

(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.)

31st Regt. Polar Bear (image printed top left)

196th patch (image printed on top right)

"WEST OF WEST" (text printed between the two images).

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Voters go to the polls in hiep duc

The polls are open for the first time in five years for over four thousand Vietnamese Voters in Hiep Duc District. Less than five weeks ago, this fertile valley was the scene of a bitter struggle between "Polar Bear" Infantrymen and forces of the 2nd NVA Division.

Local elections for hamlet and village officials were held recently for the first time since the communists over-ran the district in 1965. August and September brought a renewed effort by the NVA to re-capture Hiep Duc which has become a showcase for pacification in the I Corps Tactical Zone. More than 1,200 NVA soldiers were killed by elements of the 196th Infantry Brigade, ARVN, and the 1st Marine Division.

Each of the several villages and hamlets elected the officials who will assist the district chief in directing the affairs of Hiep Duc. A polling establishment was set up in each village or hamlet for the use of its residents only. The officials were elected to three year terms, and suffrage was universal to all residents over 18 years of age. Fifteen officials were elected in all.

Have You Ever Been Alone

While on a company maneuver one morning during the battle of Hiep Duc, Alpha Company was ambushed from well concealed bunkers along a rice paddy just as they were ready to enter a wooded area. The point man, SP5 Robert "Prune" Jeans hit the ground for cover in a dead space directly in front of one of the bunkers little knowing that he would spend the next twelve hours in that depression with sporadic fire being exchanged right over his head.

The Kenilworth, New Jersey rifleman began to lead his company off the main trail and into the wooded area to keep from exposing the element in an open rice paddy on the way to their objective, Hill 102. Forces of the Second NVA Division were waiting with 30 caliber machine guns and various small arms in their bunkers for the company to cross into the open. By heading for the woodline instead, Jeans foiled the enemy's plan for a perfect ambush. Jeans had moved to the top of a paddy dike when there was a sudden barrage of M16 and M79 fire to his rear. "We thought it was our men opening up, so we didn't take cover immediately", explained SGT Al Holtzman of Brentwood, New York, squad leader of the point element. The second burst included 30 caliber fire and left no doubt in the soldiers' minds that they were the target.

Suddenly, Jeans discovered that the dike he was atop was actually a machinegun bunker but he had to head for cover before he had a chance to rout the occupants. The intense firing over his head prevented him from rejoining his unit as they moved back to take cover. "I called to Al and told him I was OK but I couldn't move from my position", related Jeans.

The rest of the company set up a hasty perimeter and began to engage the bunker with machinegun fire and M-72 rocket launchers. However, they were unable to effectively open up on the bunker without further endangering their comrade's life.

"I thought the rest of the company had left the area", said Jeans. "Their machinegun fire was coming so close to me I thought it was the NVA trying to hit me."

"I was in a space just large enough for my body," Jeans related, "everytime I tried to move out they opened up again. I finally decided to wait out the day and try to move in the dark."

the church of the polar bears

Worship here in Vietnam, though very different from that of the organized church back in the states, is similar to that of the early church in the following aspects:

1. Location-The early church began out in the fields and mountainsides; how similar to our environment here.

2. Size of groups-the early churches were small in size due to their beginning and also persecution. When the scripture mentions "and the church in their hour's "it was literally just that a small gathering. Most of our worship experiences here are held at company level and at times at platoon level. How similar!

3. Spirit of groups-the early Christians worshipped in joyfulness, for Christ was their new life; their singing impressed the way they felt. Here, too, one finds singing to be a great release for his fears; one has only to experience it.

4. Type of Worship-the early Christians spoke mainly of the life of their Lord; often they could not gather because of persecution. Often here, too, we cannot meet together as we would like because of the enemy situation, therefore, of necessity one must at times communicate with God alone.

The Church of the Polar Bears through is on the move, whether here on the fire base, out in the field, or back at stand down. This reminds us that God is not static, but walks with us daily!

Chaplain (CPT) Donald Wilson

Polar bears cite "soldier of the week"

Deserving "Polar Bear" Infantrymen will get a chance to have a three day break from the field under a new plan to honor the outstanding "Soldier of the Week." Each week a different company will designate a man who deserves the opportunity to have three days of rest, a daily shower, and clean clothes.

"This individual will accompany the Battalion commander through out his daily routine, and in this way, he will learn something about how the battalion operates," stated Major Roger Lee, 4/31 Operations Officer. "He can give us information about what the troops in the field need and bring the battalion staff closer to the field troops in general."

SP4 Dick Oswald of the First Platoon of A Company was the first "Polar Bear" to be nominated. SP4 Oswald has performed in an outstanding fashion as a squad leader for A Co.

When last seen, Dick was enjoying a movie in the BTOC.

Alone? (CON'T FR PG 1)

As darkness began to set in, Alpha Company set up a night laager at their position. Later, under cover of darkness, Jeans was able to maneuver from his position toward the laager. Still not certain whether the positions were NVA or his own comrades, he lay quietly near the perimeter listening and observing. He soon heard English-speaking voices and anxiously called out to the astonished men that he was coming in.

After a terrifying day spent in the crossfire between enemy and friendly elements, Specialist Jeans happily fell into the open arms of the waiting Polar Bears.

Malaria can kill take your pill

Mortars slug it out with "charlie"

Recently, with only a few hours notice to pack and be ready to move, Bravo Section of Echo company found themselves on the way to the field to participate in the battle for Hiep Duc. The destination for the Polar Bear mortarmen was Hill 118, perhaps better known to everyone in the battalion as "Million Dollar Hill", located about half a mile north of Hiep Duc.

The 14 men, with their three mortar tubes, were on a mission as a forward section to provide support for the line companies in heavy contact in the area. The area couldn't be covered from the mortar positions on the nearby fire support bases, West and Siberia.

As soon as we landed on the hill, we began registering the guns and digging in," said SGT. Paul Armstrong of Westminster, California. No sooner were they set when the NVA hitting the hill with their own 82MM rounds. the enemy pounded the hill all day from mortar positions dug in and camouflaged so well that gunships were unable to rout them. during the time the mortar position was on the hill the NVA continued to harass them with mortars periodically.

A platoon from one of the line companies in the rice paddies below would join the men on the hill late each afternoon to provide security during the night. They were successful in keeping the enemy from coming up 'the hill and using small arms fire on the men. A sniper did make it up the hill (cont't Pg 3)

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thanks from marines

LZ Baldy, Vietnam-The soldiers of the Americal Div's 4th Bn, 31st Inf, 196th Inf Bde, were presented a silver bugle by Col. Gildo Codispoti of New York city, commanding officer of the 7th Regt, 1st Mar Div.

The bugle was given to Lt. Col. Cecil M. Henry of Rome, Ga., as a token of appreciation for the spirit of cooperation and hospitality that was extended to the Marines recent joint operations around LZ West.

Mortars slug it out with "charlie" (From page 2)

one night, but he was soon silenced.

During the day, in addition to their fire missions, the men provided a secure landing zone for helicopters to bring in supplies for the line companies as well as their own supplies and the vital mortar rounds. "Sometimes we would finish one fire mission just in time to unload a chopper and then hurry back to our positions for another mission," Said SP4 Jack Massarello of Plymouth, Michigan.

Originally, the section was to be on the hill only two days but ended up staying out for twelve days. "During that time we expended over 1,000 rounds and were credited with 37 kills," reported Lt. Charles Allen of Fairfield, Connecticut. "From our position on Hill 118 we were able to provide close, instantaneous fire support for the line companies, usually getting support to them within a minute or two of their call". The section was not required to obtain clearance before firing, as is the case on the fire support bases, so they were able to fire as soon as the guns were aimed.

When their mission on "Million Dollar Hill" was completed, the men of Echo company had once again, proven their value to the fighting men in the field.

PIO chief retires [*Historian: I am not clear who the PIO officer was*]

It has been my privilege to serve as the chief of the Public Information Office of the 4th Bn., 31st Inf for these last eight months. During this time, I have attempted to gain some recognition for the fine fighting men of this battalion through the civilian media as well as the official publications of the U.S. Army here in Southeast Asia. For the past several months, I have also helped to produce West of West, the battalion newspaper.

No amount of publicity would do justice to the Infantrymen of this unit. You know that the full story of the "grunt" who does his job each day in spite of extreme danger and discomfort can never be fully understood by the public in general. Each company, platoon, and man deserves a front-page story for their actions at one time or another during their tour in Vietnam. Unfortunately, only a very few get the recognition which they deserve. However, I know that each and every "Polar Bear" element, whether it be a company, platoon, or a squad qualifies as "front-page" heroes! This was especially true during the recent battle for Hiep Duc. As I look back on the past months, I feel sure that anything that I did proved to be inadequate in itself, and no one person can change it.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the "Polar Bear" Infantrymen who have so often taken their time to make sure that I got a story or picture. I would like to thank the tired machine gunner who had time to tell me what it was like after four days of constant battle near "Million Dollar Hill", and the wounded RTO who related the story of being surrounded with his company by an NVA battalion in AK Valley.

I would like to thank LTC Henry and Major Lee for their cooperation and support which made my job so much easier during these last months. CPT Condon and his staff in the S-1 Section also merit mention because they have been responsible for the printing West of West each month. RTO's in the TOC and company clerks have also helped whenever I have asked. To all of you, I would like to express a hearty "Thank you!" But most of all, I will remember those dirty, unshaven faces; those platoon sergeants and squad leaders; those RTO's and grenadiers. These are the best of the "Polar Bears!"

ARVN present awards

In a ceremony held in Tam Ky on 25 October, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) awarded the Cross of Gallantry to representatives of the Battalion.

LTC. Cecil M. Henry, Commanding Officer of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry, received the Cross of Gallantry with Palm.

Presented the Cross of Gallantry with Bronze Star were SFC Jackie Blackwell of Echo Company, PSGT James A. Buytaert of Alpha Company, and SP4 Reynaldo Pacheco of Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

The awards were given to honor deserving personnel in the recent battle of Hiep Duc.

comic: Drawing of a beautiful woman under a parachute. The parachute canopy looks very much like a large brassiere.

reenlistments accomplished during the month of october 1969, with option and reassignment shown after each name, were as follows:

HHC:

1. HODGES, Garry L. - Medical - 44th Med Bde, APO 96384
2. PHILLIPS, Chester A. - Sch Bde, USA Armor Center, Ft Knox, Ky
3. EDWARDS, Lennis - USA Face, Ft. Sill. Okla.

A CO:

1. WILLIS, Larry C. - Aircraft Maint - HHC 123d Avn Bn
2. SHANKEL, Glen A. - Aircraft Maint - 174th Avn Co.
3. JUPTA, Robert K. - Hvy Equip Oper - Co E, 26th engr Bn
4. MCKIBBENS, Lamar - Metal working - 20th Engr Bde, Long Binh
5. DESMAIAIS, Richard L. - Motor Transport - Co B, 23d S&T Bn
6. TEIFER, Bruce #. - Law Enforcement - 18th MP Bde, Long Binh

B CO:

1. FEASTER, Marion - Supply - HHC 23d S&T Bn
2. BAKER, Raymond L. - Data Processing - 101st Abn Div, APO 96383
3. HOSNER, Richard G. - Administration - 527th PSC, APO 96238
4. JOHNSON, Rex - Metal working - HHC, 723d Maint Bn

C CO:

1. TAYLOR, James C. - Draftsman - HHC, 523d Sig Bn
2. MC CLURE, Jerry C. - Aircraft Maint - 178th Avn Co, 14th Avn Bn
3. CROMER, Paul H. - Communications - 174th AVN Co, 14th Avn Bn
4. RAWLINS, Charles M. - Metal working - HHC, 723d Maint Bn
5. WALZ, Jerome E. - Communications - 132d Avn Co, 14th Avn Bn
6. LUMSDEN, Robert O. - Draftsman - 518th PSC, Cam Rahn Bay

D CO:

1. GRAY, Gary A. - Hvy Equip Oper - HHC, 723d Maint Bn
2. HAMBELTON, Michael T. - Supply - HHC, 723d Maint Bn
3. AVENA, Anthony - Postal Clerk - 23d Admin co.
4. SHUMAKE, Boyce B. - Wire Maintenance - Co B, 723d Maint Bn
5. DIGARA, Hiram W. - Dy W/Stand down - 196th Inf Bde
6. WITTAKER, Melvin J. - Motor Maint - Co D, 723d Maint Bn
7. CAMPBELL, Robert J. - Food Service - HHC, 4th Bn 31st Inf
8. FULLERTON, Jay G. - Aircraft Maint - 71st Avn Co, APO 96374

E CO:

1. WRIGHT, Ira L. - Supply - 355th [?335th] Trans co
2. RINKS, James M. - Hvy Equip Oper - Co D, 26th Engr Bn
3. HOAG, Davey V. - Supply - 71st Avn Co, 14th Avn Bn

RECAPITULATION:	OBJECTIVE	REENLISTMENTS	PCT. ATT.
	4	28 + 2 RA Career	720%

RAYMOND C. STICE, SFC; Bn Reenlistment NCO; 4th Bn 31st Inf 196th Inf Bde; APO San Francisco 96374;

West of West
 LTC Cecil M. Henry CO
 SP4 William Crawford Reporter

This newsheet is published monthly by the 4/31 Infantry, 196th Infantry Brigade APO 96374, as an authorized publication. Views and opinions herein do not necessarily represent those of the Department of the Army. AFPS material used.

comic: Soldier presents himself to the First Sergeant. The First Sergeant is not pleased to hear this line of crap, "I'd like to volunteer for the draft cut."