

## 1968 News Aug

### IVY LEAF

11 Aug 68 Ivy Leaf

#### *3rd Brigade Moves Again*

OASIS — The trucks lined up, all bulging over with chairs, tents, dogs, duffle bags and a thousand other things a brigade headquarters company needs. The 3rd Brigade was moving for the fifth time in six months.

They set for about an hour and then without warning began to move slowly.

Smoke poured out of the vehicles.

This time the brigade was going to the Oasis near Pleiku.

Now Kontum was just another one of those places where you had been, just another place to talk about how good or bad it had been there.

The convoy meandered along the 80 some miles of Highway 14 for about three hours before it reached the Oasis.

The men of the 3rd Brigade are used to moving and as some say, "It's no big thing."

The 3rd Brigade has had to take over the area of operation (AO) of the 2nd Brigade while maintaining its own AO at Kontum. Some Infantry elements of the brigade were left in Kontum while others moved to the Oasis.

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#### *Chaplain Haggin Takes Leave Of 'Sons' At Forward Bases*

*By PFC Tom Hurley*

KONTUM — The helicopter swooped down from the low-hanging clouds and the gray haired passenger inside waved to the men atop the bunkers below. Chaplain (Major) Melvin V. Haggin of Carpinteria, Calif., was saying goodbye to his men for the last time.

Chaplain Haggin had served as the 3rd Brigade Chaplain for the past year. It has not been an easy 12 months.

In keeping with his belief that a chaplain's main obligation is to the men in the field, Chaplain Haggin spent five days and nights a week with the 3rd Brigade's Infantry battalions.

He said he had nothing but respect and admiration for the American fighting men in Vietnam.

The infantrymen were as glad to see Chaplain Haggin as he was them. Each of the companies in the 3rd Brigade responded with a near 100 per cent Catholic turnout at his masses. He averaged 20 - 25 masses a week.

'Soldiers are the most God-hungry people I know,' said Chaplain Haggin. "There is a tremendous void in their lives created by the loss of family and home for a year. This is where I come in. It is up to me to show my men that God gives a damn for them because their Chaplain does."

"In the richest sense of the word 'pure', I believe the American soldier is the purest individual on earth, in the sense Christ spoke of in the Beatitudes. He has no rivalries, jealousies, or bitterness. The man in the field does have an absolute brotherhood that includes all those capable of accepting brotherhood," he continued.

Any discussion involving Chaplain Haggin invariably ended with his praising the men he had grown so close to. He believed the men stationed in Viet Nam are the greatest.

"These fellows never fail to amaze me. Whether they just finished humping ten kilometers or building a fire base, they were never too tired for a brief service followed by a hootenanny. And their courtesy is wonderful. If there are only two sodas on the fire base, they offer their chaplain one.

"I often wonder how I can ever complain to a waiter back in the world about a steak when I know my men are eating C-rations in the field. They've done more for me than I could ever do for them."

Many 3rd Brigade soldiers don't agree with that last statement. Men joke about the chaplain's function, but all know a good friend is there when needed.

"My old outfit was always glad to see him," said Specialist 4 Jon Ingenthron of Oakland, Calif. "Not only did he conduct services for us, but it was not unusual to see him helping carry water canisters or building bunkers. And he was sincerely interested in our problems. We're going to miss him."

"Lasting friendships are formed in the field. Heroism in regard to saving buddies has become almost commonplace. The first thing a wounded man invariably asks is how are his friends. So many times have I heard an injured soldier request that the man in the stretcher beside him be treated first," continued Chaplain Haggin.

But there have also been good times. Few who were with the 3rd Brigade at Christmas time will forget the "spiked" parties Chaplain Haggin arranged. Each man also knew that a cold soda or beer was always available at the Chaplain's tent. What the men didn't realize was the money for the drinks almost always came out of Chaplain Haggin's pocket. That's the only way he would have it.

"I've heard all kinds of accusations about the men in the field. Protestors back home claim that a year in the boonies turns men into animals.

"I have seen exactly the opposite.

"Sure the men tend to complain about their living conditions. But these are always the grossest of understatements.

**"The infantryman's ability to adapt to any situation is his greatest asset. When conditions become unbearable he simply shrugs and says 'it don't mean nothing.'**

**"All of us might profit by following his example."**

**So Chaplain Haggin's tour in Vietnam has come to an end, but will by no means be forgotten. He has witnessed the confusion of new men in Vietnam, the exhaustion of soldiers working in the torrid Asian summer, the joy of a Christmas in Vietnam, and the terror of the Tet offensive.**

**"Many people ask me if the life of a priest is a lonely one, not having wife or family.**

**"I just smile and tell them I've got more sons who are closer to me than if they bore my own name," he concluded.**

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### **Medic saves Montagnard's Life**

**OASIS — Quar had never permitted his people to accept medicine from the American doctors. Today his daughter lay shivering and convulsing with fever. Montagnard medicine had failed —his daughter would die.**

**The civil affair's team of the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry had in the past encountered difficulties in reaching the villagers of Plei Cham Neh. Small children were the only ones who responded to the Ivymen's offer of aid, often against the wishes of their primitive parents.**

**Quar let his sick villagers die rather than have them treated at Army hospitals. It wasn't that he was unnecessarily cruel, he simply believed in ruling his village as his ancestors had ruled before him, free of outside Interference.**

**Today, the team sensed something wrong.**

**The village was quiet. Doors were closed, windows barred, and the children who usually played in the dirt were not in sight.**

**First Lieutenant Robert Gratty of Longmeadow, Mass., who had seen it before, realized the Montagnards were in mourning.**

**The 3rd Brigade team moved quickly into action. Specialist 4 William Drehs of Williamsville, N.Y., and the team medic, Specialist 5 James Weinke, of Neeah, Wis., raced from door to door trying to find the reason for the mourning. An old woman whom the team had befriended in the past finally told them the problem. The chief's daughter was dying.**

**The medic examined the little girl and diagnosed the ailment as malaria. It was not acute malaria, but the disease had been neglected a long time and was now serious.**

**The lieutenant and his men were in a delicate position. They knew if they saved the girl it could be the turning point they had been looking for in their relations with the Montagnards. If they failed, the project would be doomed.**

Proud Quar, who had by this time stoically accepted the fact that his daughter would die, reluctantly agreed to let SP5 Weinke treat the girl. The young medic did all he could, administering the proper pills and serum. All the team could do was sit and wait.

The girl showed immediate improvement. Her temperature dropped steadily and soon the fever broke. A week later she was on her feet again.

The next time the team entered the village they were greeted enthusiastically. The old and young alike were present at the team's MEDCAP. The only one absent was Quar, the aged chief.

Some things can only be changed with the passing of time.