



Raider Tales

Stories of Courage & Valor

The combat Marines of "E" Co. 2nd Bn, 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division

Volume 1, Issue 3

Winter 2023

Inside:

- **Purple Hearts**
Echo was awarded many..... 2
- **Decorations**
Bronze Star, Silver Star, Navy Cross?2
- **Father Gerlach and the Ambush**
Giving the last rites under fire 3
- **The Phantom of the Rice Paddies**
Operation Union 4
- **Combat Stories**
1st Person Accounts..... 6
- **Family News**
Seeking news about Echo families 6
- **Book Review**
W is for Warrior 7
- **Those Who Walked Point** 8
- **Dispatches From The Front**
The Sea Tiger 10

From the Raiders to You **Happy New Year**



Lt. Marshall Croy
Platoon Commander
2nd Platoon
Echo 2/1

Greetings to all Echo Raiders and your families. I am writing this between the December Holidays. Christmas Day has passed. New Years is upon us. Christmas decorations are still up at our house though most of our neighbors have removed theirs. The Winter Solstice has passed, and the hours of daylight are increasing ever so slowly.

Christmas Long Ago

It was 56 years ago that many of us shared Christmas together in Vietnam. That was, by far, the most unusual Christmas I have had. Yet it is one that I won't forget because of the people I was with. In this season I hope the things you value most have brought you joy and peace regardless of your external circumstances.



Echo Gathering

As you start planning 2023, please join us at the **Hampton Inn, Prescott Valley, AZ**, the week of **30 Apr – 5 May**.

See: [The Phantom of the Rice Paddies, page 4.](#)

Some of us will be there all week. Some plan to arrive Tuesday, 2 May and depart Friday, 5 May. To make reservations please call the **Hampton Inn** at **928-772-1800** and tell them you are with the Echo

Raiders Group.

The rates will be better than if you make your reservation online. I look forward to seeing you there.

Hope Springs Eternal

The change of the year brings opportunity and hope for the future. Some of you have had a great 2022. Some of you may still be rebuilding from the storms and other natural disasters of 2022. Some of you may still be digging out of more recent winter storms. Some of us are grieving a loss or setbacks and are learning that grief does not come with an expiration date printed on it. Regardless of our past, there is still hope. Gather your friends and loved ones close.

Stay in contact with people. Find someone to encourage you and perhaps even laugh at your jokes. Join us in **Prescott Valley** for the **Echo Raiders Gathering**. I look forward to seeing you there. And I wish you all a **Happy New Year**.

— **Marshall Croy**

Purple Hearts



Many were wounded while participating in the amazing exploits of Echo Co. If you received the Purple Heart and would like us to write up your story about what it was like to get hit, the circumstances involved, and the recovery period, let us know. We'll publish your story along with your photo in the Raider Tales newsletter.

tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com • (352) 999-1576

Decorations

Awards for heroism are deeply personal. Quite a few Echo Co. Raiders were decorated.

If you received the Bronze Star, Silver Star, or Navy Cross, and would like to share your story, please let us know. We'll publish your citation along with your story and photo in the Raider Tales newsletter.

tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com
(352) 999-1576



Sgt Terry Dunne
Platoon Sgt
India 3/1

It was a good hot day in 1968 Vietnam, around noon, when our 12-man squad patrol was ambushed by the North Vietnamese Army. It came from a couple of thatched roof huts on a tiny island in the rice paddies maybe 60-70 yards away. The burst of gunfire dropped two Marines. It kept coming and we fired back with all we had. No Corpsman was with us that day and I looked over my shoulder to check the two shot-up Marines.

India company's **Chaplain** was with them, **Father Gerlach**, a Jesuit priest. It looked like one Marine was dead and the other badly wounded. Father Gerlach knelt beside them, his green **Stole** of priestly authority around his neck, the Latin of the Christian Last Rites in the air.

Little dusty puffs from bullets nicking the ground appeared to the left and right of Father Gerlach. Then a machine gun burst stitched the ground in front of him. He seemed unaware.

From the NVA's point of view, Father Gerlach was an easy target. We Marines were hugging the ground, flat as possible, blasting away with our machine gun and rifles. Father Gerlach was behind us, kneeling, silhouetted against the sky. Another enemy machine

First Person Account

Father Gerlach and the Ambush

gun burst hit the ground inches from his kneeling figure. "He's gonna get it for sure," I thought, but Father Gerlach, lost in devotion, continued on with the Roman Catholic sacrament of **Extreme Unction**. He was lucky. No bullet hit him.

The enemy fire stopped, the ambush broken.



In the middle of a deadly fire fight with the North Vietnamese Army, Father Gerlach, India Co's Chaplain, administered the last rites to a dying Marine.

One Marine died, the other was lifted out by helicopter with serious wounds. We picked up our gear and moved out. Father Gerlach shouldered his **M1 Carbine** and continued on with us as if nothing had happened.

It was only luck that Father Gerlach wasn't cut to pieces by enemy bullets. But, I couldn't help but

wonder, was it something else?

1. Had divine intervention taken place. Was the Lord protecting Father Gerlach?
2. Why wasn't he afraid? Did Father Gerlach believe God was on his side?
3. Was he unhinged? Did he have a death wish?

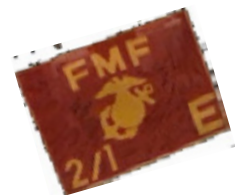
I was hoping to ask him those questions but, after that day, I never saw him again. I never knew his first name and over the years I tried to find him but all inquiries hit a dead end. Searching the web, I emailed Catholic parishes across the country that listed the name "Gerlach" as one of their priests. No replies.

Later I heard that Father Gerlach had left the priesthood. Did the same individual with the courage to do the Lord's work under fire give in to despair? Had Father Gerlach lost the faith?

Maybe, but that doesn't change what he did. Those of us there that day saw Father Gerlach's valiant actions impart dignity to a dying teenager, a young Marine rifleman giving his life for his country.

Father Gerlach was a brave man, greatly respected. To us combat Marines there that day, living and dead, he stands tall.

— Terrence Britton Dunne



First Person Account: Operation Union

The Phantom of the Rice Paddies



L/CPL Rick Lindsey
Battery B, 1st Bn,
11th Marines,
Artillery Forward
Observer (FO)
attached to Echo Co.

In April, 1967, as an artillery forward observer, I was transferred from **Echo Co.** and soon

we were on **Operation Union** southwest of **Danang**. It was the beginning phase of a regiment-sized attack on a suspected **Viet Cong** battalion headquarters.

The plan as briefed was that we would infiltrate by platoons by night, then link up with the rest of the battalion and assault near dawn the day after. During our movement, we could tell that the enemy was watching, moving parallel to us in the tree lines about 400 meters away. **Foxtrot Co.**, ahead of us, hit a large booby trap and it was a monster. It was a **155mm Howitzer** round suspended in the trees and it killed more than a dozen Marines and wounded several more. I won't describe what I saw.

Some time mid-morning the other two battalions were in their blocking positions on the far side of the objective, which was a long thin tree line on the

edge of a long open field of tall yellow grass. I was in the center of our company, which was in reserve,

right behind the two assaulting companies, so I had just broken into the open when the lead companies ran into the enemy defenses. The VC opened up with several machine guns, including one heavy machine gun, and we took casualties immediately. The leading companies recoiled and returned fire. It was obvious that it really was an enemy battalion, and they were staying put.

I lay down flat in the grass and tried to send an artillery fire mission, but the medevacs were

going on because of all the wounded and that stopped all artillery and mortar fire in our area until the evacuations were complete.

We



were pinned down and it looked like it was going to be really tough to cross that 300-400 meters of open ground to get to the VC when it was our turn to attack.

While I was lying there, a single U.S.

Marine F-4 Phantom approached and crossed over me, very low and heading straight for the enemy line. Echo's **Forward Air Controller (FAC)**

must've had him under control because the F-4 made his pass and then came back once more, then passed directly over me again to make his bombing run.

We were on one edge of a small triangle bordered by three Marine battalions, separated by only a few hundred meters, so the Phantom had to drop whatever he had with extraordinary precision or he would kill some of us. He was flying very low and slow, so slow that the plane was making that distinctive moaning sound Phantoms usually made when they were slowing for landing.

Then I saw a whole, solid wall of muzzle flashes coming from the enemy tree line and the enemy was standing up, at least a hundred of them, pouring fire at the oncoming Phantom.

Without flinching, the pilot kept coming and dropped four **Snakeye 500 pound bombs** directly on the enemy position.

The Snakeye had a tail fin assembly that popped open upon release to form a broad cross at the rear of the bomb, slowing it drastically to allow the bombing aircraft to escape the blast.

Huge clouds of dirt, debris, rooftops, and trees soared high in the air after the stunning concussions of

the bombs faded. All the enemy fire ceased and we raced up and forward to get them. When we got into their position, we discovered that the VC had built concrete and sandbag bunkers, plus barbed wire and mines, but

the four bombs killed many of them and those

that escaped ran into our two blocking battalions. We could hear the gunfire from that direction as what was left of the VC were torn to pieces.

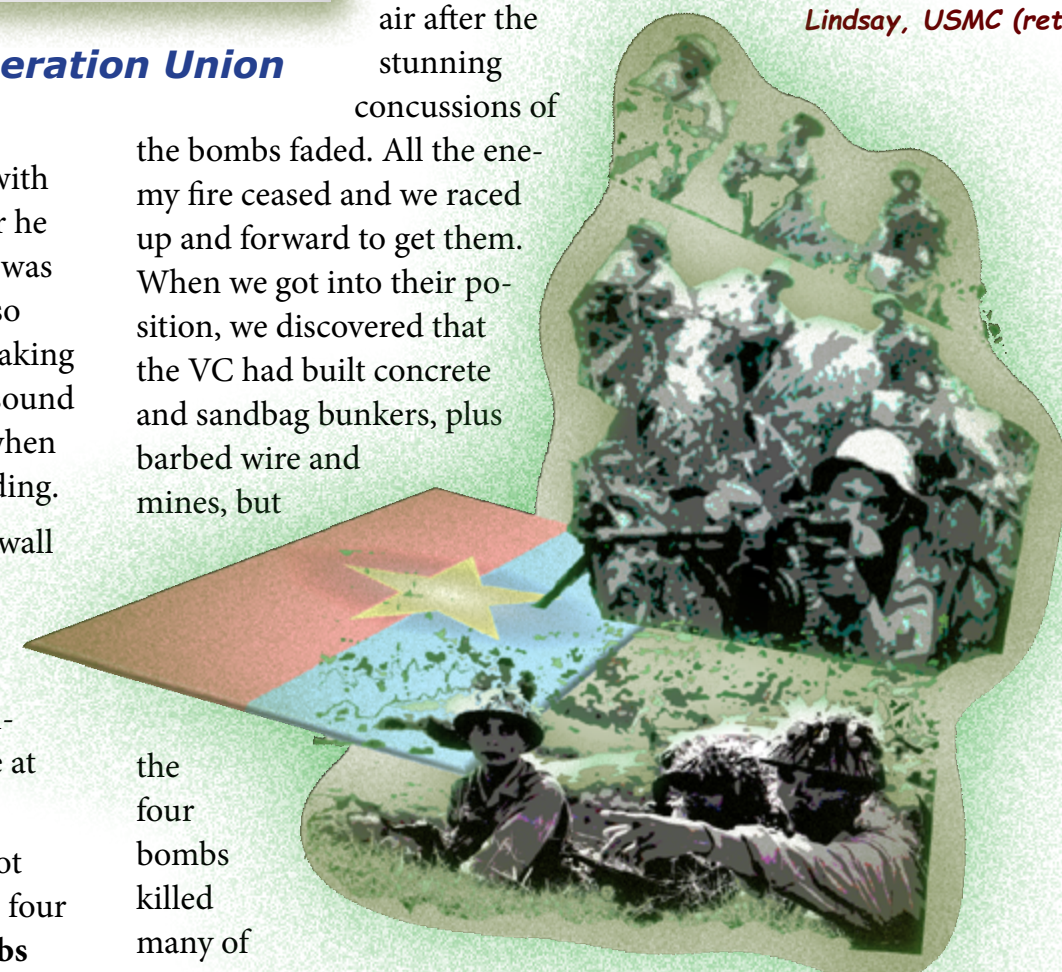
I saw that Phantom turning towards Danang. There was smoke trailing behind him but with Phantoms always smoking it was hard to tell if he had been badly hit or not.

I would love to find out who the pilot was and buy him a case of whatever he wanted to drink.

— Lt. Colonel Rick Lindsay, USMC (ret)



Operation Union



1st Person Accounts

Combat Stories

Send in your combat stories. Email them, text them, dictate them. Remembering the exploits of Echo Co — the hair-raising close calls, the brushes with death, the ass-kicking we gave the Viet Cong and NVA — it would be a shame not to record for posterity the things we saw as young men in Vietnam.

All combat stories are welcome. First person accounts of fire fights and booby traps make them come alive. Ambush descriptions, ours and theirs, have great value. Multiple first person accounts shine light on long ago complex events.

Send them in. We'll publish them in **Raider Tales** for the Echo membership to view, discuss, and contribute to. Email/text combat stories to: tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com • (352) 999-1576

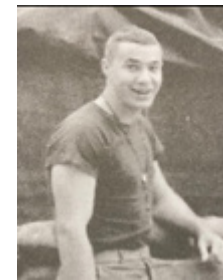


Member News

Seeking Family News

The most important goal of the **Raider Tales** newsletter is to keep track of Echo Co. members and their families. Vacations, wedding anniversaries, family milestones, grandchildren — these are the things we want to hear about.

Send or text your photos to: tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com • (352) 999-1576



Sgt. Ivan Strope
Rifle Squad Leader
Echo 2/1

Book Review

W is for Warrior

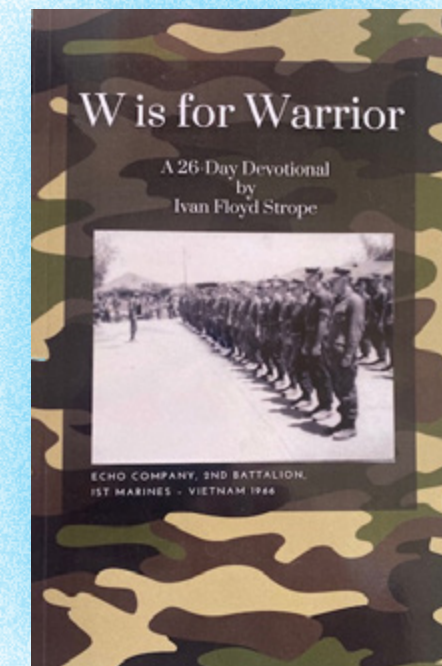
Ivan "Bud" Strope was pretty good with a gun and a knife when he was an 18-year-old

rifle squad leader with Echo 2/1. He's even better at seeking the Lord's help to sort out the moral consequences of the deadly combat in which he engaged as a young man.

When Bud came home, he suffered from the enormity of all that he'd seen and done. He didn't realize it but, like so many, he had all the symptoms of PTSD. In his case, he was able to resolve the suffering with—his words—"a **new life in Christ.**" That's what **W is for Warrior** is about: forgiveness and redemption through Christ, backed up with liberal quotations from the Bible.

For example, when Bud describes how he was brushing away the dirt to disarm a VC booby trap — a Marine had stepped on it and was about to trip the trip wire when Bud slowly backed the Marine's foot out — he pairs the booby trap description with a quote from the New Testament's **Colossians**: "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son he loves, in whom we have redemption..."

With PTSD, if you have it, or have had it, or if you have conflict between what it meant to be a Marine and the perception of a morally correct life, you'll find this book helpful. Bud resolved PTSD in his own way, through his closeness to God.



"God has not changed. He still hates war and he still loves warriors"

The book finds its strength in countering the hopelessness and sense of futility so common to PTSD. Bud punches PTSD in the nose with **2 Corinthians**: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things have passed away: Behold all things have become new" and **Ephesians**: "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ forgave you."

Bud questions the obscurity of war but refreshes the reader with his stand on war's nobility. He quotes General Robert E. Lee, "It is good that war is so terrible lest we should grow to love it" but then states, "There can be no wars without warriors" and follows up with "...he must learn to be a warrior: He must conquer fear". He finishes this treatise against fear with **2 Timothy**: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Anyone who has served their country in combat will enjoy this book. Like Christianity, it redeems.

— Terry Dunne

Bud Strope

Ivan "Bud" Strope served with the 1st Marine Division in I Corps, South Vietnam, 1966-1967. He is on the board of directors for **Camp Centurion**, which provides housing for veterans, and is **Pastor of Veteran's Ministry** at **Journey Fellowship** in **Wylie, SC**. He is the author of "**W is for Warrior**," a 26-day devotional (one day for each letter of the alphabet) that draws on his experiences in Vietnam and how the Lord used those experiences later in his life to lead him to "my new life in Him."

Bud says, "I hope you receive as much from reading it as I did from writing it."

First Person Account

Those Who Walked Point



Lt. Lee Suydam
Platoon Commander
3rd Platoon
Echo 2/1

Platoon, Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines as a new, green, 2nd Lieutenant, I quickly became aware of these two “Indian Fighters,” as we liked to call them. They were legends among their fellow Marines when I arrived in 1967.

Everywhere we went in the Phung Nu area south of Danang, these two were on point. They wanted to walk point. Knobby once explained to me that walking point helped alleviate the monotony of patrol.

Operation Medina

Operation Medina was a battalion-sized search and destroy mission in the Hai Lang Forest. There was a lot of fighting during Medina, most of which Echo was not involved in. I’m told that Hotel Company was ambushed badly as the operation was coming to a close and that many casualties were taken. The place was a jungle.

We usually worked with 1:25000 Photo-Picto maps with contour lines every 10 meters. With such maps, you could easily identify your spot on the ground using roads, tree lines, elevation, rivers, etc. These maps were very accurate, and you could call in artillery fire with con-

Let me tell you about Cpl. Tilo Oesterreich and LCpl. Dennis (Knobby) Knoblock. When I took over the 3rd

Platoon, Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines as a new, green, 2nd Lieutenant, I quickly became aware of these two “Indian Fighters,” as we liked to call them. They were legends among their fellow Marines when I arrived in 1967. The map was solid green. The only thing we had to go on was the contour lines, which were too far apart to be able to read the map with the limited visibility in the jungle. As a consequence, we stayed lost.

Once, the Battalion Commander called in helicopters and fired starburst clusters through the canopy so that we could be located by air.

Operation Medina lasted a week or more. As usual, Echo was in the lead with my platoon, 3rd platoon, on point with our two natural-born Indian Fighters, Cpl. Tilo Oesterreich and LCpl. Dennis Knoblock, in the lead.

NVA Hospital

We came upon a stream. We all got cautious. Suddenly, there was machine gun fire and return fire. I ran forward with others to find that Tilo and Knobby had stumbled onto an

NVA hospital complex guarded by a single rear guard with a machine gun. Knobby took the machine gun out in a few short minutes. These empty hospitals were about 60 feet long, open air buildings with grass roofs and wooden floors. There were other living quarters and supply buildings. Echo Company followed us into this clearing and long after we left, we could hear the crackle as the flames consumed this jungle facility.



Two 21-year-old youngsters, my hero, Dennis “Knobby,” Knoblock (L) and me, Lee Suydam. We’ve seen each other twice in the last 50 years but we keep in touch.

Stuck In The Jungle

We were in the jungle a long time. We were hungry. We had taken a sleeve of rice from the hospital complex. It was like a pant leg, filled with rice, tied off at each

end with a rope that could be slung over the neck and shoulder. The rice was crude, unprocessed nodules of grain. If you know Uncle Ben’s, you wouldn’t recognize this material as rice. With a little C-4 or a heat tab, you could boil up a small handful which gave quite a satisfying result.

Hundreds of NVA

Later, we came upon another clearing. The canopy was whole,

but the underbrush was cut out. This place looked like a Boy Scout campground. There were worn places on the ground where hundreds of men had recently slept. We moved cautiously but rapidly. I didn’t want to be caught in the middle of the clearing and I wanted to get to the other side quickly. I was about 3/4 of the way across when a machine gun barked to my left. I ran left, toward a little stream and a trail that went away from the clearing, backward and to the left about 45 degrees. The trail intersected with another trail that left the clearing at 90 degrees to the left. So, there was a little triangle of brush between the men on the short trail and the clearing where the main body was.

NVA Machine Gun

When I got to the men, there were three on the short trail and one dead, Cpl. Terry Fenenga, in the intersection of the two trails. More machine-gun fire. We mistakenly thought the fire was coming from the left. Then, a grenade sound, like a rock falling through the trees. Being close enough to throw grenades was not good news particularly when we did not know where the enemy was. The grenade landed in the triangle of brush not far from us. I was sitting down almost should-

er-to-shoulder with the others facing the grenade. I tried to lean backward in the brush, but it was not forgiving. So, I pulled my helmet over my face before the grenade went off. We were sprayed with shrapnel. A nickel-sized piece of shrapnel hit me on my third rib. My flak jacket was open. It cut a hole in my shirt and left a bloody spot but did not penetrate. I felt that we were all dead men if we didn’t find that machine gunner quickly.

“I felt that we were all dead men if we didn’t find that machine gunner quickly”



Tilo Rudolph Oesterreich
Echo 2/1, KIA 7 April 1968
Panel 48E Row 45

Knobby Takes Out the NVA Gun

Meanwhile, Tilo was in the main clearing. He had figured out that the machine gunner was in a hole in the triangle of brush. Like Indian fighters, Tilo moved his fire team into the brushy triangle on their bellies. Since the bad guy was between the main body and us, none of us could have fired without hitting friendlies.

Knobby thought he saw something like a head coming up out of a spider hole and he fired, dispatching the NVA soldier and silencing his machine gun. We were saved. I

was saved. It was the second machine gun captured by Knobby on Operation Medina. I cannot heap enough praise on these two heroes.

Summing Up

Every man of ours was a comrade whether he was personally known as a friend or just another brother in uniform. When a brother fell, it was a time for remorse. If the brother was a dear friend, all the more reason for anguish and bereavement.

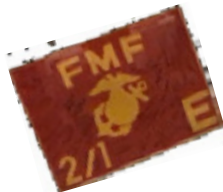
But I tell you, dear reader, there were no losses more bitterly suffered than the loss of those dear friends and comrades that fell to friendly fire, as Tilo did. All too frequently, and because of the lethal nature of all tools in combat, men died from the killing power of our own weapons misdirected by accident or used too close to our forces.

All the Marines I was privileged to serve with stand tall in my memory.

Semper Fidelis.
Always a Marine
— Lee Suydam

About Tilo

Tilo and his family were refugees from East Germany. Tilo was later killed in action by friendly mortar fire on April 7, 1968. Four shells came in on top of Tilo’s fire team. Three died instantly including Tilo. The others that died with Tilo were LCpl John Mount of Vineland, NJ, and PFC Thomas Nash of Atlanta, GA.



First Person Account

Dispatches From The Front



Sgt. Steve Berntson
Sea Tiger Reporter,
Embedded w/Echo 2/1

The Sea Tiger was the III Marine Amphibious Force's weekly newspaper that covered the Marine units in Vietnam's I Corps area. Sgt. Steve Berntson was assigned to the 1st MarDiv Informational Services Office (ISO) but spent most of the time out in the field with the 1st & 5th Marine regiments. He was embedded (long before the term was developed) with 2nd

Bn/1st Marines and Echo 2/1 was his favorite company to go out with because Captain Pratt, the commanding officer, "let me go where I wanted and sent Gunny Weathers looking for me when something was coming

down," he said The majority of his Sea Tiger 2/1 stories were about the exploits of Echo Co. The first issue was published on 10 November 1965 and the last issue on 14 April 1971.

Marines vs. NVA—Indian Style

QUANG TRI — Four Marines applied Indian Style methods in stalking an enemy, and ended up killing one North Vietnamese Army soldier and capturing his Chinese communist (Chi-com) assault machine gun. The Marines were from 2nd Bn., First Marine Regiment, First Marine Division and were participating on Operation Mardao, a nine day operation in the mountainous jungles 15 miles south of Quang Tri city. It began when "E" Co. was cutting its way down into one of the many mountain ravines and came upon a large clearing being used by the enemy as a patrol base camp. Apparently the enemy had been in the area that morning for the Marines found freshly-dug fighting positions and pieces of dry paper. The Marines didn't have long to wait to verify their estimates. A machine gun opened up from within the nearby dense jungle brush. The initial burst of enemy fire wounded three Marines and another Marine was wounded by a grenade the NVA threw. While the Marines were mo-

mentarily pinned down by the enemy gun, squad leader Cpl. Tilo Oesterreich (Philadelphia, Pa.), and LCpls. Dennis K. Knobloc (Peoria, Ill.), Donald F. Kita (Flint, Mich.) and Bruce J. Sisney (Mukkeytown, Ill.), began crawling Indian Style into the brush to seek out the enemy's position. "It was pretty thick going in there and we were all trying to keep quiet," said Knobloc, the point man of the "brush patrol." "When he opened up again on the Marines, I got his general direction and started over that way," Knobloc said. "Then I saw a head of black hair and a set of eyeballs peering over the nearby river bank and I let him have it with my M-16." The NVA was dead when the Marines arrived at the position, but he was clutching an armed Chi-com grenade. "The grenade had about one eighth of an inch left of the detonating cord before it would explode. The slightest movement of the body probably would have set it off and we all would have gotten it," said Kita. Kita, who had previously received demolitions training, gently spread the dead enemy's fingers apart to remove and disarm the live grenade.

"It was pretty tense there for a moment, I must admit," concluded Kita. The Marines also captured the Chi-Com Machinegun complete with 300 rounds of ammunition.



First Marines Put Viet Congs' Mine Factory Out of Business

By: Cpl. Steve Berntson
DA NANG—"I just couldn't believe it—these people had been in business for a long time turning out effective mines and booby traps," said 2ndLt. Robert Barnard (Kannapolis, N.C.). He was viewing a Viet Cong mine factory discovered Aug. 22 by "E" Co., 2nd Bn., First Marines, while on a two-day search and destroy mission 15 miles south of Da Nang.

The Marines had moved under the cover of darkness into the village of Lanh Dong (3) and in the morning Sgt. John L. "Spanky" Baldwin (Cuba, N.Y.), squad leader in the 2nd Pl., began searching the area where his unit had dug in. "I found an M-1 carbine torn down, and in the process of being made into a pistol, laying in a bucket," he said. "Myself and the Army of Republic of Vietnam interpreter, began questioning the woman living in a hut," said Baldwin. She started uncovering and digging up all kinds of grenades, powder, explosives, tools and other items used for the mines and booby traps. "They had every kind of tool from tin snips to files, many of the tools had been damaged and they had repaired them," recalled Baldwin. "But the strangest thing I found was what I thought were rocks."

"They looked like rocks and were a grayish color, but when I used two of them to hold up my can of chow after lighting a heat tab, the 'rocks' started burning." Engineers later identified them as explosives. After a complete search of the hut and the surrounding area, the Marines found 13 M-29 grenades, three M-79 grenade rounds, one 150mm round, 19 Chinese communist grenades, two Z-19 French mines, five box-type mines with 25-30 pounds of explosives in each, 17 anti-personnel mines made out of soda

and Cration cans and a block of TNT manufactured in North Vietnam. They also uncovered an anvil, forge, pieces of tubing, tin, small arms rounds, and medical supplies. Barnard and his men from "A" Co., 1st Engineer Bn., destroyed the gear. Cpl. James A. Wiggin, 21 (Laconia, N.H.), has spent 21 months in Vietnam with the engineers and was astounded by the find. "I have never run across a set up like this before," said Wiggin. "They had been here for quite some time. Most of their stuff was homemade mines and booby traps, but they must have been getting supplies from the North Vietnamese." "They had stacks of tin and battle field salvage that they had been picking up plus lots of explosives that they had taken out of dud rounds," he said.

To Marine Who Gave His Life School is Memorial

By: Cpl. S. L. Berntson
DA NANG — Education has returned once again to the hamlet of Viem Tay (4), located 13 miles south of Da Nang in the form of a new school dedicated to the memory of a Marine officer.

The last classes had been conducted eight months ago in two grass thatched-roof huts. The students had to mostly sit on the earthen floor. Today the 145 pupils have handmade benches and desks in a two-room concrete school house. It was built by members of the 4th Bn., 51st Regiment, Army of the Republic of Vietnam soldiers stationed near Viem Tay with help from villagers and supervision of Marines from 2nd Bn., First Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division. The school was dedicated August 28.

A commemorative plaque was placed on a classroom wall written in Vietnamese and English reading: "2ndLt. Harley E. Spivey . . . 2nd Bn., 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division. Killed in action May 21, 1967, for the freedom of South Vietnam. This school is dedicated in memory of a brave Freedom fighting Marine."

"Pete" Spivey (Samson, Alabama) had served as a platoon commander for "G" Co., 2nd Bn. He knew many of the ARVN troops and the people of Viem Tay. Cpt. Bob A. Johnson (Bruce-

ville, Texas), attached to the battalion Civic Action office headed the building project. Prior to entering the Marine Corps, Johnson was a part-time building contractor. "These people were absolutely great workers," said Johnson. "They were dedicated in their work to build the school. All the Marines had to do was supervise. The villagers and the soldiers of the 4/51st did the work." Plans for the school project began in February. All the building supplies were supplied by the Government of South Vietnam. The ARVN 1st Bn., 51st Regiment aided in starting the project. Their replacements, the 4/51st, were instrumental in the building of the school. The construction began in May and the school was completed in August. Two ARVN sergeants from the 4/51st former school teachers, serve as teachers for the 145 students. There are four classes in the new school. However, due to the large numbers of children attending, two classes are conducted in the morning and two in the afternoon. Present for the dedication ceremonies were the Viem Tay hamlet chief; village officials; the commanding officer of the 4/51st ARVN's, the commanding officer of 2nd Bn., First Marine Regiment, LtCol. Archie Van Winkle, with his staff; and soldiers and Marines of both units.

SEA TIGER

Vol. II, No. 43 III Marine Amphibious Force, Vietnam November 30, 1966

500 Marines pay homage to comrades

DONG HA—Five hundred Marines paid homage to comrades killed in action during services here. The Memorial Service, held on the 191st anniversary of the Marine Corps, was in memory of all fallen Marines, and especially those killed by enemy action in Operations Hastings and Prairie near the Demilitarized Zone. Lieutenant Commander F. E. Sims, Fourth Regiment Chaplain, delivered the invocation and read the scripture selections. The 3rd Marine Division (forward) chaplain, Cmdr. J. A. Powell, gave the prayers of consolation and the prayers of committal. The memorial read: "Each time Marines look at their long and distinguished history, we must remember the many fallen Marines whose lives brought the Marine Corps its reputation and status as the preserver of freedom and justice of man. May we never forget their sacrifice." The Marines were called to attention and rendered a salute while a firing squad fired a volley in tribute to their fallen comrades.



Marines of "A" Company, 1st Bn., 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, interrogate a Viet Cong suspect during a search and clear operation north of Chu Lai. The Marines had received sniper fire from the village. (Photo by LCpl. Ronald Curry)

CAC unit trap, kill 25 VC

CHU LAI — A platoon from a recon unit, Seventh Marine Regiment, trapped and killed 25 Viet Cong yesterday in the hamlet of Phung Thuan (1), about 13 miles southwest of Chu Lai. The Marines trapped the VC on a peninsula on the coast of the China Sea and pushed the enemy towards the water. The fire fight developed when the Marines received small arms fire from a VC force dressed in black pajamas, green, and brown uniforms. The Marines returned the fire and set the trap to keep the VC from escaping. Machine gunfire and air strikes were called on the site and accounted for 13 dead VC. The other 12 enemy KIA were killed by ground forces. A Vietnamese civilian, wounded in the fire fight, was evacuated to the battalion aid station. The combined action unit observed an estimated 100 VC in the area prior to the arrival of reinforcements from the 1st, 5th Marine Regiment, 20th Marines and the 8th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division and their weapons. Five sub-machine guns, 1 automatic weapons and 2 carbines were captured. CWO Norbert A. Zimmerman, (Continued On Back Page)

Sea Knight copter Plays dual role; fight, rescue

By: Cpl. Jim Payator
DA NANG—CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 164 filled with troops played a dual role recently. They rescued a downed UH1E (Huey) helicopter and halted a Viet Cong attack against an area of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) artillery outpost at the same time. The Huey, from Marine Observation Squadron 3, was downed by ground fire near the ARVN position at Ban An shortly before dark the day before the Sea Knights made their rescue. Darkness and inclement weather made it impossible to lift the Huey out. Later that night the Viet Cong made a determined assault against the ARVN artillery unit on a hill above the Huey. The fighting was heavy from 8 p.m. to midnight, and moderate then went down. A 4-year-old Marine photographer, Sergeant Ronald C. Hathaway who was with the Vietnamese troops, reported that the guerrillas got to within 50 yards of the outpost, but accurate rifle and mortar fire held them off. F-4 Phantom jets came at dusk and blasted the Viet Cong stronghold at the bottom of the hill.

'Prairie' frees 1,000 villagers from two years of oppression

By: 2d Lt. Mike Pitts
DONG HA—The village of Mai Loc, nestled between rugged mountains of the northern part of the Republic of Vietnam, ten miles from the demilitarized zone. For years its inhabitants had lived a relatively peaceful life, cultivating their rice in the rich farmlands of the Cua Valley. Then the Viet Cong came. And with them came political indoctrination lectures, mass meetings and enforced labor. For the 1,000 villagers it meant two years of oppression. It meant that the rice which they had grown for centuries would not be their own, but they were forced to pay a "rice tax" which took all but a meager amount. Operation Prairie changed all that. The Marines set up security around the village, and doctors and carpenters began treating the sick and injured. It was the first (Continued On Back Page)

Liberty Road sniping halted by 1stMarDiv

By: Cpl. A. H. Mitchell
DA NANG—Units of the 9th Marine Regiment concluded a search and sweep operation eight miles southwest of here Nov. 10 after sweeping some 29 square kilometers of flooded rice land. The operation was prompted by Viet Cong harassment of traffic along the vital supply route known as "Liberty Road" and by VC sniping at nearby Marine positions. Little contact was made with the VC in the first three days as Marines passed warily through mined and suspected mined areas, heavy undergrowth and flooded rice land. The last two days and nights were marked by sporadic contact and sniping as the Viet Cong were compressed into a two square kilometer area flanked by rivers and Marines. The elusive Viet Cong, unwilling either to be trapped or to make a stand, slipped out of the rice under cover of darkness. All operations ended the Marines had accounted for five Viet Cong confirmed dead, six captured, and four weapons captured.



Move it out
Marines of "A" Co., 1/5, carry captured Viet Cong rice to a helicopter during a search and clear operation north of Chu Lai. Rice was later distributed to Vietnamese villagers. (Photo by LCpl. Ronald Curry)

Refreshing Shower Disrupted By Incoming Enemy Rounds

By Sgt. Steve Berntson
DA NANG—This is the true story of three Marines who "barely" escaped an enemy barrage. The afternoon of Feb. 1 seemed like a good time to start another luxury — a refreshing shower. For four days the enemy had been dropping in a few artillery rounds only in the early morning and late evening. Three Leathernecks of an element of the First Marine Regiment headed for the shower stall near the end of the compound. "I had just finished taking my shower and was drying off," recalled 2nd Lt. Lee Suydam (Montgomery, Ala.), a company commander. "I had just said to the other two with me, 'Wouldn't it be something if they dropped in a couple of rounds now?'"

"In fact," he continued, "we were thinking up newspaper headlines such as Marines Seen Running Bare in Attack or Assault Led By Marines in the

Nude when we heard that sickening, screaming whistle of incoming." Suydam and his companions, Sgt. Peter G. Walsh (Hamilton, Ontario), and Cpl. John Mac Donnell (East Paterson, N.J.), wasted no time taking cover behind a big rock as the first rounds came in. "Just for a second we debated whether or not to put on our clothes and then run or just put on our helmets and flak jackets," said Walsh. "Then the second rounds hit and the decision was unanimous. It was helmets and flak jackets and run like blazes."

Suydam and Mac Donnell donned their armor and took off for a bunker while Walsh ran for shelter in another direction. "I was running like the devil for the bunker," said Walsh, "hopping and skipping over the rocks on my bare feet, when I heard the voices of Marines cheering me on. I looked and saw a group of guys standing in the doorway of the bunker trying to stop! Don't stop! Don't stop! You've almost made it!"

Come on, don't worry about your feet—keep running!" Rushing into the bunker, Walsh was greeted by a round of applause and congratulations from the cheering section. "I was standing there naked as a jaybird," he recalled. Meanwhile, Suydam and Mac Donnell had arrived at a bunker. It was the first one in their path of flight and they jumped in with enemy rounds exploding. The men in the bunker had mixed expressions of shock and amusement as they saw their commanding officer arrive dressed in only his helmet and flak jacket. "They didn't seem to have any questions," said Suydam, "and I guess there wasn't much use for an explanation at the moment." Mac Donnell took the whole thing pretty well, but admitted, "Despite the rounds and all, the hardest part of the whole episode as far as I was concerned was standing in the bunker trying to hide behind a bar of soap."