

(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 1<sup>st</sup> 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).

---

VOL II NUMBER 3 4TH BATTALION 31st INFANTRY 03 March 1970

---

## Awards go to “pf’s”

In a colorful ceremony recently three Vietnamese Popular Force Infantrymen received awards from the American forces they work with.

Held on the soccer field in Hiep Duc, five miles west of LZ West, the ceremony was conducted by Colonel James M. Lee (Wilmington, N.C.), Commander of the 196th Infantry Brigade.

The PF’s provide security for the district area and played a decisive role in repelling large scale enemy assaults on the village last August.

After Col Lee reviewed the troops, the national anthems of the Republic of Vietnam and the United States were played by the Americal Division Band. Before making the presentations COL Lee said, “We are pleased to see the continuing success and growth of the pacification efforts in Hiep Duc. It is our hope that all the fighting in Vietnam will be over in the very near future.”

LTC Kenneth L. Skaer (Spokane, Wash) commander of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry expressed the appreciation of his Battalion to the people of Hiep Duc and the Vietnamese forces operating in the area. “It was through the combined efforts of Vietnamese and American Forces that the enemy was denied his objectives in August. Through these awards we wish to recognize these soldiers who were instrumental in bringing about this defeat.”

Colonel Lee pinned the medals, two Bronze Stars and an Army Commendation Medal with “V”, on the deserving Vietnamese soldiers. The band struck up again as the ceremony closed and everyone moved into congratulate the men.

The band continued playing until their Chinook returned to pick them up. The curious villagers crowded around to watch as the musicians went through their numbers.

## Bear Facts

Hello Polar Bears. Since we find ourselves in an environment which makes it very difficult for us to communicate I’m taking up a little space in “West of West” to talk about these things I think you should know. I plan to continue this practice in future “West of West” publications and each Polar Bear can consider these articles to be the monthly “state of the union” message for the 4th Bn. 31st Infantry.

First, let’s consider the Polar Bears accomplishments since the New Year. Despite an unexpected continuation of the monsoon season we have continued to cover our assigned area of operations. Now I know this has meant much physical discomfort for all you men in the field, but your results speak for themselves. We have gone after an elusive enemy guerilla and have beat him at his own game. You have enjoyed success in the most frustrating and difficult type of warfare and you can be proud of your accomplishments in the field. A hearty well done to you the Polar Bear.

The Polar Bears also proved their worth in (cont’d on page 2)

## “answers”(questions on pg 4)

a. Zarf

b. Yes

c. On Monday

f. Dink

g. Stand down

h. \$4,333

- d. Because of the big orange pill.
- e. A K.P.

- i. A second lieutenant
- j. ?

“Facts” (from page 1)

another area. the long monsoon season had its affect upon LZ West and LZ Siberia. Toward its end, instructions came from “higher, higher” to correct the situation. Materials began to flow and you Polar Bears found yourselves busy filling sandbags, laying wire, digging trenches, building bunkers and you picked up trash. To make matters worse, every time you sat down to take a much deserved and needed break there came the Papa Bear or the Super Bears with all kinds of helpful advice. Despite all these obvious handicaps and interruptions the Polar Bears have once again demonstrated the ability to excel in a distasteful but necessary and very important task.

Siberia will soon be the best firebase in the Division and West is only a little bit behind, but only because it is larger. Once again well done, but let’s keep pushing and keep ahead of the other Battalions of this fine Division. Needless to say, the Poppa Bear is very, very proud of your efforts which reflect true team effort.

Now let’s talk about a few things bugging the Polar Bears. First, HEPATITIS! Did you know it is a virus infection of the liver primarily caused by bad water? Did you know that once one man gets the stuff he can pass it to all his fellow soldiers? Did you know after getting the disease you can’t drink any alcohol from anywhere from six months to a year? Now that would really tear up your next “Recharger” wouldn’t it? So let’s use the water purification tablets faithfully.

Next, MALARIA,. Now there just isn’t anyway to joke about this disease because of its long range (Cont’d in next column) affects on an individual’s health. It is caused by mosquitoes so what can we Polar Bears do about it? Sounds simple doesn’t it? Don’t let the insect bite you, and no problems. Well, we know our mosquitoes are tough and they are numerous so we can’t stop all of them. We can roll down our sleeves and button up our collars as night approaches. We can use insect repellent on our exposed skin. We can also protect ourselves when we sleep by using a net, poncho or liner. But all these measures won’t stop all of the bugs, so we must take our pill—the orange one on Mondays and the white one on all days. Now this includes those days when we’re not in the field because all these drugs just keep the malaria bug from getting us sick. If you miss a day the bug already in your system may really get with you. Don’t sweat it when you go home because the Army has a procedure which rids you of the bugs but, while you’re on R&R take your pills. Now if everybody works on it we can lick this thing. How about a month with no malaria for the Polar Bears? Heck, we can do that because we’ve done everything else!

## Hiep Duc expands

To provide lasting safety for the Vietnamese civilians is today one of the foremost aims of the allies war effort. American and Vietnamese operations in the area of the 196th Infantry Brigade have now taken another giant step toward this goal. The Hiep Duc District, a remote but thriving outpost of pacification recently doubled its area of control.

The progress of Hiep Duc has been steady and rapid. The district was originally a relocation center. One thousand refugees were moved into the area under security of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry. In less than a year the population had swelled to 4,000. The district chief, Major Soan, and the commander of the 4th Bn., 31st Inf., at the time, LTC Cecil W. Henry (Rome Ga.) jointly decided to expand the district south to cover 600 more people. “The people there had chosen to live in an unsecured area rather than leave the soil which their ancestors had worked”, said Lieutenant Michael Donohoe, (Buffalo, N.Y.) the Battalion Civil Affairs Officer. “We wanted to provide security for those people without taking away their homes.”

Vietnamese Popular Forces moved in to clear the area. When the few remaining guerillas had been driven out defenses were set up guard against their return. The region was then secure.

The expansion of Hiep Duc District serves the allies in several ways. The newly acquired residents, allowed to stay on their own land, will fight harder to defend it.

Secondly, the expansion will give many Viet Cong a very personal reason to rally to the Government of Vietnam. “Many of the guerillas have families that wish to remain in this expanded area,” said LT. Donohoe. “The only way they can see their families is to rally.”

Lastly, safety in the hamlets and fields such as this, and the promise to maintain it, have swung whole

populations away from the Viet Cong influence and brought a semblance of normal living the area.

**LET'S GET ON WITH IT!  
DON'T LET A FEMALE ANOPHELES MOSQUITO CATCH YOU WITH YOUR PANTS DOWN OR  
YOUR SLEEVES UP!**

## **'BUFFALOED' soldiers**

The scowl is cold, cynical, calculating, and plain all around unnerving. He looks at you as if you insulted his mother. He acts like you owe him money.

And he's not all bluff, either. Toughened combat veterans have been known to flee without shame in front of a charging Water Buffalo.

You aren't supposed to hurt them. When they chase you, you have to shake your head, click your tongue and say, "Bad, Bad Buffalo! Now look what you have gone and done-tromped all over my pal Elmer Briggett!"

Then the Buffalo will stop what he is doing, stand statue-still, and fix those big bloodshot eyes on you. He assumes the appearance of a western gunslinger.

You hurriedly flash your biggest, friendliest grin and say, apologetically, "I sure am sorry Briggett got in your way, Mr. Buffalo. I hope you didn't hurt your hooves tromping over him like that". And you back away, slowly, still grinning like a Cheshire cat.

Sometimes buffalo are alone, and sometimes they go in bunches. Herds, they're called. If one Buff is bad, a herd of the beasts is a downright catastrophe.

They'll be standing there in the mud, doing whatever Buffalo do while they stand around in the mud. The little tick birds spot the soldiers fires, and blow the whistle. The Buffalo glance up, and even very far away you can see a big grin start to grow across their ugly muzzles.

Suddenly on cue, a unanimous, thunderous bellow issues from the cluster of buffalo, and they break like a football huddle.

It's the Buffs versus the soldiers opening quarter; Buffs highly favored, and playing on their home field.

"Run!" hollers the point man. "Here come the Buffalo!. Here comes the Buffalo!. The element needs no encouragement and proceeds to scatter like leaves before a dust storm.

"Man, that was close," gasps a soldier as he lies sprawled on the ground, wheezing for breath. "These Buffalo act like they enjoy chasing us like that!"

## **EASY DAY FOR RECON**

Two caches and two KIA's made a busy but successful day recently for the Recon Platoon of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry.

The Polar Bears were sent to search and clear the area around Son Hoa Village in the Que Son District. The village at the base of LZ West had been attacked the night before by a large VC force.

As the Infantrymen swept north from the village they first came across a cache containing one 82 and three 60MM Mortar rounds, and eight Chicom grenades.

"We had just destroyed the ammunition when we spotted four VC on a ridgeline north of us," explained LT William K. Rapp (Glen Ellyn, Ill.) Recon Plt Ldr. Artillery was called resulting in two KIA's.

The platoon moved on to a hootch area at the foot of rugged hill 441 where they questioned an old woman. "She led us to several places where the VC had recently hidden rice" said LT Rapp. "We found about a thousand pounds of rice buried in vases, baskets and crocks. "The rice was helo-lifted back to the village to be distributed among the people.

## **Friendship council**

“An air of cooperation was established at the very beginning,” said First Lieutenant Michael Donohoe, the Battalion S5. “Both sides had problems to solve and suggestions to offer.” 1LT Donohoe aptly expressed the mood of the first Friendship Council held in Hiep duc District.

Election of village and hamlet officials was held in October for the first time in four years. After receiving Government training in Vung Tau and Tam Ky, the officials returned to go to work for the district. The Friendship Council, composed of these newly elected officials and the Civil Affairs team from the 4th Bn., 31st Inf., was convened at Landing Zone Karen, the Regional and Popular Force outpost overlooking the entire village area.

“The people are very anxious to build a school in the district,” said LT Donohoe, “We explained how to go about doing it and how to requisition materials.” The council also discussed possible economic projects to be started by the village such as new crops and husbandry.

Now that the council has been established, mutual cooperation and exchange of ideas will be beneficial to both sides.

## Re-enlistments

### HHC:

1. DRISKELL, Mitchell – MACV 16 Team, SAIGON (CAREER)
2. STRANGE, William – Present Duty, Chu Lai - \$7531.00
3. BELL, James Present Duty, Chu Lai - \$5688.00
  4. McCarron, James - HHC 196th Bde, Hawk Hill
  - 5.

### A Co:

1. MOORE, William – AERO Scout Co, 123rd AVN, Chu Lai
- 2.

### B Co:

NONE

### C Co:

1. Wolf, William HHC, 1st Avn Bde, Long Binh
3. Blevins, Allen HHC, 196th Bde

### D Co:

1. Frias, Jesus – Co B, 23rd S&T Bn, Chu Lai
2. Zorn, Robert M. –Present Duty, Chu Lai

### E Co:

1. Howard, Marcus – Supply, 23rd S&T Bn, Chu Lai
2. Wright, Lamar – Supply, 23rd S&T Bn, Chu Lai
- 3.

### Objective Reenlistments Percentage Attained

4 10 250%

### Elig Reenlistments Percentage Attained

1 1 100%

## Questions (Answers on page 1)

- a. What do you call a metal coffee cup holder used in Asia Minor?
- b. Can you see both the big dipper and the Southern Cross [*constellations*] from AT990250 [*Historian Note: Every body must know this grid or have a map - Nui Lon Mountain to the east of LZ West*].
- c. When are you most regular?
- d. Why?
- e. What is the lowest form of human life?
- f. What word is TASC0 ?
- g. See question above

