

(Copy from C 4/31st Inf. Bn. veteran James B. Simms with the assistance of Mike Crutcher a veteran of E & HHC, 1/5 Cav, 1969-70 1st Cav Div. May 2014.)

page 1

The "CHARGER" (Snoopy cartoon character dressed as WWI fighter pilot)

"AHEAD OF THE REST"

Vol 1, No. 5

CHARGER

OCTOBER 5, 1969

NVA STOPPED AT HIEP DUC

LZ WEST ** AMERICAL Division infantrymen were locked in combat with two regiments of NVA recently 17 miles southwest of Tam Ky. The violent ten-day battle took 516 enemy lives.

The unit involved was a task force comprised of companies from 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry and 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry.

Early fighting saw 59 NVA soldiers killed and 6 captured when an element of the 2nd NVA Division was surprised before it could launch a pre-dawn assault on LZ (Landing Zone) West. A sweep of the area turned up a small enemy arsenal. Scattered on the slopes of the 4th Bn., 31st Inf., fire support base were rocket propelled grenades, rocket launchers and explosive charges.

NVA forces hoped to destroy the American-supervised Hiep Duc refugee center. The enemy had vowed they would wreck the center and disperse or kill its inhabitants. Broadcast messages told the refugees that no one could stop the NVA efforts.

"The American and South Vietnamese government cannot protect you, boomed the loudspeakers. "We will wipe out your settlements."

The infantryman made the NVA eat their words.

In subsequent fighting, Bravo Company, 4th Bn., 31st Inf., encountered a large bunker complex near Hill 118. Enemy machine gunners pelted the Americans from concealed positions.

Reinforcements came immediately. A platoon from Charlie Company joined Bravo and helicopter gunships from F Troop, 8th Cavalry, rained deadly fire on the enemy positions.

The battle raged for ten days. Most of the action involved con-
(Cont. on page 10) tact that soon mushroomed into heavy exchanges of fire.

Elements of the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Artillery, provided invaluable firepower throughout the operation. Explosions rocked enemy bunkers, accounting for many enemy deaths and clearing the way for an infantry assault.

Eventually, the NVA elements were thrust back toward the Nui Chom ridgeline, where the 1st Regiment, 1st Marine Division, waited for the remnants of the battered NVA force.

"We definitely disrupted the NVA plan to overrun Hiep Duc and LZ West," asserted LTC Cecil M. Henry (Rome, Ga.), commanding officer of the 4th Bn., 31st Inf.

Enemy equipment captured by the 4th Bn., 31st Inf. included 26 individual weapons, two mortar tubes, four damaged .51 caliber machine guns, 208 Chicom grenades and nineteen B-40 rockets.

Graphic Art of soldiers at the ready with their M-16s.

Escape and Evasion Page 8

Alpha Incident Appraised Page 3

Power of Attorney and You

Since the build-up of personnel in Vietnam many questions have arisen concerning power of attorney.

Service personnel who are overseas, or are on their way, are especially vulnerable.

Power of attorney is a legal document by which you give another person the power to act as your agent, either for some particular purpose or for the transaction of your business in general.

The power of attorney can be useful, especially while a person is overseas. But it must be realized that in the wrong hands it can be harmful. The agent who holds such power has - within the limits granted by it - full authority to deal with your property without consulting with you. Power of attorney should be given only to a person whom you can trust without reservation to follow your wishes and protect your interest and those of your family.

Check your situation carefully, for in many cases a power of attorney is not needed. Or it may be advisable for you to execute a limited special power of attorney, with authority to perform certain acts and no more. Finally, it is more desirable to limit the time of its operations. You should never execute a power of attorney until you have consulted with legal counsel.

The legal authority granted in a power of attorney is revoked by your death, the death of the agent, by the time limit set by the document itself, or by a specific revocation. If it has been recorded in a public record, a revocation is always necessary.

For further information on a power of attorney or any other legal assistance, contact your legal assistance officer.

The Charger is an authorized periodic publication of the 196th Infantry Brigade Information office, for all Units of the brigade, Army News Features, Armed Forces Press Service and Armed Forces News Bureau material are used. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Contributions are encouraged and may be sent to the Brigade Information Office, Hqs 196th Infantry Brigade, APO San Francisco 96256. The Information Officer reserves the right to edit all material.

COL T.H. Tackaberry .. Brigade Commander
 1LT Kenneth S. Mikulski.....Brigade IO
 2LT David H. Coffman.....Press Officer
 SP4 T, Amick.....Editor
 SP4 G, Rice.....Brigade Reporter
 SP4 R. Merritt.....Brigade Reporter
 SGT J. Sloan.....1/46 Reporter
 SP4 W. Crawford.....4/31 Reporter
 SP4 T. Hertel.....F Troop Reporter
 PFC C. Ekengren.....3/82 Reporter
 PFC J. Tanneson.....2/1 Reporter

Graphic art: Parents with their son after a graduation party.

Caption: GET A HEADSTART, SEE YOUR EDUCATION OFFICER.

Alpha Incident

Stateside View

Too much—or the wrong thing—is being made of the temporary refusal of Company A, 3rd Battalion, 196th Light Infantry Brigade to fight.

The facts are these:

The battle-worn company had been fighting for five days in an attempt to recover the battalion commander's body from a helicopter crash south of Da Nang. Alpha Company, commanded by a lieutenant who had been in Vietnam only one month, had sustained many casualties, particularly among its NCO's and was down to half-strength.

Alpha Company refused to go into action on the sixth day. After a visit from Sergeant Okey Blankenship, who stung the pride of the demoralized young soldiers, Alpha Company advanced against the enemy. It now has a new commander, and in so far as the Army is concerned, the matter is closed.

There have been suggestions from some quarters that Alpha Company's "mutiny" may presage a revolt among young draftees serving in Vietnam who are unwilling to die in an admittedly unwinnable war in which many Americans feel this country never had any business.

There is not a scintilla of evidence to support this, and those who suggest it display little knowledge of what soldiering is all about. There have been similar incidents in every conflict since the Punic Wars.

Nobody in his right mind enjoys shooting at another human being or—more particularly being shot at himself, the less so if his combat time is drawing to a close. There comes a time when individual soldiers—and whole units—can take no more and must be temporarily pulled out of action. When that moment comes depends to a large degree on the caliber of leadership in the unit involved.

If there is one factor which binds group of soldiers together and makes them effective fighting men, it is acceptance of the fact that each man's life—which is all and everything he has—depends on every soldier's performance of his duty.

In refusing to advance with other units against the Viet Cong, the men of Alpha Company endangered the lives of the men in those units, thus violating this basic [?canon].

Through the admitted device of telling a lie about the performance of other under-strength units, Sergeant Blankenship saved the men of Alpha Company from far more than the serious charges which would have arisen from the enemy. He saved them from the certain knowledge that they had let down their comrades in a dangerous situation.

Thanks to Sergeant Blankenship, the men of Alpha Company have been spared that. And that is what leadership—and soldiering—are all about.

EXTRACTED FROM THE WASHINGTON STAR 30 AUGUST 1969.

CHARGER ROUNDS

LYRICIST INEMAN

LZ BALDY - For Specialist Four Elane Keyes (Jacksonville, Fla.) writing was just a pastime. But now it seems that his song writing talent may actually pay off for the Americal Division soldier.

"Ever since I can remember, I've liked to write songs. Said Keyes, a wireman for the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Artillery. "Not only do I write in spare time, but when I'm working at the switchboard at Headquarters words from a song called, 'Golden Memories'---actually it was no different from any other of my compositions, or so I thought. However, as I began to add more words, things seemed to fall into place. Then the words sounded better than any others I've ever written.

Pleased with the results of his efforts, Keyes decided to go all out.

"I felt I couldn't go wrong sending the words to a music company, so I sent 'Golden Memories' to a music company, so I sent 'Golden Memories' to the Music City Songcrafters of Nashville, Tennessee.

A short time later, Keyes received a surprise package in the mail. The Tennessee company liked the words so much that they adapted country and western style to the piece. They sent Keyes a recording of the song with a list of publishers to which he could send the song.

"I never thought they would accept it," said Keyes, astonished. Now I think I'll send the record to a publisher--if it happened once, I guess it can happen again!"

Infantryman Needles

Buddies (graphic art: drawing of a syringe)

LZ PROFESSIONAL**Specialist Four Dave "Doc" Williams, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry, wields a hypodermic needle just as effectively as his fellow infantrymen operate an M-16 rifle. The Rock Falls, Illinois, native is a member of AMERICAL Division's 196th Infantry Brigade, and a volunteer in the field.

"When I first arrived in Vietnam I was assistant gunner on an M-60 machine gun," Williams recalled. "Some men became sick, and others rotated back to the states leaving few much-needed medics to help the unit. I saw the need and thought I could help the company more as a medic. So here I am."

What qualifies a man to become a medic? Spec. 4 Ken Niemict (Woodbridge, N.J. explains:

"Field medics must know first aid. Most medics here have school training behind them, too.

Spec. 4 Williams attended pre-medical courses in college, worked in a hospital, and was a high school coach before enlistment in the Army.

Charlie Company medics have earned the Combat Medic Badge. Many of them have spent, or will spend, their complete tour in the field-- a grueling task for a man with a "little black bag" in his rucksack.

AND sounds

Medcap

Graphic art: Medevac (Air Ambulance) Huey from being marshalled in to land by a soldier wearing a steel pot.

LZ WEST** Each day, some 3,900 Vietnamese refugees are receiving medial care, thanks to the efforts of the Medical Civilian Action Program Team of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry. This five-man medical element can be transported by helicopter to any location in the AMERICAL Division in a matter of minutes. The group was organized by Lieutenant Colonel Cecil M. Henry (Rome, Ga.), the commanding officer of the 4th of the 31st, and Captain Phillip Kinman (Petersburg, Ind.) the battalion surgeon.

"The purpose of the MEDCAP team is to provide daily medical care for the people of Hiep Duc," explained captain Kinman. The Hiep Duc Refugee Center, located near LZ West, 35 miles northwest of Chu Lai, contains over 3,900 refugees who have recently returned to the area following several years absence. caused by VC-NVA terrorism. MEDCAPs have been conducted at Hiep Duc before but only on a weekly basis. The MEDCAP Team can provide follow-up treatment as well as aid in the instruction of the Vietnamese medics who assist in the daily treatment," observed Captain Kinman.

The Vietnamese constructed the dispensary which houses the daily MEDCAPs. Over 1,300 patients received treatment during the first week of operation. Twelve Vietnamese medics are currently in Tam Ky to receive intensive training related to their duties in Hiep Duc. They will assist in the daily treatment of refugees at Hiep Duc upon the completion of their training.

Staff Sergeant John Weary (Shamokin, Pa.) heads the Mobile MEDCAP Team. His four assistants all serve as combat medics with 4th of the 31st. Now, medics like Specialist Four Steve Dan????1 (????ago) and Tony Ramella (Huntington, W. Va.) are turning their talents from combat to pacification with the appreciation of the people of Hiep Duc.

Artillery Vet Notes Expansion

LZ BALDY**Rejoining his old unit after three's year's absence, one Vietnam returnee finds considerable change.

Sergeant First Class Samuel O'Neal first came to Vietnam July 15, 1966. He was attached to the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Artillery, at that time and worked in the field of communications.

"We brought raw recruits over with us," said O'Neal. "We trained the men in AIT; I taught communications.

O'Neal returned to the United States in August 1967, and was stationed at Ft. Bragg, N.C. On July of this year he was reassigned to 3/82.

The 3/82 certainly has changed since 1966, noted O'Neal." The unit has acquired more personnel and equipment and has expanded its area of operation.

Charger Combat

Artwork. Drawing of C.I.B.

FREDERICK HILL TOTALS MARCH 18, 1969 - SEPTEMBER 28, 1969	
	OPERATION TOTALS
VC KILLED	1,062
NVA KILLED	1,832
IND. WEAPONS CAPT.	439
CREW-SERVED	101
TONS OF RICE CAPT.	69.997 (T)

SP4 Small Eyes Rice Jackpot.

LZ BALDY** AMERICAL Division infantryman, Specialist Four Larry Small (Georgetown, S.C.), peeped through a hole in a storeroom wall and saw a pile of rice.

"I knew I had to break the door down to get in," Small related. He threw his shoulder against the wooden door and crashed into the room. More than 2 1/2 tons of grain were contained in the large bin..enough to feed a company size element for more than a month.

Specialist Small's unit, Echo Company reconnaissance platoon of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, was taking part in a cordon search of a small village located 14 miles northwest of Tam Ky.

Approaching the village from the other end was a platoon from Bravo Company.

As they neared the hamlet, both units were met with small arms fire.

The village was rich in artifacts symbolic of the era of French occupation. There were ornate wood carvings and cement courtyards—now shrouded in jungle growth. But no all of the art work dated from the French period.

Crude paintings on white-washed walls depicted American helicopters being attacked by ground forces armed with AK-47 rifles.

"It was only a temporary cache said 1Lt Mike E. Holyrod, commander of the reconnaissance unit. "The rice was surprisingly ill-concealed. They usually bury it in crocks

[Historian Note: Nearly the same article appeared in the 29 September 1969 - Platoon finds tons of rice in VC bin story in the Army Reporter newspaper.]

"CHARGER NOTES"

The 196th Infantry Brigade arrived in Vietnam July 15, 1966, after a 30-day sea voyage from Ft. Devens, Mass. They were fully combat-trained when they arrived and set up the first Charger headquarters near the city of Tay Ninh. They moved to LZ Baldy in the spring of 1968.

"CATMAN" Feels Deadly Device

LZ BALKDY** Specialist Four Neil McKinnon seems to have the eyes of a cat. At least that's how his fellow AMERICA Division platoon members feel.

It was after 9 p.m. on a very dark night when Company E, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, operating 20 miles northwest of Tam Ky, broke camp and began heading toward another location.

"I was supposed to be the second man in order of march," said Spec. 4 McKinnon (Eureka, Calif.), "but our point man was sick, and I was nominated to replace him." Neil is a Yurek Indian from a small tribe in California.

"I always feel better when the 'Chief' is walking point," said PFC Ron Justice (Los Angeles). "We all feel that Neil is the best point man in the whole battalion."

Unseen to McKinnon and the rest of the platoon members was a Viet Cong warning of an upcoming booby trap. It was a piece of paper on a rock, 100 meters from a bridge.

"I was cautiously crossing the bridge when my leg felt a wire going across it. I immediately stopped and held my breath," related McKinnon. Looking down, his keen cat-like vision pierced the darkness and saw a fine trip wire running ahead of him.

The Yurek Indian ran his hand across the wire and he signaled for his company to take cover.

Coming to a hand grenade, Sp5 McKinnon recited some quick prayers, then seized the explosive by the handle.

"I just thank God that it did not go off," smiled the "Chief".

Resupply Turns MEDEVAC

LZ BALDY**It seemed as though the day would be normal one for the crew of the 71st Aviation Company resupply helicopter.

The crew had been resupplying units of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry, four miles west of Landing Zone (LZ) Ross, when they were asked for emergency resupply of supplies and ammunition.

With the material on board, the chopper was forced to circle the drop area for half an hour because of enemy mortar fire slamming into the proposed LZ.

The gunship pilots leaving the area to replenish their supply of ammunition, told the aircraft commander, Warrant Officer (WO) James A. Waterbury (Mt. Kisco, N.Y.) and pilot, WO Frederick T. Torreal (Oakridge, Ind.) that the situation on the ground was too "hot" to attempt a landing without gunship support.

Then the report of casualties came to the crew. WO Waterbury decided that "gunships or no gunships" the casualties had to be evacuated.

During the landing, the AMERICAL Division chopper came under heavy enemy machinegun fire which was returned by crew chief SP4 Charles Newell (Blemore, OH) and door gunner PFC Douglas Chisholm (Mineral, Va.).

Upon landing, the emergency supply was quickly unloaded and the wounded men were helped aboard the helicopter.

Rising through a wall of enemy fire, the supply-turned-MEDEVAC roared to the nearest medical aid facility and dropped the casualties for treatment.

In summing up the change in mission, gunner, PFC Chisholm said, "Today wasn't really unusual. It was all part of a day's work for a helicopter crew."

ESCAPE and EVASION

LZ WEST**They were in the NVA impact area. Mortar rounds whooshed overhead and one smashed close by.

PFC Marion Feaster (Deland, Fla.) dove into a nearby stream and submerged. During the confusion, Bravo company, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry, 196th Inf., Bde., pressed on to their night defensive position, leaving Feaster separated from his unit, deep in enemy territory.

"I don't think it really ever hit me how bad a shape I was in," Feaster remarked later. "It never occurred to me that I might be captured and not be able to get back to my buddies.

He had grabbed a damaged radio to keep it out of enemy hands. He clutched it under his arm and moved upstream as quietly as possible. He hoped to rejoin his unit since he knew approximately where Company B was to set up its laager that night.

"But I miscalculated," laughed Feaster. "When I came out of the stream, I came face-to-face with another group of NVA. But my lucky stars must have been shining that night. They mistook me for an advance point man with an American element.

Thinking Feaster would lead a large element into their ambush, the NVA let him pass.

"They realized their mistake too late," said Feaster. "By the time they began firing at me I had made it to our own perimeter."

What password did PFC Feaster use to enter his company's perimeter?

"None," replied, Feaster, "I just ran like made. My buddies were too busy blasting the NVA to worry about me."

3/82 Arty Adjourns VC Meeting

LZ BALDY**When the 105mm howitzer rounds came pounding into their position, the enemy knew they were up against an devastating adversary.

With the help of the guns from one AMERICAL Division fire support base, along with the aid of the Vietnamese Regiment and Popular Forces (RF/PF), a company-size VC force was prevented from carrying out their mission.

CPT John Waltner (Bridgeton, Mo.) and 1LT Thomas Wilson (Addison, N.Y.), both of whom are attached to Mobile Advisory Unit No. 1, were sitting in their district office going over the previous day's notes.

CPT Waltner is the Operation Coordination Center Advisor for Moc Bai District, and LT Wilson is the sen or Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) advisor in the district.

Suddenly at 6 a.m. a voice from the Vietnamese Operation Office (S-3) crackled over the radio requesting and urgent fire mission on a unit one mile from the Moc Bai location and about one-and-a-half miles from LZ Baldy, home of the 196th Infantry Brigade.

LT Wilson contacted the Fire Direction Center (FDC) of a battery of the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Artillery relaying the message from he had received and that he was going to Tra Dinh Hamlet, the place from which the fire mission was called.

Wilson, along with three NCOs from the advisory unit, hurried to the area, where they joined 2LT Phiet of the 323rd RF Company.

Upon arriving, LT Wilson found LT Phiet and his two platoons receiving heavy fire from one 60mm mortar and small arms from 400 to 600 meters across the river.

By now, Wilson was in contact with the FDC also located on LZ Baldy.

As Wilson called repeatedly for fire support *Alpha* Battery responded with heavy barrages of 105mm artillery. ??? during this time LT Wilson was adjusting the fire and calling in grid changes according ??????.

"On the second grid change," said Wilson, "a 105mm round hit dead center on a group of approximately 60 VC who were evidently gathered to discuss plans for a ??ion. Twenty-nine rounds soon followed."

The PF's observed 10-15 enemy bodies floating down the river and nine lying on the river bank.

In spite of the fact that Lt Phiet was outnumbered by the enemy he and his two platoons managed trap the enemy, largely because of the volume of fire from the U.S. Army's artillery. First LT Andrew Tagliaferri (Boston), Fire Direction Officer of Alpha Battery, said "The VC were boxed in against the river. We caught them by surprise and the PF's were firing on the VC from all directions."

In a search of the areas later in the day, the Popular Forces counted 11 killed, all attributed to artillery fire.

Graphic Art: Drawing of a 105mm howitzer set to fire at high elevation.

4/31 + 'HO' Tracks = 8 Enemy KIA's

LZ BALDY**Numerous "Ho Chi Minh sandal" tracks and a group of field packs hanging on a fence led to the death of eight enemy soldiers at the hands of AMERICAL Division infantrymen.

Elements of Company C, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry, under the command of CPT Thomas Murphy (Savannah, Ga.) entered "Happy Valley," some 25 miles northwest of Tam Ky, and apparently surprised a group of VC and NVA soldiers.

A platoon-sized element of "Charlie" Company under Sergeant First Class Marshall Robinson (Portsmouth, Va.) proceeded cautiously down the winding trail.

They observed many sandal tracks, hooches, and tunnel complexes. A "Kit Carson" Scout accompanied Sp4 William Rozier (St. Paul, N.C.), the point man. Suddenly the alert "Kit Carson" detected movement in the thicket ahead.

"I deployed my men right away, and we soon had the enemy surrounded," declared Robinson.

Three NVA and one VC were killed by the platoon's small arms fire as they attempted to evade. A detailed probe of the area disclosed a hidden tunnel entrance. Destruction of the tunnel by a demolition charge produced a loud secondary explosion.

Meanwhile, helicopter gunships supported another platoon-sized element commanded by 2nd LT James Simms (Clarendon Hills, Ill.). As the platoon moved to investigate the enemy casualties from the gunship, three VC were killed when they tried to flee from the infantrymen.

Minutes later, SGT Albert Gentry (Bumtass, Va.) observed several enemy packs hanging on a fence directly in front of his position. Advancing slowly, he located three VC in a bunker beneath a hooch. The enemy attempted to escape from the "Polar Bears," but died in a hail of fire.

Three additional enemy were discovered in the immediate vicinity, victims of the gunship's devastating fire power. Also uncovered were 12 Chicom grenades, three AK-47 rifles and a large supply of ammunition.

MAIL ME HOME

|
| STAMP
|
|
|-----

