon sergeant to 2/506 Recon.
 - Dick Cable [REDACTED] Dick along with friend Mark listed below arrived late to Recon after serving several months in the south with the 25th Inf. Division.
 - Mark Heintz [REDACTED]
 - Ron Will [REDACTED]. The notorious "Doc Will" is remembered fondly by this writer for the several beers we hoisted together in the rear. Shenannigans such as ours were a regular feature of our one night stand downs from Recon 5 day missions. Ron's pleasant wife informed me recently in a conversation over the phone that he had "settled down." If so it's truly a sad turn of events.

- Benny Hill [REDACTED] This writer spent a whole year bemoaning the fact that no one from Southwest VA was anywhere nearby. I only recently discovered that Benny and I apparently met but weren't aware of the proximity of our home towns. Benny literally lives just over the hill from me. We've got to get together soon.

RESOURCES

Continuing with resources that may be of interest to some of our group are the following:

- **STATIC LINE:** A monthly publication covering the gamut of airborne units and issues. Dues are \$21.00 annually. Correspondence and inquiries regarding the publication should be sent to Don Lassen [REDACTED]

- **TRACERS:** The Veterans Information Center. Is self described as as independent veterans publication. Review indicates Tracers has good coverage of a number of current veterans issues as well as resources for Vets. Apparently some connection between the publication and the Veterans Business Resource Council noted in earlier newsletter. Published quarterly one years dues are \$7.00. Inquiries to P.O. Box 236 Carmel, IND 46032.

- **IMPORTANT UPDATE:** For those planning on making June 86 reunion of our group: 101st ABN DIV. ASSN has a new Secretary/Treasurer. Ralph Watson and the ASSN are now reached at [REDACTED] 97401.

- **VIET VIEW GRAPHICS:** Is the brain child of one of our group. Former door gunner Tom Chase was able to take and retain so many quality photos he decided to permit a greater access to his material. Many of his photos cover important Ripcord or Ripcord era sites. Inquiries to Viet View Graphics P.O. Box 31 Brunswick, Ohio 44212. Ripcord vets should inquire regarding Tom's special rates for them.

- **CYCLO DAP ARCHIVES:** Is a number of things. Its primary business is books about a number of topics including Vietnam. \$1.00 gets you a complete listing of books (over 220 new & used) apart from books, articles on Southeast Asia, National Geographic Maps, information on POW/MIA groups, decals, stickers, T-Shirts, and other memorabilia etc. A good resource passed along by Blackie Blackman. Bill Laurie [REDACTED], AZ 85201 offers fair prices and donates 5% of proceeds to Vietnam related causes such as Disabled Veterans groups.

RETROSPECTIVE

"Shag"

The letter at first looked innocuous enough. Glancing at the name and return address, I had wondered briefly what former high school girlfriend might have moved and be living in Minnesota. The last name wasn't indigenous to Southwest VA. so she would also had to

have married at some point. But those thoughts were quickly stifled by the numbing impact of those few lines.

August 8, "75"

Dear Chip,

I'm Gary's older sister, Sharon. I was home last weekend and Mom showed me your letter you had written to Gary and asked if I would write to you.

This is going to come as quite a shock for you. Gary died two years ago this past July. He had been to several doctors without our knowledge and had been told he had about six months to live. He had severe liver damage. It had been seven months after seeing the doctors that he had took his own life. If you knew Gary well you'll understand why, as he wrote in his last letter "That no machines were going to keep him alive." We all miss him terribly.

Sorry I had to write this news to you. Hope you get your reunion together now and have a hell of a good time as Gary would have had.

Sincerely,
Sharon Ogren

Slowly re-reading the letter I wondered whether his death in July had been Ripcord symbolic. Perhaps not. He had had very little time. Only three years after Ripcord! Although the news hurt like hell it seemed perfectly logical. "Shag" as we had known him would not have weathered well the idea of long hospitalizations, intensive care and the endless paraphernalia of the healing arts.

The tears came then. Later in almost ritualistic deliberation I set out and succeeded in getting roaring drunk. As Shag would have wanted and done had the situation been reversed. The tears were new to me. On Ripcord friends had gone very fast. Lost to the field through wounds or as Kia's. We dealt with it as it has been in every war with a brand of grisly combat humour. There was no time for loss or remorse, only for our survival. But even as quickly as they went we were all underneath aware they had a family, children, girlfriend, a mother or someone else back in the "world" who they were important to. One side of our dealing with it had to do with the awesome wisdom that only a group of young kids in the emotionally sterile conditions of the bush can have. It was like if we cried we would really only be mourning our own potential loss. So we canned it.

The news regarding Shag had quashed efforts at a reunion that year. To have attempted celebration with the pall of Gary's recently learned death hanging over proceedings would not have been overcome. At any rate I was to later learn that it would take ten to fifteen years for most of us to have put Ripcord and Vietnam into a perspective which would permit the friendships from then to re-blossom.

Gary "Shag" Breidenbach had arrived in B 2/506 in the usual manner. Shortly following the ill fated April 1 (Fools Day) assault on Ripcord a log bird had arrived with a small gaggle of replacements and the sundry items of resupply. At the time we were operating somewhere in the mountains around Ripcord. Tensions ran high in a

company that had coasted several months during the monsoon season with missions in the lowlands that saw small skirmishes and booby-traps as occasional reminders that they were indeed in Injun country. Then came the insertion into the Coc A Bo region with ridgelines that ran straight up and down, four lane highways for trails, and well dressed NVA that could be spotted minutes after leaving an NDP scarfing thru our refuse.

A majority of Bravo's first platoon ended up wounded or KIA as a result of permitting a Cherry named Richard Tapp to walk point in those conditions. He walked them into a clearing. We heard the ACK ACK sounds of the Ak. 47's some kilometers away and thought they would never stop.

Rumor was later that the guys being used to the lowlands, weapons had suffered in the mountains and half of them wouldn't fire. It made for a great bloody massacre. Richard Tapp had come in company the same time as I and the days spent waiting to get out to the soaked in bush had permitted a brief friendship of sorts.

The import of those high speed trails and the bold behavior of the NVA must have been lost on a company used to easier going. A lesson could often be painful and ours was just about to begin. Following the 1st platoon episode Ripcord and April 1 were only several hours away.

By the time Shag arrived I had been in the field less than a month. Already an old man in my own eyes. Having arrived in company during the Coc A Bo insertion I had seen my first NVA while setting up an O.P. cum L.P. one evening. He had practically walked on top of us. A flurry of excited fire found no body count.

Remarkably I had been with first platoon and was shuffled to the Third Herd shortly before Tapps critical error. Third Herd exuded a sense of doing things right and staying alive. With people like Garth, Hansmann, Horn, Strvcki and Radcliff many had been around when the 101st assaulted into the Ashau the previous year. They had gotten their ass kicked there. But they had learned their lessons. Instead of taking the position that time in the bush

earned them easier roles in the squad or a job in the rear they took on the task of teaching new people how to survive. You were able to learn first hand how to walk point or blast an L.Z. If there was any question of experience they took on the chore to avoid casualties. It was a stance I was to appreciate and tried to emulate for the rest of my tour. Unfortunately many units were not that supportive.

On April 1, we had seen twenty-five casualties within the first hour on Ripcord. By dusk command was giving odds that we would be overrun during the night and giving orders to evacuate. That led to a nighttime trek to a ridgeline some distance away thanks to A 2/506. (Bill Heath was pointman leading us that night.)

We were finally able to crash on the narrow troop infested ridgeline in the



wee hours of the morning exhausted. The next day saw us beginning patrols and rifs around the firebase while another 2/506 company was to eventually secure and set up operations on Ripcord. Given the action seen from late March thru early April everyone was tense and irritable. New guys coming in were expected to get it right first time or pay the price.

Shag made it easy for us to dislike him at first. He was tall thin and gangly. His body looked like it was used to abuse and preferred it. He wore glasses, sported a lank thatch of blond hair and looked to be in perpetual battle with acne. He made the gross error of complaining. This among the most outwardly stoic people in the world. He looked like the class wimp who wanted to be the class bully. Seen thru the hypercritical eyes of a recent cherry he left much to be desired.

Shag had the typical cherry faults. He like most was in no condition for humping a ruck thru the jungle that weighed anywhere from 70 to 100+ lbs. Cherries as a rule arrived with around 25 lbs. in their ruck which made the Old-Timers sneer. Cherries rarely arranged their equipment well which meant grenades and bandoliers were worn in god-awful ways and the LAWS we humped ended stuck somewhere near up their ass or worse. But cherries somehow ended up making it unless of course you were unfortunate enough to be Richard Tapp.

Shag soon became the pet person in squad to receive the petty details that were dished out. Still Shag like most cherries began to receive and store knowledge that would be invaluable later.

By May 5th it was Shag who was walking slack for me when our squad sized patrol came across a cache some distance from Ripcord. Stumbling upon the area which was well protected by dug in shelters under huge rocks had found both our assholes having drawn up tight.

The discovery of the cache led to a one-day standdown for our platoon on Ripcord during which we bought warm beer from the Arvn's and got blitzed. The hangover the next morning was worse for the fact that we had been billeted in shelters next to the 155 battery all night. What seemed like the hammers of Nordic gods were heard for some time.

The cache also apparently led a few days later to B 2/506's stay on Ripcord during May as perimeter security. Tempers rekindled when Shag balked at the ever present array of details and chores available on the firebase. However as were the days then on Ripcord basically peaceful so were our relationships. He was the next bunker over and always available for shared bullshit or a meal.



It was then that he sketched in some basic details of his family and life in Minnesota. One got the impression that his youth had not been an easy one as his looks had indicated to us earlier. Shag as the ultimate teen-aged rebel began to emerge. He had ended up in Vietnam like most of us not really sure what the alternatives were. Also like most of us he was beginning to have a strong sense of unease as to whether the decision had been a wise one.

Things were relatively quiet then until the assault of Hill 805 on July 1. The lulls between major actions at times were our worst enemy. You were either in zero shit or 100% shit with no in between. There had been one week long period of leisure along the Song Bo River when the area was so quiet that we played and swam everyday.

We hid only from any air activity which might have reported our unorthodox behavior. Some of the group tried a hand at fishing. We had one sergeant named Stanga from Louisiana who was a former alligator wrestler. He dived in to our horror and fascination after one of the huge lizards along the bank that hit the water one day.

From July 1 until Ripcord fell on July 23 things never again let up. Around 805 we were constantly in contact and on edge. Given orders to approach Ripcord as perimeter security we arrived just as the shelling was to increase to fever pitch.

It would not have been bad given the excellent bunkers and fighting positions were it not for the ungodly logistics of running such a base. Someone had to unload the choppers, carry the dead and wounded and other supplies and if that were not enough we began digging fake bunkers and positions supposedly to fool the enemy as to where we really were. We doubted they would ever work but dug anyway.

We were on constant call to help carry dead and wounded from Hill 1000 which was to the front of our perimeter where Recon, Charlie and Delta Co's began to catch hell with regularity. Eventually dubbed Hot Dog Hill the Arty people on Ripcord took bets on who would knock the last tree down. But the hill was never taken not even when reinforced elements of Charlie and Delta attempted to do so.

I had given up the squad machine gun on July 1 to my A-Gunner Pete Collins. Only a few days after going to Ripcord our squad leader a black dude named Johnson simply skyed out on a chopper never to return. I then was tapped as squad leader. When the shelling got Pete Collins in the legs Shag was tapped to become gunner.

Between the shelling and casualties caused in other ways we were forced to begin dealing with the attrition which in part eventually forced Ripcord's evacuation.

It was at night that the attrition hurt us most. Going around the foxholes it grew harder and harder to have more than two guys to a position which made standing guard a nightmare and this after a full day of dealing with the wounded and endless details. Worse the second man in the hole was not a grunt but a cook or radio operator from the top of the hill. One night near the end a radio research person (electronic spook) even reported for guard duty.

Increasingly the pressure began to take its toll. The squad lost its first guy killed Vic De Foor when the gooks zeroed in on Ripcord's mess hall with a direct hit on Vic. They called for his own squad to come collect him. When the guys came back with tears

in their eyes telling how they had tried to pick Vic's scalp up we got with other units and agreed to take care of their bad KIA's if they would take care of ours.

Still the shelling was so intense and the demand for our bodies so great for the endless array of details we began to develop ways to get around "going up on top!" Too many guys went up and didn't come back. Also during most of Ripcord we had that eerie wind that kept us from hearing when NVA guns began firing.

More and more days were spent hunkered down in Shag or Riddles bunker or mine just wishing the whole mess would end. Several of us had had more than one direct hit on our positions. Riddles had taken three by the time he got hurt.

One day a Captain came down for some of our reluctant bodies. Even after giving us a direct order Riddle and I continued to laugh at him which elicited a threat of court martial. Before he could make good on the threat he too was gone.

Although in ways our behavior became bizarre or outright insane it was understandable given conditions. Apart from that one could see a certain mettle developing in the ones that survived. Looking back I recall other faces on that hill who were never again the same who made the time more bearable. Dave Cote, Ihor, Senyshyn, Shannon, Sgt. Jim Burnette, Lt. Steve Wallace, Gibson, Byrd, Mauney, Mc Dowell, Misheler, Dufus, Colbert, Wyrosdick, Parsons, Old Man, Stanga and many others.

Each name elicits a mini-montage of images of life on the hill. Ihor and I shared a bunker and he was an RTO when the chinook went down on July 18. He had just extended so he could leave Vietnam and service at the same time. He also had just learned of his rear job as a clerk. But the exploding Chinook postponed that until he could safely be evacuated.

As a result the next 24 hours were pure hell. In slow motion we watched the chopper go down and then the fire that sent super-heated arty rounds all down the sides of the base. Their going off meant we lay in our bunkers until it was over. Sometimes the explosions were directly overhead. Later gas rounds went off and masks were worn nearly suffocating the two of us. At one point something was burning directly over the sleeping position we'd taken shelter in. We were scared shitless that it was fuel and would end up flowing in the entire position. We were never to find out. It simply existed one moment and burned itself out another.

Ihor was an emotional Ukrainian who I came to deeply respect. It was during this episode he shared with me a letter from his even more emotional parents who were beside themselves with grief at his extension. We were to finally exit the hole but not before several false starts in which Ihor would begin to stick his head out and a 105 round go off so near that his head and wire-rimmed glasses would be covered with dirt. A little later he was to make it off that hill to the rear job.

One morning a day or so later I was able to hear a single incoming mortar leave its tube. It landed to the upper right of our position near a fake bunker, I had assumed it had caused no problems. But moments later Sgt. Burnette called and was in need of some bodies to carry casualties and I ran up to help.

All I saw was a mass of bodies and we began pulling them out of the position. At the bottom was a head with a thatch of blond hair and I remember thinking "It's only Shag! Thank God!" But as



I pulled the head and body on out the face turned upward and to one side and I recognized the face of my best friend Al Riddle. We got he and the others quickly to the TOC for transport by medevac. Riddle had suffered a number of chest wounds and kept saying "Those fucking gooks!" Mauney and Mc Dowell were already dead. Some others had been wounded as well.

I was to later learn that Riddle had been working with a .50 cal and some others had come over to watch or help. A single round had zeroed and scored a direct hit. It was all those friends around Al and his flak vest that saved him. Given the respect I was to have a short time later for Shag I will take to the grave that horrible initial response on digging those people out.

Things gradually worsened especially without the support of the 105's. The last couple of nights on the base saw concern for a ground attack reach the point that no expense was spared with flares. The entire area was kept lit up for most of the night.

With only the wired perimeter separating us from the suspected NVA division out there many of us swore (with the atmosphere so highly charged) we could sense their breathing all around us. Although Ripcord had excellent wire defenses particularly with what was named Helderman wire (after the grunt who invented it) which utilized crushed concertina overlaced with tanglefoot we had no illusions about our emotionally and physically depleted ability to deal with a determined assault that would naturally include bangalores.

The day before we left Ripcord found Shag just below the pad next to the TOC firing suppressive fire. It was this pad that caught hell every day. A number of rounds had come in that day and details had been abandoned for the most part to fire at any confirmable target causing us problems.

The choppers were catching so much hell that at one point our choppers thought we were hostiles. One chopper stitched a line of fire all the way across our line of bunkers with several near misses. Byrd was grazed in the arm and yelled for Shag to get them. He danced a jig then fell in his fighting position.

I'd been watching Shag all morning. All gunners over there had a certain aura or mystique that they unconsciously or consciously exuded. Some of my best and ballsiest times over there were as a gunner, particularly when Riddle and I partpered up as gunners for our platoon.

Shag was no exception. There were times you could see Shag was getting a nut just working that gun. Since taking over the gun he was really coming into his own. That day was a beautiful clear day with the wind blowing that orange/red dust around the firebase. Shag had his helmet on backwards. All you could see was the glint off those glasses of his and those teeth bared in a grin. And the gun went on firing. The bolt moving back and forth spewing out its lovely death. Man and gun were the same.

The truth was that although the chopper pilots had done a beautiful job and we normally adored them they like us were getting hair triggered and beginning to allow too fine a line enter their decisions. The near misses pissed us off and it had pissed Shag off who was up there on that exposed knoll for them anyway.

On seeing what had happened to Byrd he looked down at me and I found myself nodding. With a jerk the gun was swung up and that lethal arc of lead began seeking out the chopper that nearly missed us then panned on a few more just as they were leaving. It was enough. No more fire came our way.

Along the bunkerline the response was wild cheering. A few guys mooned the next few birds that went over. Later as dusk fell and the reverie of the moment was gone the guys shook their heads and asked Shag what he thought he'd been doing. But Shag was more than aware of the invincible aura he wanted to perpetrate and only smiled an insane smile.

Months later with both of us by that time in Recon we would often encounter the inevitable cherry. By that time the story had grown to gargantuan proportions with Shag having actually shot down a fleet of our own birds. Shag's response was always the same. Sporting a purple beret and looking like a wizened Israeli general he would listen ramrod straight to the cherries question as to why on God's earth a man could shoot down three of our own choppers. He would reply "none of your business and besides it was eight, motherfucker!" And with a strut and exaggerated swagger he would depart the newly deflated cherry.

What had actually happened was that rarest of things that happens in the field when things go right. Shag had known that I would want him to let the choppers know in the quickest way possible that we represented friendly fire. And I had known that Shag would understand what the nod meant. Nothing further needed said. Shag's gunning had sent a lazy arc of red as oppose to green tracers just under the bellies of those birds and the message was quickly understood by their crews.

As is the case with most endings the evacuation of Ripcord was almost anti-climactic. I have memories of what a beautiful day it was and as the last platoon off we were 18 men eventually huddled down on a pad all the way across the firebase from where we had held the perimeter. At one point we were told that fire was too intense for further evacuation. At that time we were catching .51 fire from a distance well below us. Major portions of Ripcord were on fire and downed aircraft were every where. I remember thinking as did most of us that the NVA would top the hill at any minute. I thought "Please let us have no Alamo's here." And then word came that an air crew would come back for us. On the next to the last chopper that lifted off I kept saying silently "Don't let them get this one." And then the bird was off and away and wild jubilation by all on the flight.

As Ripcord signalled an end to an era during my tour it signalled the beginning of a solid friendship between myself and Shag and many of the other survivors. Later many of us at Bravo went to Recon but no matter where we met each other there was a strong sense

of respect and trust that what we had been thru at Ripcord was at the core of.

Once back in the rear things quickly decelerated to the Mickey Mouse that non-combat areas always represent. I got into a fight with a Korean war veteran sergeant who had been with us on Ripcord till the end but practically had to be kicked on his chopper. When I was under fire from the .51 he had refused to ready LAWS for me so I could fire back.

He had talked like a real hero. He began putting down all the non-NCO's who were squad leaders on Ripcord who now expected to eat in NCO mess. I heard about it and made the proclamation. I would kill him but many others including Shag offered to sub for me. I was so drunk by the time I confronted him he almost got the best of me. I blacked his eyes and threw his boots away.

In the midst of it I had looked up and Shag was swinging from a rafter begging me to hold the guy up enough so Shag could kick him. I obliged. Later Top came by and asked what happened. He knew though about the sergeant and had to shush all those who volunteered responsibility. He left saying simply that the sergeant had a good looking eye.

After the stand-down at Eagle Beach and refresher training Bravo got ready to go back to the field. It was a company most of us no longer recognized. Ripcord had taken its toll but many old guys were readying for DEROS or had lucked out with rear jobs.

A few of us Shag included never felt comfortable in the rear so returned to the field. But to a basically green company we were pariahs. When we attempted to teach, the cherries wouldn't listen and sneered at what they saw as Mustache Pete's who had lost their usefulness. Yes, they knew all about Ripcord. "You guys got your ass kicked didn't you?"

It took only so many encounters with people who refused to stand guard or set out claymores for us to decide to get out. During a brief perimeter security stint on Rakkassan I had counted five straight open positions one night with no one up for guard. Shag, I and others saw the handwriting on the wall and left Bravo. It was a tough move. For reasons you couldn't fathom there was always a loyalty for Bravo.

Following Ripcord I had watched and chuckled as Shag had moved the gun in the field. Going up and down those mountains in quiet areas he would yell "Huuh!" and throw the gun in front of him. On particularly difficult passages he waxed eloquent and would yell, "Huuh Motherfucker!" and shove the gun ahead. One morning we had both awoken early discussing old times when just before daylight we swore we could smell bacon and eggs frying. Our company of cherries mumbled "Mustache Petes" under their breaths, and slept on.

Recon found us posted in different teams but with enough simultaneous time back in the rear to have a brew now and again. Sometimes more than that. We both went to Bangkok on R&R about the same time and had been equally fascinated and satiated. To hear us tell it we went thru the town like two sexual scythes laying waste to hordes of Asian women with sex-swords.

I've recalled often what it was like to be in the bush for eight months without some sort of female companionship. But it was more than that. It was being without a woman's caress, comfort or care. A life where everything was hard-edged. No softness, warmth,

Standdown (Con't from page 7)



INFANTRY REFRESHER - Standdown includes a review of infantry squad tactics. (U.S. Army Photo)

Eagle Lingo--Check It Out

Arriving in a foreign country presents many problems to a soldier. One way to feel a part of a new unit is to make friends and try to learn your way around. However, during those talks with the 'old men' (those who have been around one day longer than you), you may be confronted by a number of terms and phrases which leave you confused.

To help you gain confidence and make you feel a little less like the new guy that you are, here are some of those strange words and idiomatic expressions you'll hear. So, check it out.

"Airborne" - Common greeting among Screaming Eagles based on the heritage of the division.

"AO" - area of operation.
"Band-aid" - the medic.
"Beaucoup" - many, much, a lot.

"Bird" - helicopter.
"Blues" - infantry troops.
"Bush" or "Boonies" - unsecure areas of operations like the jungle.

"CA" - combat assault.
"Cannon-cocker" - an artilleryman.

"Charlie-Charlie birds" - command and control helicopters.

"Crane" - a CH-54 "Skycrane" helicopter.

"Crash" - sleep, go to bed.
"DEROS" - date of return from overseas.

"Dime nickel business" - 105mm artillery battery.

"Dust-off" - helicopter evacuation of wounded from the field.

"Duster" - M42A1 twin 40mm antiaircraft gun.

"ETS" - estimated termination of service.

"Grunt" - the infantry soldier.

"Gun bunny" - a cannon cocker.

"Higher-higher" - the commander.

"Hook" - a CH-47 "Chinook" helicopter.

"Hootch" - sleeping area, quarters.

"Horn" - a radio-telephone.

"Little Man" - NVA/VC observation helicopter.

"LOH" - an OH-6 light observation helicopter.

"LZ" - landing zone.

"PZ" - pickup zone.

"RF/FF" - regional forces - popular forces.

"Short" - what everyone wants to be soon and those who yell it are.

"Ships" - helicopters.

"Sky-up" - to take a trip on a plane or helicopter.

"Slick" - a UH-1 series helicopter or Huey.

"Snake" - an AH-1 series assault helicopter or Cobra.

"Turtle" - individual's replacement.

"Two-digit midget" - one who has less than 99 but more

than nine days left in country, or "Double-digit midget".

"The World" - The U.S.A.; Home; Mom; and whatever else you forgot to bring to Vietnam.

"ARVN" - the Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

FABULOUS PHRASES

"Check it out."

"You owe it to yourself."

"There it is."

"What's happening?"

"Wow! How you gonna act, Dude?"

"You stepped on it that time."

"It's a bummer."

"Back on the block."

"Over."

"That's a rope."

"Cut me some slack."

"Roger that."

Now you've got it. Slip a few of these choice phrases into your conversation and no one will ever know you just stepped off the plane. That is, "unless you step on it!"

Beach Popular With Troopers

Even in the midst of war, there must be occasional time for rest and relaxation. To provide the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) soldier with this needed break in his daily routine, there is Eagle Beach.

Located on the South China Sea, six miles from Hue, Eagle Beach was opened on May 1,

1969. Here, the jungle trooper can trade the mud and rough terrain of Military Region I for cool tropical waters and a white sand beach. Complete recreational facilities include miniature golf, movies, USO shows, a massage parlor, pool

tables and basketball courts. He can also relax in the comfort of the modern enlisted men's club and enjoy his choice of refreshment.

Eagle Beach continues to grow and improve since its beginning and provides only the best for the best—the 101st trooper.

Hot chow, a warm shower, clean clothes, cold beer, iced sodas. PX runs, outdoor movies, a tin-roofed hootch, a cot and sleep—the first real sound sleep in months.

Early the next morning the Screaming Eagles found themselves outside the perimeter wires of Phu Bai Combat Base—this time on a weapons range. Each man zeroed his weapon. During an instruction period the men were familiarized with their buddy's weapon. More firing - machinegunners used M-79s, grenadiers fired M-60 machineguns, rifleman fired both. Everyone fired someone else's weapon. Later, M-72 Light Antitank Weapons (LAW) and the 90mm recoilless rifle were brought out.

"Man, this M-79 is the weapon for me. It sure is a lot lighter than that M-60—easier to handle. But I think I'll pass on the LAW and the 90...too loud," commented one machinegunner as he handled the M-79.

After all the firing, an aerial rocket artillery (ARA) pilot gave a talk and demonstration on the use and effectiveness of ARA. Many troopers got their first close look at an ARA Cobra helicopter.

Supper was served on the range that night. The men of the company were scheduled to attend a class on night firing techniques, but their company commander had assured them that the USO Show slated to perform for the battalion that night would be held until they returned from the range.

The show was great. Beer and soda cans were emptied. The men relaxed. Sleep came more naturally that second night in the rear area.

"Up and at 'em," it was dawn again, another day of refresher training—classroom work was on the schedule for the morning. It was hot and muggy. It was difficult to stay awake, but the men managed. They listened, learned and relearned—map reading, first aid and Medevac procedures.

Finally it was lunch time—hot meat, steaming potatoes, green beans, bread, butter, ice cream and iced tea or milk.

After lunch there was a short class in stream-crossing techniques. Then there was a demonstration on the construction and use of the single-rope bridge and the Australian poncho raft. The sun made the afternoon almost unbearable. Now the Screaming Eagles were ready to cross the "blue" using field expedient devices.

The company commander was the first man to attempt crossing the stream on the single-rope bridge.

"This is what standdowns should be like all the time," yelled a Pfc as he plunged into the stream for another try at crossing on the poncho raft.

Another day came and went with more classroom work. Suddenly it was Sunday. The men were out of the rack in record time and headed for Eagle Beach, the 101st Recreation Area on the coast of the South China Sea, for a day in the sun and surf.

"Eagle Beach really makes it."

The sandy beach, the bright sun and salty surf were a break in the routine of the infantryman.

"Surf's up."

"Boonies!"

The men returned to the standdown area early the next day for their final round of classes. The day was billed to be "thrill-packed" with rappelling from a UH-1 helicopter as the feature event for the day.

"It's a little frightening at first, thinking about climbing out of that chopper on a little 'ole rope, but after you get over the initial shock, it's just great," noted one veteran sergeant.

Most of the men had rappelled before, but everyone took part in the day's practical exercise. The Screaming Eagles were learning their lessons well.

During the afternoon, the battalion operations officer talked with the men about the coming mission. The men listened intently as he explained the enemy and friendly situations, the terrain, and outlined the scheduled operation.

By the time the men returned to their billets, they were all aware that for them standdown was over. The next morning they would head for the field. By mid-afternoon they would be back in the jungles searching for the enemy. Standdown would be just another memory of life in the Republic of Vietnam.

A specialist four commented, "This sort of training is good for refreshing your memory on some of the little details that may have slipped your mind, but which are very important."

"What they get during standdown training is important. If they get just one thing out of it, they have accomplished something," added one of the officers.

The last night of standdown was quiet in the billeting area. Snoring could be heard. The Screaming Eagles were resting up for the next day—retrained and ready for combat in the mountains and lowlands of northern Military Region I.



SEASIDE FROLIC - Eagle Beach provides rest, relaxation and recreation for the men of the 101st. (U.S. Army Photo)

The Screaming Eagle

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or even a future until we shook hands with our DEROS date.

Shag and I almost had a final mission together. With seventeen days left E Co's Top decreed that I would have no more missions with Bravo team and gave me a pie rear job. I volunteered instead for an ambush mission with two other teams. Shag and I were to go as gunners. I had went as far as Brigade for permission to participate which was granted when Top called me in to make it clear I would not leave at DEROS unless I abided by his wishes. I relented. Shag had understood when others had not. He knew how we had always felt about the rear. I was gone before we could get together again in the rear.

(Late Summer 1971)

Chip,

Well it's only me, Shag. I'm going to write back right away or I'll never get this finished.

This summer has really been a drag. Got myself a Chopped 650cc Triumph that I get around on. I've rode out to Colorado, Wyoming, S. Dakota, N. Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa and Wisconsin. So I've put a few miles on it.

You know how we missed the chicks man? I ain't been able to keep myself satisfied. Can't seem to find any I dig enough to be around for more than three days.

So not much else is new. Should you get anything set up in November let me know. Long as I have \$1.50 in my pocket I can make it. Will be going up to St. Cloud State in the middle of September. Hoping there are some broads there looking for someone good.

So take it easy
Shag

P.S.

I haven't worked a day since I got out