

TWENTY

Wounded Soldier Loses

By JOSEPH GALLOWAY

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"Look at them," Moore said again. "They're great and the American people ought to know it."

War "Accident"

It was shortly after 8:30 a.m. Monday when one of those terrible accidents of war happened.

I was sitting in the command bunker, a mound of dirt screening us from Communist snipers, looking at the wounded in the aid station just a few yards away.

Suddenly, I felt a searing heat on my face.

An American fighter-bomber had misjudged the Communist positions, and dropped a load of napalm. The flaming jellied gasoline, impossible to shake or scrape off once it hits the skin, splashed along the ground in a huge dragon's tail of fire less than 25 yards away.

Screams penetrated the roar of the flames. Two Americans stumbled out of the inferno. Their hair burned off in an

instant. Their clothes were incinerated.

"Good God!" Moore cried. Another plane was making a run over the same area. The colonel grabbed a radio.

"You're dropping napalm on us!" he shouted. "Stop those damn planes."

At almost the last second, the second plane pulled up and away, its napalm tanks still hanging from the wing.

It was an hour before a medical helicopter could get into the area and tend to the two burned men. One GI was a huge mass of blisters, the other not quite so bad. Somehow his legs had escaped the flames. But he had breathed fire into his lungs and he wheezed for air.

A medic asked me to help get the men into the helicopter when it arrived. There were no litters. Tenderly, we picked the soldiers up. I held a leg of the most seriously burned man. I wasn't tender enough. A big patch of burned skin came off in my hand.

VC Battalions

Chu Pong Mountain rises 2,500 feet from the valley below. From the top, you could almost lob a mortar shell into Cambodia. The mountain slopes are heavily jungled. And they hid at least two battalions of North Vietnamese Army regu-

Wounded Soldier Loses Half His Platoon In Bitter Chu Pong Fray

By JOSEPH GALLOWAY

Chu Pong Mountain, South Viet Nam (UPI)—The soldier's eyes were red from loss of sleep, and maybe a bit from crying too, now that it was over.

A three-day growth of beard stubbled his cheeks. But was hard to see because of the dirt. He was hurt, in terrible pain, but you'd never know it. Slivers of shrapnel had ripped his chest and speared his leg.

He sat on the landing zone below the Chu Pong mountain where more Americans had died than ever before in a battle against Communists in the war over Viet Nam. He had gone through hell—three days of it—and was still a bit dazed, more from lack of sleep than his wounds, though. When I walked up to him, he spoke. But not to me in particular, nor to the other guys sitting around sipping the first hot cup of coffee they had had since the fight began.

Loses Friend

"I took care of 14 of 'em myself," he said. "They were tough little bastards. You had to shoot them to pieces before they quit coming . . . just rip them apart."

I squatted on my heels waiting for him to say more. But he didn't. I was still waiting when a medic came and gently led him to a Medivac helicopter. Somebody told me he had lost half of his platoon, including a friend he had served with for more than eight years. "What is his name?" I asked.

"It's not important," the sergeant slouching nearby said. "He's just one of us and he did a damn good job."

Everyone did a damn good job. And nobody knew it better than Gen. Richard A. Knowles, task force commander and deputy commander of the 1st Air Cavalry.

"These men were just great," he told me. "They were absolutely tremendous. I've never seen a better job anywhere, anytime."

Back From Battle

Monday another American soldier walked out of the jungle into the valley of death. Bullets whizzed over his head and kicked up dirt at his feet.

"Get down, you fool!" we shouted.

The GI kept walking. He carried no weapon. He walked straight and tall.

A mortar shell exploded nearby. He didn't waver. Shrapnel chopped off branches above my head. But the American out there in the open came on until he was within a few feet of the battalion command bunker. He looked funny, dazed.

Then we knew. He was shell shocked. He paused for a moment and looked around. He



THE PRICE OF HOLDING LINE — Poncho-covered bodies of American soldiers give mute evidence of what it has cost the 1st Cavalry Division to hold our position in the Ia Drang valley during fierce battle that has been raging since Sunday. Units of the division have been battling to hold its lines against what is estimated to be a regiment of North Vietnamese soldiers. Bodies of the slain soldiers were carried to this clearing with their gear to await evacuation by helicopter.

—AP Wirephoto

recognized the aid station set up under the trees and walked toward it.

Just as the soldier reached the station, he slumped to his knees, then pitched forward on his face. That is when we saw his back for the first time.

It wasn't pretty. It had been blown open by a Communist mortar.

Medics were unable to reach the soldier because of the almost solid wall of Communist bullets and jagged steel fragments coming from the jungle. So he walked out. The bullets and mortars did not bother him anymore. He had had his.

Veterans Cried

The men of the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry fought like heroes. They died the same way. Some took their wounds without a whimper. Seasoned veterans cried.

Col. Hal Moore of Bardonia, Ky., the commanding officer of the 7th Battalion, 1st Cavalry, came over to me, tears streaming down his face. His men were catching hell from the slopes of this mountain range less than five miles from the Cambodian border.

"I'm kind of emotional about this, so excuse me," Moore said to me. "But I want you to tell the American people that these men are fighters."

"Look at them."

Moore pointed to a Negro soldier lying in the shade of a tree. A Communist bullet had torn a huge hole in his stomach. The soldier had his hands over the wound. You could see him bite his lip. He was in terrific pain, but he made no whimper as he waited for a medical helicopter.

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size of a football field at the base of the mountain on the valley floor.

One platoon got about 300 yards up the mountain before the Communists opened up. They hit the platoon from behind, cut it off and fired on the main cavalry force from three sides with small arms, heavy machineguns and mortars.

Time and again, the cavalrymen tried to move in and help the platoon pull back. It was futile. The fire was too heavy. The platoon spent the night on the mountainside. Their losses were heavy, but their damage to the Communists was said to be even heavier.

"We got 70 Communist bodies stacked up in front of our positions," the platoon leader radioed back Monday.

Men Dying

It was shortly before noon Sunday when the cavalrymen swept down in the area about 12 miles west of Pleiku. Ever since the nine-day battle around the Special Forces camp at Plei Me, the cavalrymen have been sweeping the jungles and running into sporadic contact with hard-core Communist units.

Brig. Gen. Richard Knowles, deputy commander of the air cavalry division, offered me a ride in his helicopter.

We circled over the battleground. Air strikes went in below us. An American A1E Skyraider was hit on a low-level bombing run, and the pilot had no chance to bail out. The plane crashed and exploded in a cluster of trees.

Men were dying down there, but they were doing their job. "This is good," Knowles said.

"This is what we came for. We've got a U.S. battalion well-armed and well-equipped down there."

Many Dead . . .

I got my chance to join the men on the ground about 8 p.m. I went in with a helicopter loaded with supplies and ammunition.

We were level with the middle of the mountain and in the darkness we could see the muzzle flash of rifles and machineguns spitting bullets at us. I said a prayer.

Sgt. Maj. Basil Plumley of Columbus, Ga., met us at the landing zone, and led me back to Col. Moore's command bunker.

"Watch your step," Plumley said. "There's dead people all over here."

They were dead Americans, many wrapped in ponchos.

At daybreak Monday, medical helicopters began landing and taking off again with the wounded. A detail was assigned the job of collecting weapons and ammunition from the wounded before they were evacuated.

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OPEN COMPETITIVE CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION FOR THE POSITION OF FIRE FIGHTER, Fire Department City of Jamestown, New York
SEVERAL VACANCIES EXIST
EXAMINATION DATE: January 22, 1966
LAST FILING DATE: December 21, 1965

Candidates must have been legal residents of Chautauque County for at least 4 months immediately preceding the examination date. Preference in appointment may be given to successful candidates who have been legal residents of the City of Jamestown in which appointment is to be made for at least 4 months immediately preceding the date of the written test.

Application forms and descriptive information regarding the position may be obtained in the office of the Civil Service Commission, City Hall, Jamestown, New York.

JAMESTOWN CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION