

The

Screaming



Eagle

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1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

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'O-Deuce' Discovers R&R Spa

CHU LAI — Paratroopers of the 101st Airborne hacked their way into a jungle clearing near here and discovered an apparent North Vietnamese Army R&R center nestled on a mountain shelf.

"I couldn't believe my eyes," said one paratrooper. "The area was beautiful, unlike anything I've seen during combat in Vietnam."

Quickly, the 2nd Platoon of A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf., put out security and began searching 'Charlie's Hide-Away'.

Twelve thatched buildings were centrally arranged providing a mess hall, an auditorium which opened onto a tiled patio, classrooms with hard wood benches and podium, immaculate living quarters and storerooms.

"The location was ideal," said Lt. Leonard Anderson, Bauxite, Ark. "Towering trees sheltered the village from the sun and observation from the air. Adjacent to the huts were numerous vegetable gardens and rice paddies. Livestock grazed nearby."

"Each hut concealed an underground shelter large enough for 50 to 75 men," said Spec. 5 Dennis Patrick, Raytown, Mo. "The walls of the huts were about three feet thick."

In the kitchen, paratroopers found meat and vegetables ready for cooking. A storeroom contained rice, corn, tea, beans and tobacco. Bundles of NVA uniforms and small arms ammunition were found in bunkers.

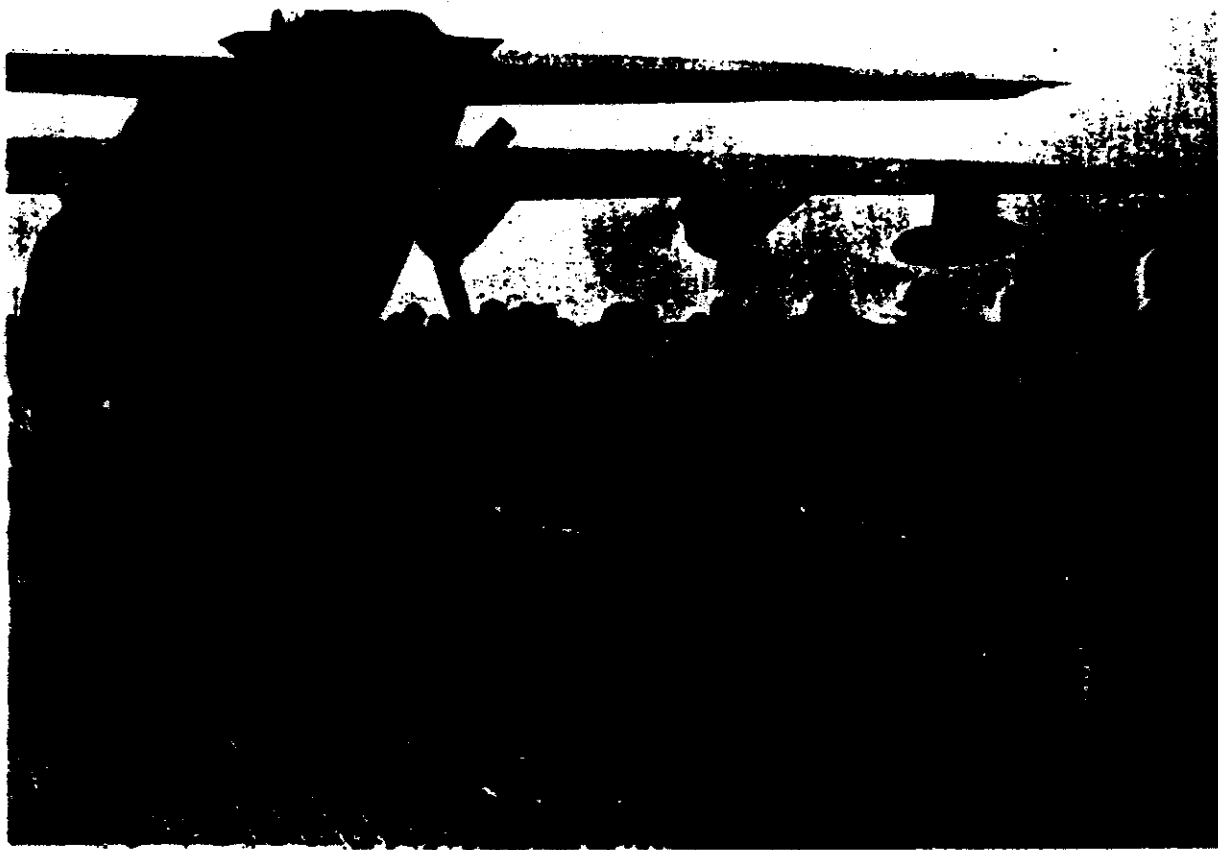
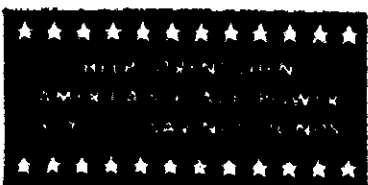
Satisfied the search was thorough, the complex was destroyed.

Quipped one paratrooper: "All it needed was a volleyball court and theater and I would have stayed."

Figures Given On Hood River

Operation Hood River, conducted by the 1st Brigade from August 2 to August 13, accounted for 63 enemy killed. The search and destroy sweeps included Marines from the Republic of Korea, troops from the Army of Vietnam, Mike Forces and Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG).

One NVA and four Viet Cong were taken prisoner during the operation. Thirty-seven individual and five crew served weapons, 24 tons of rice and three tons of salt also were captured.



The 'Always First' Brigade

Whining engines of an Air Force C-130, scraping of boots on metal runways and silent determination fills the air as paratroopers of the 1st Brigade load up for a new combat operation in their " Rendezvous with Destiny."

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Mike Magiamelli)

Medics Ease Trooper's Mind After Hidden Mine Strikes

By SSG Mike Magiamelli

CHU LAI — An explosion shakes the ground around the command post of B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 337th Inf., and a voice screams for a medic.

Six medics rush to the side of a 101st Airborne paratrooper who stepped on a mine. His left foot is shattered.

The paratrooper cries softly. He tries to ease the pain by gripping his rifle. His teeth are clenched.

Pfc. Larry Evans, San Gabriel, Calif., is the first medic to reach him. Evans applies a tourniquet between the wound and the knee.

Spec. 5 Lamont Howze, Atlantic City, N.J., gives the wounded Screaming Eagle a shot of morphine to ease the pain as Evans applies bandages.

Other medics quickly make a stretcher to carry the fallen soldier to the helicopter LZ.

Capt. Ray Millard, St. Louis, company commander, has radioed for a "Dust-Off."

Howze talks to the patient to keep his mind off the pain.

"You son-of-a-gun, you're going home. What some guys won't do to transfer out!"

The wounded soldier manages a thin grin.

"What the hell is this?" asks aidman Spec. 4 James R. Cris-

well, Hobbs, N.Y., noticing the wounded trooper doesn't have parachute wings on his jacket.

"I'm not about to let you go to the hospital looking like a 'Leg'." Criswell takes his wings and pins them on the patient.

"New, by damn, they'll know you're airborne!"

The effect of the morphine is wearing off and the trooper asks for another shot.

"Hell no!" exclaims Howze. "Consider yourself lucky you got one. I carry this stuff

around and never get a shot and you, just because you get a little scratch, want two!"

The trooper, despite his pain, manages to laugh. He and Howze have been through four months of combat together.

"Don't expect any sympathy from me," says Spec. 4 Salvador Melendez Jr., Chicago. "Six medics in the company and you've got everyone of them waiting on you hand and foot. Now you're going to the hospital where they have good-looking nurses. Boy, some guys sure expect a lot."

Someone yells: "Pop smoke! Chopper's coming in!"

"You're on your way home, buddy," Howze says comfortingly. "Now, don't you play 'Jodie' and look up my girl when you get there."

The wounded paratrooper grins at Howze and shakes his head.

As the "Dust-Off" helicopter settles, the medics lift their friend aboard. They watch the chopper wing back to Chu Lai and the hospital.

"What the hell are you people standing around for?" shouts Howze. "Our job's done here. Get back to your platoons."

The six medics trudge back to their platoons and the continuing job of saving lives.

Abn Priest Sees 'Star'

WASHINGTON — One of the most famous paratrooper-padres of World War II has been nominated by President Lyndon B. Johnson for major general.

Chaplain (Brig. Gen.) Francis L. Sampson, who jumped with the 101st Airborne Division into Normandy in 1944, is the author of "Look Out Below," the story of a Catholic priest's view of the largest invasion of all time.

Father Sampson is scheduled to replace Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Charles E. Brown Jr. as Chief of Chaplains. Chaplain Brown retired July 31.

1/327 Pounds Enemy

CHU LAI—The 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf., killed nearly 100 enemy in the first two weeks of Operation Benton, captured more than a score of weapons and destroyed several base camps as the "Above the Rest" paratroopers pressed the offensive against NVA and VC elements.

B Co. kicked-off the battalion's body count with 10 enemy kills on the third day of the operation. The "Brave Rifles" also found the battalion's first enemy weapons cache containing a variety of automatic and semi-automatic weapons, mortar shells and small arms ammunition.

Tiger Force carried out various missions as the companies maneuvered in dense jungle terrain. The Tigers found food caches, including one which contained four tons of tea and rice.

Charlie company, initially in reserve, air assaulted into the tactical zone five days after the operation began and was in contact with the enemy within a few hours after landing.

One element of C Co. moved along a ridge line and made contact with a reinforced NVA unit of unknown size. For more than four hours the battle raged. Night fell with the company still in contact. When dawn broke over the battlefield, numerous blood trails indicated heavy enemy losses. Days later fresh enemy graves were discovered as C Co. continued the offensive.

A Co. paratroopers swept over a heavily-fortified NVA base camp, which contained 33 air-raid shelters. Numerous NVA helmets also were found.

During one phase of the operation, C Co. discovered another base camp containing 30 huts large enough to house a company size unit. Paratroopers reported evens were still hot. They searched, then destroyed the camp.

Another enemy base area swept by C Co. was laced with tunnels, bunkers and numbered barracks. One portion of the complex was used for physical training exercises. In a hut, paratroopers found crude model airplanes apparently used by the enemy for instruction and identification of Free World Military Force aircraft.

During one phase of the search and destroy sweep, B Co. discovered a wide area at the base of a hill bristling with punji stakes and spears. As the paratroopers moved through the obstacle, they heard noises at the top of the hill. Quickly, artillery and air strikes were requested. Fire came screaming in. When the "Brave Rifles" reached the top of the hill they found 13 enemy dead and numerous blood trails.

Serpent Inhabits Canteen

CHU LAI—Paratroopers of the 101st Airborne carry water in their canteens — also kool-ade, tea and anything else made from a ready mix. But snakes?

C Co. of the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf., sent a patrol to a stream near their perimeter to fill canteens.

One member of the patrol, Spec. 4 Melvin R. Valentine, Des Moines, Iowa, was busy talking with friends as he dipped his canteen into the water. He failed to notice his canteen was becoming a "home."

"I had filled about 15 canteens for the command post," said Valentine, "and dropped purification tablets into each. I got quite a surprise when I returned to the company area."

"I poured water in a cup and out came a snake," said Valentine. "He scared the hell out of me and I jumped back, spilling water over myself."

"Then I looked at the small 18-inch snake, pinned it down with my foot, picked it up behind the head and took it over to the interpreter attached to our company."

The interpreter announced the snake was harmless—comparable to the common grass snake.

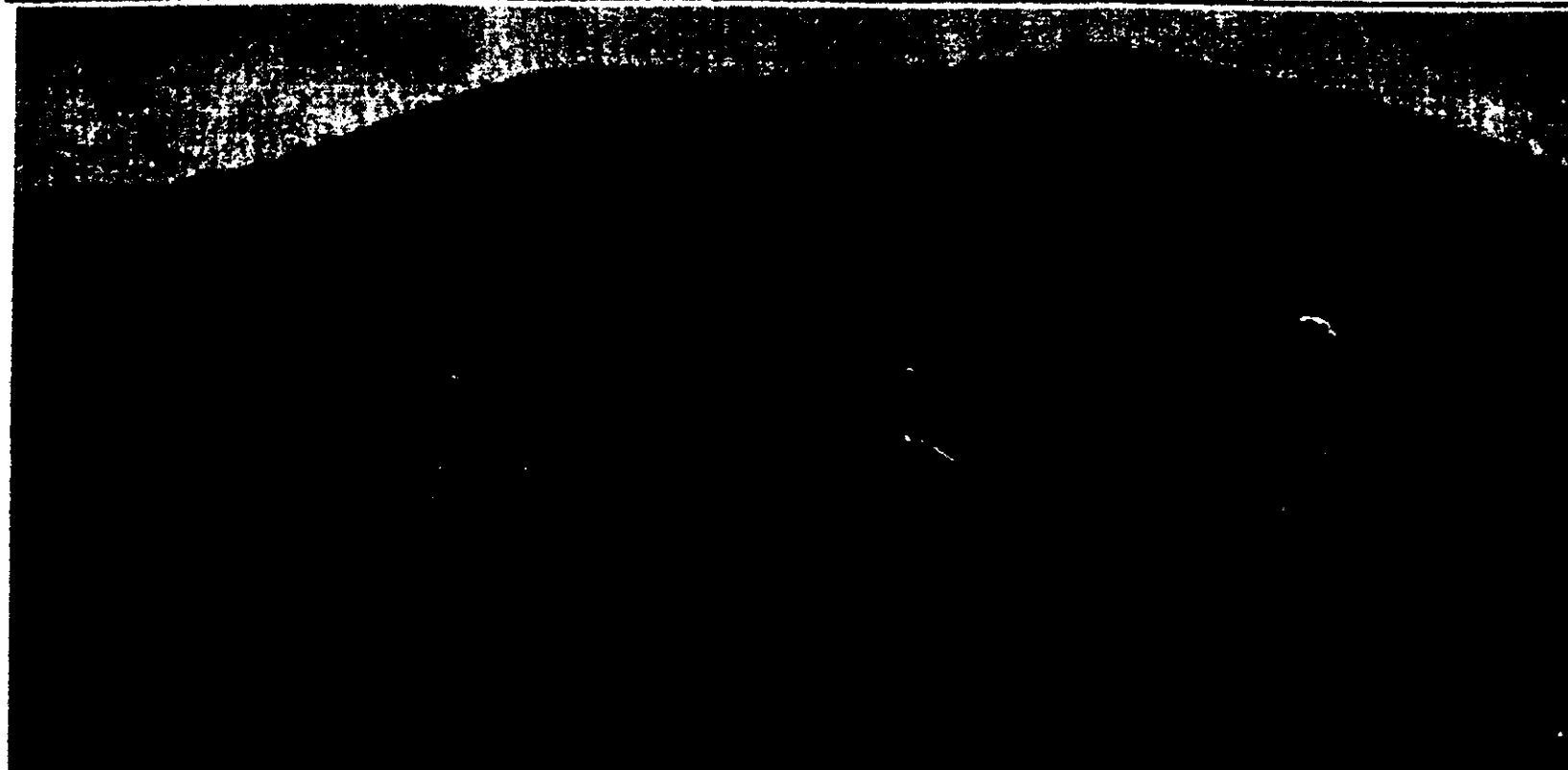
Troopers Will Swap For Fruit

CHU LAI—Most every trooper eating C-rations in Vietnam likes fruit, but Pfc. Clarence H. Ward, Baltimore, abhors it. Yet, he never passes up a chance to get an extra can of peaches, pears, apricots or applesauce. Matter of fact, he usually has a good supply.

When the resupply chopper drops in on B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf., Ward looks forward to receiving fruit.

What does he do with it?

"Well," says the 101st Airborne paratrooper, "You take a man who doesn't like ham 'n lima beans, for example. I'll trade him out of that, plus crackers and chocolate—all for one can of fruit."



Rice Paddy Crossing

Paratroopers of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf. cross a sprouting rice paddy during search and destroy operations.

(Photo by Spec. 4 Matt Pesce)

VC Misses Conference

CHU LAI—Somewhere in the jungle west of here angry words will be exchanged between the NVA and the Viet Cong because somebody failed to show up for a meeting. A paratrooper in B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf., is to blame.

Pfc. Claude Anderson, Jr., Oxford, N.C., was walking point for the 2nd Platoon when he saw a black pajama-clad VC running toward him.

"I dropped my machete, raised my rifle and fired," said Anderson. "Charlie collapsed in a heap."

Searching the body, the 101st Airborne paratrooper found a typewritten message. An ARVN interpreter working with the battalion said the message called for several groups of main force VC to meet with NVA regulars later this month.

"I was disappointed the VC wasn't carrying a rifle," Anderson said. "But I guess the message he carried could be considered a weapon of sorts."

Fast Kill Added To Rifle Skills

Fast, unaimed shooting by reflex technique called "Quick Kill" will become a basic part of rifle training at 12 Army training centers by December. Presently it is being taught only at installations giving Vietnam-oriented advanced individual training.

Gen. Matheson Visits Troops Mending in Chu Lai Hospital

CHU LAI — Wounded paratroopers in blue pajama bottoms lay on the beds of the 2nd Surgical Hospital here, their bodies camouflaged in a kaleidoscope of bandages, tubes, and life-saving paraphernalia.

Some were asleep when Brig. Gen. S.H. Matheson, commander of 1st Brig., 101st Airborne entered their wards.

The eyes of those awake sparkled as he approached their beds.

"How are you getting along?" asked the general.

"Very good, sir," responded a rifleman, bringing his hand up in salute.

"Your company really put it on 'em last night," smiled the general.

"Yes sir," grinned the trooper in reply.

"I've got a medal for you," the general said. "I don't want you to get any more of these."

The paratrooper blinked his eyes in agreement as he received his Purple Heart.

Two beds away a Spec. 4 lay with his arm in a cast.

"Looks like you took a frag or two," the general noted.

"Yes sir," replied the blond patient. "But I'll be back in Charlie company in a few weeks."

"That's a good unit," responded

ed the general. "Your buddies are cleaning up that area today. Doing real well."

The two paratroopers looked at each other as the general opened the leather-covered case revealing the Purple Heart.

Gen. Matheson nodded to the trooper as he walked away.

"Above the Rest," called the trooper.

"Here's a sergeant from 2nd 'Bat,'" said Maj. Phillip Ritchie, brigade surgeon from Newburgh, N.Y., indicating a man with bandages on his chest.

"No Slack, Sir," greeted the sergeant as the general approached.

"That was quite some fight you put up the other night," complimented the officer.

"Yes Sir," the sergeant responded. "We gave 'em all they wanted. Our platoon is first-rate."

Gen. Matheson grinned, his eyes beaming as he replied: "Yes. I know your platoon leader. I know his father, too. We jumped into Europe together in World War II."

Another Purple Heart exchanged hands.

Support Battalion's FSE Supplies Combat Units With Life Necessities

DUC PHO — Beyond the main supply depots of the 1st Logistical Command and the rear echelon supply centers of each unit there is a forward supply facility supporting the troops in the field. In the 101st Airborne, Maj. John M. Chambers, Colonial Heights, Va., directs this activity.

"The Forward Supply Element (FSE) is located close to the troops for the distribution of supplies to the units in the field," said Maj. Chambers.

The facility here also has a Forward Supply Point (FSP). The FSP is located closer to the tactical area, making combat supplies readily available to

units in the field.

Lt. Kendall B. Coen, Mineral Bluff, Ga., is acting operations officer for the FSP.

"Our mission is to provide combat service support to the brigade and its attached units during any operation," Coen said. "Utilizing operations criteria and past experience we determine what will be needed at FSP level."

Chambers says he has a fine staff.

"I have never worked with a group of people who know more about how to make a supply system work," he said. "We have a group here that pulls the system together and the sup-

plies come through. The system will provide."

The most common items found at the FSP are clothing, field equipment (weapons, radio supplies, rucksacks) and rations. Periodically, hot food is carried to the troops from the FSP. Fuel depots for gas and JP-4 (helicopter fuel) are often found at the FSP.

The FSP is an adjunct of the Spt. Bn. through which all supplies are requisitioned. The support battalion maintains the motto "Lifeline," definitive of its relationship to the combat troops in the field.

"One might consider us the 'life-blood' of the brigade," said Chambers.

The **Screaming Eagle**

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B Co. Repels NVA

NUI CHUONG — Fires from exploding artillery shells blossomed around the hill. Flames leaped high in the dry elephant grass sending a black plume of smoke into the cloudless sky.

Capt. Ronald G. Odom, San Francisco, looked out the helicopter door at the burning hilltop. He and his paratroopers of B Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf., were about to make a combat assault which touched off a nine-hour battle with an estimated NVA battalion.

The thin, sandy-haired officer watched the artillery preparation lift — the signal for the helicopters, loaded with infantrymen, to swarm in and land only long enough for the men to leap out.

Intelligence reports indicated the paratroopers of the 101st Airborne would likely make contact with elements of the 21st NVA Regiment, a seasoned, well-equipped force that had roamed at will through Quang Tin province. Mines also could be expected.

The string of helicopters turned on the downwind leg and lined up for the landing.

Last Assault

Odom, 25, West Point class of '64, was about to make his last combat assault in Vietnam. He had made many before, but this one was special. In 12 days he would be going home, an 18-month tour in Vietnam completed.

The night before, Odom wrote his parents a brief note saying he would not write again because he would be home before further letters arrived. He started to add a postscript saying he was going on his last combat assault the next morning, and he hoped the landing zone would be peaceful.

He decided against the foot-note, sealed the letter and checked his gear.

Dark dust now swirled up from the blackened hilltop as the helicopters touched down.

Odom yelled for the troops to be alert for mines as they leaped from the choppers.

Moments later the lead element discovered the first mine, a "Bouncing Betty." The para-

troopers skirted the minefield. Six Enemy

"Suddenly we saw six 'Charlies' approaching a woodline in front of the 1st platoon," Odom recalled. "We killed one of them."

As Odom's troopers opened fire, the platoon leader was seriously wounded when a Chinese-Communist rocket struck his rucksack. A hail of enemy bullets forced the 1st platoon to halt. Medics rushed to aid the fallen officer. A "Dust-Off" chopper was requested and Lt. Fred L. Meyers, Jr., Reno, Nev., assumed command of the platoon.

Lt. Donald A. Nemetz, Kingston, Pa., the artillery forward observer with B Co., moved forward and began calling supporting fires. The contact lasted about 15 minutes.

"He (Nemetz) did a helluva job," said Odom. "He kept dropping the fire until it exploded within 50 meters of his position."

Puckett as Scene

Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Ralph Puckett, Jr., Columbus, Ga., arrived at Odom's command post by chopper and offered assistance.

"We thought the contact was over," recalled Odom. "We walked back to the LZ with the wounded and waited for the 'Dust-Off' to arrive." The 2nd platoon, commanded by Lt. Ted Orvold, Atlanta, was moving out to select a defensive position for the night.

Suddenly, Orvold's platoon was under fire from AK-47 and semiautomatic weapons. Orvold radioed the company commander, gunfire from the north indicated the 4th platoon was receiving fire also.

Within seconds, B Co. was getting fire from three sides: North, west and east. The time was 5:30 p.m. The company was forced to dig in on the black, bald hill they landed on earlier in the afternoon.

Couldn't Manuever

"We were unable to move off the hill," Odom said. "We couldn't find enough concealment for maneuvering. Our location made us a prime target for a mortar attack, and we knew

it could very well be a long night."

A radio message for Col. Puckett informed him a helicopter was coming to take him back to the battalion command post. Puckett declined, saying he would remain with the company until the contact ended.

By 7 p.m. B Co. was dug in. Now an occasional bullet cracked in the damp night air.

Moonlight played across the hilltop casting grotesque shadows that kept the eyes of every paratrooper strained, nerves taut.

Attack Comes

The moon disappeared at 11:30 p.m. Minutes later the enemy attacked.

"They opened up with everything they had," Odom recounted. "We were hit with 81 and 60mm mortar fire. Off our flank, their heavy machine guns began firing and their infantry moved in."

Odom previously had made a map reconnaissance of likely locations for enemy mortars and Nemetz called in artillery. Despite the artillery support, the enemy continued to rake B Co. with mortars and automatic weapons.

On the northwest flank, a Bostonian, Lt. Robert Barry, and his 4th platoon were taking the brunt of the attack. He radioed: "Some are ten meters away. Good hand grenade range. Out."

Odom recalled the report: "He was so damn cool. I couldn't believe it, and he stayed cool and calm all night long."

Lt. Thomas J. Courtney, Knoxville, Tenn., had the 3rd platoon firing into the enemy pushing toward his flank. The tracers from their rifles crisscrossed the perimeter with streaks of red.

Spot Mortars

The enemy mortar fire continued to blast away on the hill. Suddenly, a report from Barry's platoon announced the location of the Communist mortars — barely 100 meters from his platoon.

Forward observer Nemetz pinpointed the location and called in a thundering volume of fire.



Decorated on the Spot

The Silver Star and Bronze Star garnish the field jacket of Capt. Ronald G. Odom. He rallied his paratroopers during a nine-hour battle with an estimated NVA battalion just 12 days before reassignment to Ft. Benning, Ga. Awards for others in the action are pending. (Photo by Spec. 4 Alva Tate)

With the enemy mortars out of action, B Co. fought with everything it had. New machine gun barrels replaced heat-warped ones. Thousands of rounds of ammunition were expended as the paratroopers defended their positions.

Throughout the night, Col. Puckett encouraged the men. He braved mortar fire to aid the wounded and walked the peri-

meter to talk with the troops. At 2 a.m., nearly nine hours after the battle started, it stopped.

Silence surrounded the paratroopers as they waited for dawn.

When day came, the tired men of B Co. surveyed their perimeter. Thirty-five NVA lay dead, their weapons scattered over the battlefield.

Pfc. Grimes Fills 'Morale' Position

CHU LAI — "Jack of all trades and master of most" is the phrase that best describes Pfc. Michael Grimes, a combat medic with the 101st Airborne.

This paratrooper from East Prairie, Miss. is not only a skilled medic, but assumes additional duties that contribute toward the morale and welfare of his unit.

In A Co. of the 2nd Bn. (Abn), 502nd Inf., he has been dubbed chief gourmet of native foods, platoon jester and morale builder, and "number-one" ammunition retriever — performing each role with a dedication only he seems to understand.

"If we pass through a deserted village," said Spec. 4 Steve Myers, Baldwin Park, Calif., "Our medic looks for an abandoned garden. Likely as not, he'll serve a meal supplemented with corn-on-the-cob and a side dish of rice."

When the airborne infantrymen become a little bored during lulls in combat and morale in 1st platoon needs a boost, Grimes breaks out with one of his many imitations of personalities. In seconds, the platoon rocks with laughter.

"He does 'Crazy Geegenheim' pretty good," commented one paratrooper.

During fire fights, Grimes can be found taking care of his troops with efficiency and calm.

"Once during a fight with VC in a village, some civilians were wounded," recalled Lt. Leonard Anderson, Benton, Ark. "Though bullets were striking the ground near him, Grimes calmly held a bottle of plasma as it flowed into the villager's veins."

During Operation Benton when the platoon required ammunition, the helicopter resupply this couldn't land because of heavy ground fire. The bundle was dropped from the chopper, landing in front of the platoon perimeter. With the platoon covering him, Grimes exposed himself to hostile fire as he relieved the badly needed ammunition.

Later, when contact ended and the last of the wounded were medicated to safety, Grimes put away his medical accessories and strolled off toward a field, looking for fresh corn for supper.



Checking for 'Charlie'

Spec. 4 Richard J. Walsh, West Roxbury, Mass., checks out a bunker entrance during Operation Benton. He is a paratrooper with C Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 327th Inf.

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Mike Mangiameli)

Three NVA Killed, Complex Destroyed

CHU LAI — Three North Vietnamese troops were killed and another wounded by C Co. of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 337th Inf., and pursuit of the wounded NVA resulted in the discovery and destruction of a large enemy complex.

Spec. 4 Rowland Cordero, Reno, Nev., and Pfc. Joseph Winthrop, Horsehead, N.Y., were pointed as an element of C Co. moved up a mountain slope during Operation Benton. Two NVA suddenly appeared on the trail ahead.

"They were walking along and talking to each other," Winthrop said. "We dove for

cover."
"The enemy saw us just as we leaped," said Cordero. "Then we opened up on them."

As the firing began, two more NVA appeared on the scene and were engaged by the paratroopers.

"We killed three and wounded the fourth," explained Pfc. Nick M. Sarabia, San Jose, Calif.

"The wounded 'Charlie' fled into the jungle. We chased him, but he escaped."

A short distance away, the paratroopers found what appeared to be a trading center for NVA and VC troops, complete with billets, mess halls and numerous fortified positions.

Capt. Roger M. John, company commander from Sherman, Tex., estimated the area was the base camp of a company-sized element.

Papers on one enemy body identified him as an NVA sergeant.

'Ringo' Ill; Medivaced

CHU LAI — When a paratrooper in the 101st became ill or wounded he is promptly evacuated from the battlefield. The same is true for scout dogs working with the brigade.

Recently, during Operation Benton, "Ringo"—a big black and brown German shepherd—became ill.

"He just quit eating," said Spec. 4 Joe Montilla, San Jose, Calif. "He didn't have any pep."

Montilla, a member of the 42nd Scout Dog Platoon, was working with C Co., 1st Bn. (Abn), 337th Inf., in search and destroy operations.

Ringo's keen sense of hearing and smell gave the paratroopers an advantage in locating VC lurking off jungle trails.

"A couple of days in the rear with the 'rot' to check him out and Ringo will be ready for the line again," said Montilla, climbing aboard the medivac chopper.

Airmobile Ruled Out

WASHINGTON — The 101st Airborne Division has been ruled out of becoming the Army's second airmobile division. Statisticians have calculated that the Army can not afford the aircraft and pilots necessary for the creation of an airmobile unit of division size.

The heavy requirement for additional aviation companies in Vietnam was a major factor in the decision. The majority of aircraft coming off the assembly line can not be delayed to build a Division.



'Hey Joel Take Me For Ride?'

Three Vietnamese children visit with Sgt. William F. Carter, Lumberton, N.C., as the Screaming Eagle M.P. escorted a recent convoy. (Photo by Spec. 4 Alva Tate)

Enough Arms for Reinforced Platoon

Weapons Cache Discovered As Troopers Pursue Enemy

CHU LAI — A squad of VC attempted to ambush a platoon of 101st paratroopers who chased the enemy off and found a weapons cache while in pursuit.

During Operation Benton, the 1st Platoon of A Co., 2nd Bn. (Abn), 337th Inf., approached a rice paddy. "As our point squad moved into the open paddy, VC began firing," explained Lt. Jerry Barnhill, San Angelo, Tex. "The enemy failed to see most of my men who were still coming down the mountain."

With split-second reaction, the men of A Co. quickly laid down a heavy base of fire which forced the enemy into the jungle.

"We chased them for an hour," Barnhill continued. "Then we lost sight of them in

a small draw." Anticipating an ambush by a larger enemy force, Barnhill moved his troops up an adjacent hill, hoping to surprise the enemy on the other side of the draw.

Pfc. William Howell, Washington, D.C., led the platoon along a small trail. Suddenly Howell froze in his tracks. He was staring into the barrel of a .50 caliber machinegun.

"It sort of scared me," said Howell. "Then I realized no one was manning the weapon."

Howell alerted Barnhill and the platoon immediately started searching the area.

The paratroopers found weapons and ammunition hidden under leaves and rocks.

When they finished searching, 20 individual weapons and five

crew-served weapons had been uncovered.

"There were enough weapons and ammunition to equip a reinforced platoon," said Barnhill. "We also found mortars, Chinese-Communist baroques and 87mm recoilless rifles."

Sniper fire interrupted the search.

The platoon regrouped and moved toward the sniper's location, a cluster of huts about 100 meters away.

"As we approached," said Pfc. Calvin Davis, Tyler, Tex., "A VC dashed out of a hut and escaped into the jungle."

A search of the hut complex revealed a cache of 200 grenades, enough material for 200 more and six rucksacks containing NVA uniforms and documents.

Other Units Find Camps

CHU LAI — While the 1st platoon searched the weapons cache, Capt. Steven A. Arnold, Decatur, Ill., directed the remainder of his company as it investigated the surrounding hills.

"Rice paddy trails and green rice paddies indicated the area was being used," said Arnold.

A radio report from the 3rd platoon said paratroopers had found a metal and wood-working shop containing coal, a large metal smelter and blower. Nearby was a mess hall with food and cooking utensils.

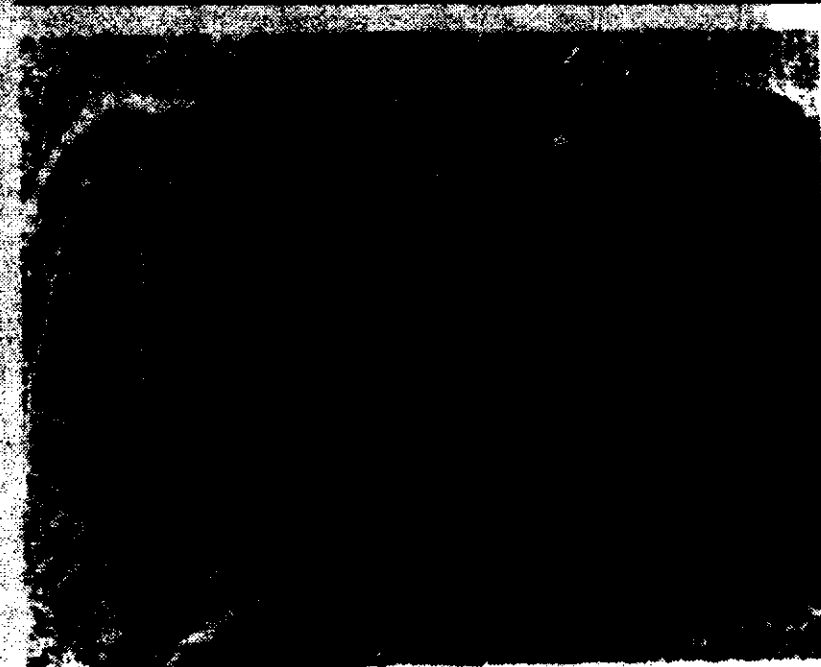
"They also discovered flatched rifle stocks, new entrenching tools and grenades in nearby tunnels," Arnold reported. "Apparently the enemy gathered shell and bomb fragments for his supply of scrap metal."

A report from the 2nd platoon indicated they found a hospital complex containing penicillin, various medicines stored in 55-gallon drums and sundry medical items.



Letter Home

Pfc. Carmen Gangi, Jr., Bellmar, N.J., writes a letter during a lull in operations of the 1st Bn. (Abn), 337th Inf. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Art Campbell)



Tunnel Busters

Spec. 4 Logan E. Harris, Brooksville, Fla. (left), and Pfc. Moses Taste, Entawville, S.C., lower an explosive charge into a VC tunnel. Both are members of A Co., 330th Engineers. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Art Campbell)