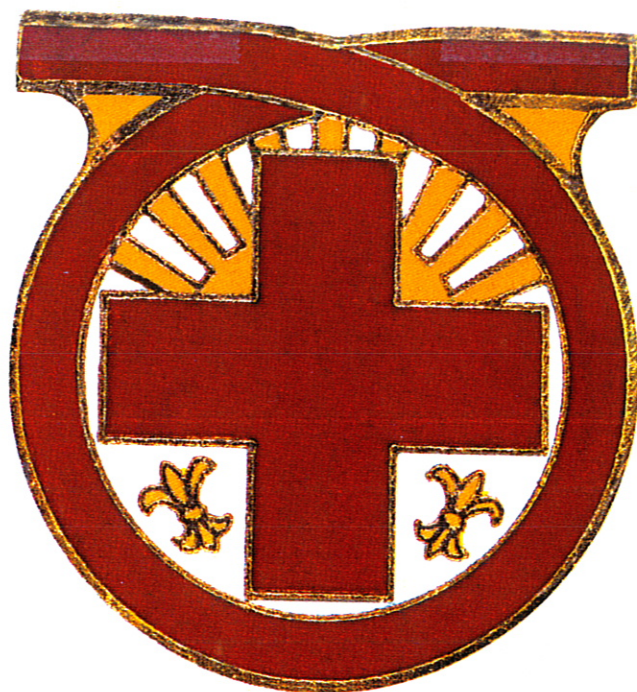


Lest We Forget

PART II

by Don Barnett and Jody Foss



The 24th Evacuation Hospital
1946 - 1972



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P r e f a c e

Welcome to the 1993 reunion of the 24th Evacuation Hospital. The theme for this reunion is “celebrate friendship”. We chose this theme because we realized that the years may change our appearance or our family lives, but there still exists that strong bond of friendship formed during the years we served together. Now is the time to recognize and celebrate that friendship.

Special guests to the reunion are the veterans from World War II who were stationed at the 24th Evacuation Hospital between 1943 to 1946. These men and women worked under some of the most adverse conditions to deliver high quality medical care. Many of these individuals have freely given us information about their experiences during World War II. We would like to give special recognition to Virgil Barrie who so graciously shared the book “Lest We Forget” and his personal memories.

Much of the information for the chapter “Between the Wars” was from LTC William J. McKinley and Robert Fulton the PAD officer. The personal memories from these two individuals was a great help in forming this chapter.

It has been a challenging and yet satisfying experience collecting the historical information for this book. Challenging in that many times we did not know which way to turn for information. And yet, satisfying that we have made so many new friends in the process. We accept full responsibility for any historical errors in the book.

Don Barnett,
Chairman Reunion Committee

Jody Foss
Reunion Committee

1993

Gerald Allgood served as Executive Officer at the 24th Evac during 1967-1968. After serving as Executive Officer at Fort Carson Community Hospital, Chief of Staff/Deputy Post Commander at Fitzsimons Army Medical Center and Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and as Chief of Staff/Deputy Commander for Administration at U.S. Army Health Services Command, Jerry retired and is currently living in Colorado Springs.

John Baldwin, M.D. completed his tour of service in Vietnam in May, 1969. He practiced general and vascular surgery on the Monterey Peninsula for 25 years, is an Associate Professor of Surgery at UCSF and USUHS (Washington, DC). He and Jean and baby William live in Twain Harte, California.

Jody Foss served in the Army Nurse Corps in Vietnam in 1969-1970. She worked on Ward 3 and the emergency room. After Vietnam, Jody worked and taught trauma nursing at several large hospitals in Denver and at UCSF San Francisco. After 23 years in the Reserve Army Nurse Corps, Jody retired in March as a LTC. Jody currently is the Director of Membership, Association of Operating Room Nurses Denver, Colorado.

Larry Horn completed his service at the 24th Evac in 1968. Upon returning to civilian life, Larry continued his medical education. Larry has kept the "flame alive" concerning this reunion. He has maintained a registry of various names of personnel assigned to the 24th Evacuation Hospital. We utilized his computer data base to contact the initial people to announce plans for this reunion.

George Brown served as the first Medical Supply Officer at the 24th Evac. He traveled with the advance party in July 1966, and first saw the site as a "vacant lot". Upon retirement from the Army, George worked as a ranger in the National Park Service and also on the security staff for the Strategic Defense Command.

Neal Walls served as Executive Officer during 1969-1970. During the balance of his military career, he served in senior administrative positions in various Army hospitals. Since retirement, Neal and his wife have lived in Oakwood, Georgia.

Bernard Dunlevy served as Adjutant and Personnel officer in Vietnam during 1969-1970. Prior to retirement from the Army in 1991, Bernie served at Ft. Detrick, Maryland as Inspector General of the Army Medical Research and Development Command. He is currently Director of Operations for an occupational health care firm.

Clem Markarian completed his first tour at the 24th Evac in April, 1968. He returned to Vietnam in 1971 and served for one year at the 3rd Field Hospital in Saigon. After serving in the anesthesiology department in several major military hospitals, Clem retired in 1987. He is currently Chief of Anesthesiology at Cobaris Hospital in Concord, North Carolina.

Ken Butke finished his second tour in Vietnam in 1969. After Vietnam, Ken served in a series of senior administrative positions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Silas B. Hayes Army Community Hospital at Ft. Ord, and at the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio. After completing 21 years of active duty, Ken retired as a LTC and he and his wife currently reside in Springfield, Virginia.

Dr. Tim Jacobs served in the Army Nurse Corps in Vietnam. Tim was a victim of a terrible accident at the hospital, with severe injuries to his arm. Following his recovery, Tim went on to receive his Ph.D. and has made two return visits to Vietnam and will provide interesting stories for all of us during the reunion. Tim and his wife currently live in Connecticut.

Dr. Ralph D. Siewers served as a surgeon during 1970-1971. On his return to the States, he practiced surgery in his home town in North Carolina for one year and then joined the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center as a cardiothoracic surgeon where he continues to practice and teach, primarily pediatric cardiac surgery. Non-medical interests, in part related to his military service, have included volunteer participation in the Outward Bound Schools in this country. He maintains contact with several friends from the year at the 24th Evac in Vietnam.

Patty McClaskey Hammon served in the Army Nurse Corps in Vietnam in 1968-1969 and is married to LTC William Hammon, 1968-1969 Hospital Commander. Patty and Bill lived in Hawaii for several years, where Patty owned an art gallery and Bill practiced neurosurgery. They recently relocated to Vail, Colorado after Bill's retirement.

Don Barnett completed his Vietnam tour in December, 1969. After eight years in public service in South Dakota, Don and his wife returned to the private sector and currently live in Denver. Don is Vice President and National Marketing Director of a golf course financing, construction, and management firm.

The official birth date of the 24th Evacuation Hospital is June 15, 1942 as given by the United States Army. Actually, the date was a few days earlier when 23 enlisted men and one officer departed from Fort Custer, Michigan in route to Camp Rucker, Alabama for assignment to the 24th Evacuation Hospital. By June 28th 1942, the hospital's roster contained 153 personnel who began intensive training first at Camp Rucker and then at Camp Blanding in Florida.

The unit relocated to Tennessee on June 13, 1943, and the first 19 registered nurses were assigned. Intensive training on unit movement, convoy procedure, hospital layout in a field environment and combat support took place. During the last half of 1943, additional staff including doctors, nurses, senior NCO's and enlisted personnel were assigned to the hospital. The unit continued field exercises near the towns of Portland, Castillian Springs, Westmoreland, Cookville, Gallatin, Lebanon and Nashville Tennessee.

The 24th Evacuation Hospital was assigned to the European Theater of Operations and deployed on the Queen Mary January 18, 1944. After ten days at sea and with a Navy escort to deter submarine attack, the Queen Mary docked at Firth of Clyde, Scotland. For the next six months the hospital was based at Cheddar (Somerset), England and continued its preparation and training for assignment on the European Continent in direct support of the Allied Armies.

The date June 6, 1944, is a day people will never forget. On that day, D-Day, the largest amphibious landing in history took place on the beaches of Normandy, France. This date and the next seven days that followed were important to the history of the 24th Evacuation Hospital. The following is a day-by-day summary of the route the 24th Evacuation Hospital followed to Omaha Beach.



24th Evac Hospital World War II, Cheddar, England spring, 1944.

| | | |
|-------|---------------|---|
| D-Day | June 6, 1944 | Allied Armies land at Normandy, France. |
| D+1 | June 8, 1944 | The 24th Evacuation Hospital departs from Scotland to Falmouth Harbor. |
| D+2 | June 9, 1944 | Personnel and equipment loaded on the Francis Drake. |
| D+3 | June 10, 1944 | Hurry up and wait, the ship sat in harbor fully loaded for 36 hours before deployment to the coast of Normandy, France. |
| D+4 | June 11, 1944 | 2:15 a.m. Anchors hoisted the Francis Drake moves in convoy with air support to the Normandy beachhead. |
| D+5 | June 12, 1944 | At dusk the Francis Drake arrives at the Normandy beachhead and Major Edwards advance party leader boards the Francis Drake to alert the surgical team to prepare to "hit the beach" in support of the 51st Field Hospital. The 51st Field Hospital landed with the Allied Armies on D-Day and its surgical team was near exhaustion. |

- D+6 June 13, 1944 The 24th Evacuation Hospital main body lands on Omaha Beach and immediately moves to LaCambe, France.
- D+7 June 14, 1944 The 24th Evacuation Hospital is “open for business” in LaCambe, France. During the next ten days, 1,146 patients were admitted for treatment and there were 29 deaths.

On July 8, 1944 the hospital relocated to L’Epinay-Tesson, France. During the next 29 days the staff would treat 2,749 patients. Between August 6, 1944 and September 16, 1944, the hospital would relocate twice and treat 3,026 patients.

In mid-September the 24th Evacuation Hospital was assigned to the British Second Army to support the American 101st Airborne Division under the command of British Field Marshall Alexander Montgomery. Montgomery's mission was the liberation of Holland.

The hospital moved to an area immediately adjacent to the FEBA (front edge of the battle area) and received casualties immediately from the battleground. Within the first twenty-four hours of the battle, the hospital received 512 patients. The hospital's location, so near the battle field made it vulnerable to German fighter plane strafing. During one of these German strafing runs at the hospital, Lt. Agatha Rause Kurth, an operating room nurse, sustained serious wounds while on duty in the operating room (a canvas tent). The intensity of fighting between September 17th and October 8, 1944, was fierce. The hospital treated 3,432 patients, had only 37 deaths, and continued to endure German strafing runs, which wounded many hospital staff.

Major General Maxwell Taylor, Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division wrote to Colonel Rylander, Commanding Officer 24th Evacuation Hospital with the following words of praise

"...upon the occasion of our departure from this area I wish to express the gratitude of the entire 101st Airborne Division for the magnificent support given us by the 24th Evacuation Hospital. During the Holland operation nearly a third of the combat strength of the Division passed through your hospital where they received medical care of the highest quality. The Division is mindful, also, of the fact that during the Nijmegen phase of the operation you and your personnel were exposed to hostile gun fire to the

same degree as the combat elements of the Division. It is the hope of all ranks that the 24th Evacuation Hospital will support the Division on all future airborne operations.."

Eventually, the 24th Evacuation Hospital would support the 101st Airborne in two different wars.

Jamor General Phillips, Commanding Officer of the British Second Army, wrote to Colonel Rylander and offered these words of praise

"...you and your unit have done a marvelous job, and I am particularly impressed by the way in which you uncomplainingly accepted sites which I know were far from ideal. The work done by your unit under such conditions is most creditable and you have earned the gratitude not only of your own countrymen but that of your British cousins and allies. It has been a pleasure to work with you and I am only sorry that you now have to leave us and go back to your own army. You carry away with you most pleasant recollections from us in 21st Army Group and I have only one hope and that is that you may come back to us again when opportunity arises. Please convey to your staff of all ranks and both sexes the appreciation of myself and all those serving under and with me; at the same time, will you accept my best wishes for your future, and rest assured that '24th Evac' is a name that will not be speedily forgotten..."

During the winter of 1944, the hospital established care centers in Uden, and Nijmegen, Holland and cared for over 7,000 Allied soldiers. During the month of December, the German army waged its last vicious offensive during the Battle of the Bulge. On December 19, 1944, the 24th Evacuation Hospital departed St. Trond, Belgium for Bardenberg, Germany and the Brand,

*1 American historian Cornelius Ryan described this battle in his book *A Bridge Too Far*, which was later made into a motion picture.

Germany to become the first American evacuation hospital established in Germany. The first casualties of the German offensive were received on Christmas Eve, 1944.

The hospital moved again during the month of March crossing the Rhine at Wessel, Germany and erected tents near the village of Peddenburg. The hospital was in a mass casualty situation for the next ten days. As the Allied Armies moved rapidly eastward, the 24th Evacuation Hospital moved to Esperde, Germany. At this location the hospital treated over 800 patients during a seventeen day period, many of the patients being American prisoners of war. On April 10, 1945, the hospital was on the move again and shortly after crossing the Elbe river, the staff was told of the German surrender.

During the month of May, the hospital was located at Bremen, Germany, in support of the 28th Infantry Division. Even though the worst of the fighting was over, the hospital still received 935 patients. Lt. General W.H. Simpson, commanding officer of the 9th United States Army, in a letter of commendation to the 24th Evacuation Hospital on May 2, 1945, sent the following message;

“The number of recoveries from severe wounds and the return-to-duty rate are considerably higher in the present war than in any previous one. This is extremely gratifying to me and is due not only to improved medical and surgical methods but also to the determined efforts and skillful services of our Medical Department in spite of the many difficulties encountered under combat conditions.

The personnel of the 24th Evacuation Hospital have brought particular distinction to themselves by their expert treatment and care of our sick and wounded, the rapid recovery of whom is the highest tribute that can be paid to the members of this fine medical organization.

I wish to extend my personal appreciation to each officer, nurse, and enlisted man of the 24th Evacuation Hospital for the excellent performance of their duties and the successful accomplishment of their mission in our recent operations. Your efforts have aided very considerably toward attaining the total defeat of our enemy...”

With the end of hostilities, some of the doctors, nurses and enlisted personnel were transferred to other medical units in the European Theater. However, most of the staff who had been with the hospital during the entire war qualified for immediate discharge and returned to the United States. The hospital continued operations in Germany until February, 1946, when it was deactivated.

The hospital Chaplain wrote of the men and women in the 24th Evacuation Hospital,

“It was a unit of individuals who subordinated personal interests to work hard for the success of the unit. Each man’s and woman’s job was important, regardless of how small the contribution. Moreover, we never lost sight of the important fact that a casualty was not just another number, but a different individual with a distinct personality. As a result, each man received the personal attention and interest of the enlisted men, nurses, and officers. Letter after letter has arrived from former patients thanking us (the staff from the 24th Evac) for the care and personalized attention received in our hospital. No army is greater than the least of its members and we never neglected our responsibilities to the individual—regardless of rank, color, nationality or nature of wound. Perhaps our hospital demonstrated a working democracy in its highest form”.

The men and women who served with the 24th Evacuation Hospital during World War II, were truly heroes. They delivered high quality care in four countries and at 20 different locations. They worked under conditions that one can hardly imagine..muddy fields, muddy roads, worn-out tents, old buildings and in close proximity to battle areas. They left a legacy of excellence in patient care.

Upon returning from the European Theater, the 24th Evacuation Hospital was put in storage until September 20, 1954, when it was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia. For the next three years, the hospital participated in massive training maneuvers at Fort Benning and achieved outstanding ratings in every facet of medical and military training. The unit was transferred to Fort Sam Houston, Texas on March 15, 1957, and was assigned to the 66th Medical Group at the Brook Army Medical Center.

The hospital commander from 1957 to 1961, was Lieutenant Colonel William J. McKinley and Sergeant Major Charles Singleton was responsible for developing the training schedule. Much of the training was accomplished at Camp Bullis, Texas. LTC McKinley summarized the 24th Evacuation Hospital's mission by saying "the immediate goal for the 24th Evac was to participate in the Army Training Test at Camp Bullis. It was the responsibility of the hospital commander to continuously check unit equipment and to keep the hospital in a high state of readiness".

The many outstanding noncommissioned officers (NCO's) assigned to the 24th Evacuation Hospital were instrumental in training efforts and keeping the unit in a high state of readiness. The 24th Evacuation Hospital was the first medical unit trained in blackout and night conditions and to train under conditions of guerrilla harassment and warfare.

While in garrison, enlisted personnel trained in their respective disciplines at Brook Army Hospital, Fort Sam Houston. The unit was classified as the best unit on several occasions while at Fort Sam Houston and received several citations.

In 1966, when the initial order for mobilization for movement to Vietnam was issued, only a few of the original hospital personnel were assigned to the advance party or the main body which traveled from Fort Sam Houston, Texas to Vietnam.



Sgt. Glenn Martin preparing to tie down a tent after erecting the frame 1966.

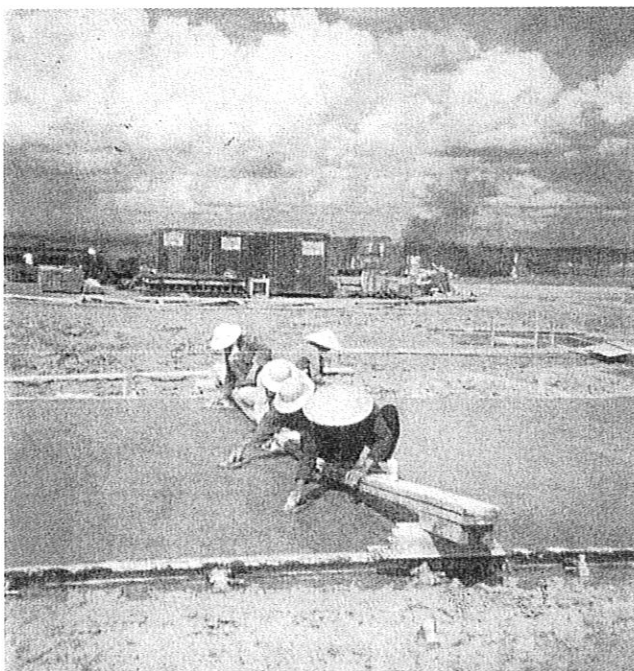
On June 20, 1966, three officers, one warrant officer, six senior NCO's and fifteen enlisted personnel, under the command of LTC Albert C. Donohoo boarded an Air Force C130 transport at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, for the long journey to Southeast Asia. Arriving at Bien



The hospital begins to take shape 1966.

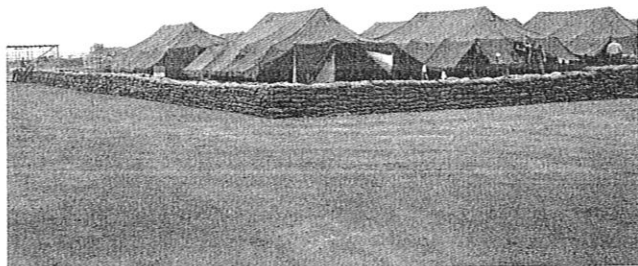
Hoa, they were met by representatives of the 93rd Evacuation Hospital, the host hospital. Personnel and equipment were immediately moved to the future site of the 24th Evacuation Hospital.

The main body of personnel from the 24th Evacuation Hospital departed on the U.S. Naval ship William W. Wiegel from the port of Oakland, California on June 20, 1966. After twenty days at sea, they arrived at Cam Rahn Bay and were immediately airlifted to Bien Hoa. The organizational equipment and vehicles arrived at the port of Saigon on July 20, 1966, and within 48 hours the entire hospital was on Long Binh post.

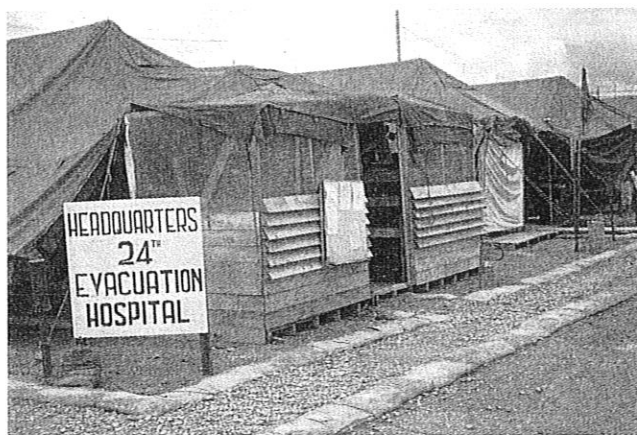


Vietnamese cement finishers laying first ward foundation 1966. Vietnamese were hired by 169th Engineer Battalion.

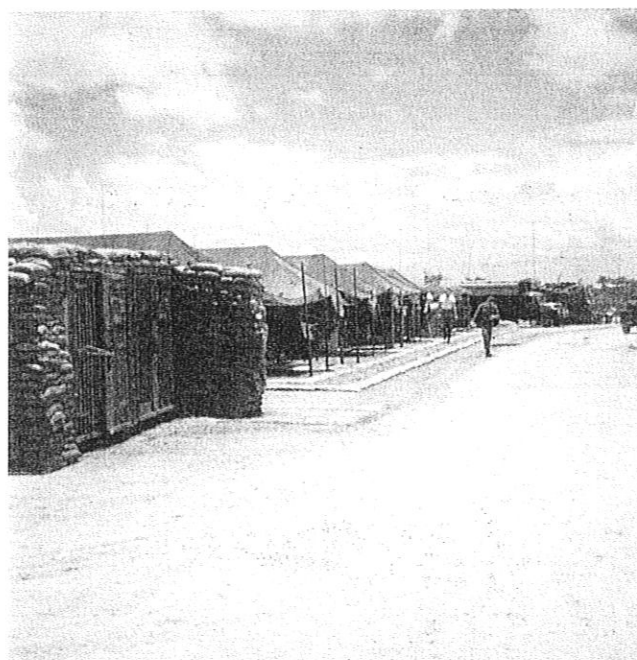
After erecting the hospital, the first order of business according to Sergeant Anthony Phillips, who was there in 1966, “was to form a defense perimeter surrounding the hospital. Throughout construction it was necessary for us to build and use the bunkers on all sides of the hospital.”



The 24th Evacuation hospital.



24th Evacuation Hospital Headquarters 1966.



Ammo bunker and arms storage August 1966.

Doctors and nurses were not assigned to the hospital until the fall. They supplemented the staff at the 93rd Evacuation Hospital and the 3rd Field Hospital in Saigon, until they were needed to help install medical equipment on the hospital wards and in the operating room.

Enlisted personnel stood guard duty every night for the first fourteen months after arrival in Vietnam. After the hospital opened in January 1967, enlisted personnel would normally work a 10-12 hour shift in the hospital and then be responsible for guard duty. The Detachment Commander and First Sergeant developed a defensive response team who could immediately move to any area of the hospital to defend against enemy activity.



Captain George Brown at a guard bunker January 1967.



Long Binh post was built as a major material and logistics center for the United States Army in Vietnam. The hamlet of Long Binh, with a small population of approximately 500 people, was located at a major highway junction called Long Binh Junction approximately 20 miles northeast of Saigon and immediately adjacent to the more highly populated community of Bien Hoa.

The western border of Long Binh post is Highway One, the principle north-south artery in Vietnam which runs from Saigon (now Ho Chi Min City) to Hanoi in the north. At the northern border of the post, Highway One turns east towards the seacoast and Cam Ranh Bay. The junction where the highway turned east was known as "Long Binh Junction" since Highway 20 and Highway One formed an intersection. The southern border of Long Binh post in the Dong Nai River.

Long Binh and the area around the post was originally a lush rubber plantation leased to the U.S. military. Mr. Mui, the Vietnamese owner, gained recognition by inviting hospital staff to dinner in his home where people never asked what they were eating and frequently became ill afterwards.



USARV Headquarters.

Four key military installations were located at or near Long Binh Junction. The most essential unit was the Bien Hoa Air Base. The base was used extensively by the U.S. Air Force and the Vietnamese Air Force for combat missions, transportation and training, intelligence flights, medical evacuations and the delivery of American troops to Vietnam.

The second important installation was the U.S. Army Vietnam Command Headquarters (USARV). These two story buildings housed the senior command staff, intelligence staff and communications network. Security for these buildings was extremely high due to the fact that it was a prime target for the enemy.

The third installation of importance was the Command Headquarters for the Second Field Force. These combat units were located immediately north of the Long Binh supply depot.

The final installation was the Long Binh Jail or as it was affectionately know "LBJ". The jail contained several hundred American prisoners and was the scene of a major prison riot late in 1968.

Long Binh was not a secure post until 1969. During its seven year history, an occasional mortar fell on Long Binh, but the post was never seriously threatened. In 1966 and 1968, rockets ignited the ammunition dump, and in February 1969, rockets preceded a night ground attack by NVA forces. In Mid-1969, a rocket destroyed the USARV headquarters post office. And in 1970, the hospital was directly hit by an enemy rocket in the administration section.

It was the intent of the American command to develop a logistical supply center to support the Allied armies in those provinces immediately north of Saigon. By 1969, over 40,000 Americans were assigned to various units on Long Binh Post.

Because of this large concentration of troops and services, nightly rocket attacks at 2:00 a.m. became the norm. Fortunately, the enemy's aim was poor and few buildings were destroyed or services disrupted. Hospital staff always were suspicious when "mammason" or "pappason" failed to show for work.

The post sported its own Chase Manhattan Bank branch, a fairly modern PX, an Olympic size swimming pool, a chinese restaurant, street signs, a war museum and approximately 50 service clubs. Long Binh was the ground soldiers' respite from war, a hot shower and a cold beer before returning to the boonies.

During the initial months in Vietnam, all efforts were directed toward construction of the quartering areas and patient care facilities. Engineers from the 169th Engineer Battalion were



Enlisted personnel laying foundation for first Adam's pre-fab building 1966.

tasked to build the hospital. Unfortunately, they were pulled periodically for other support activities and the hospital staff ended up constructing much of the hospital. Robert Fulton the PAD



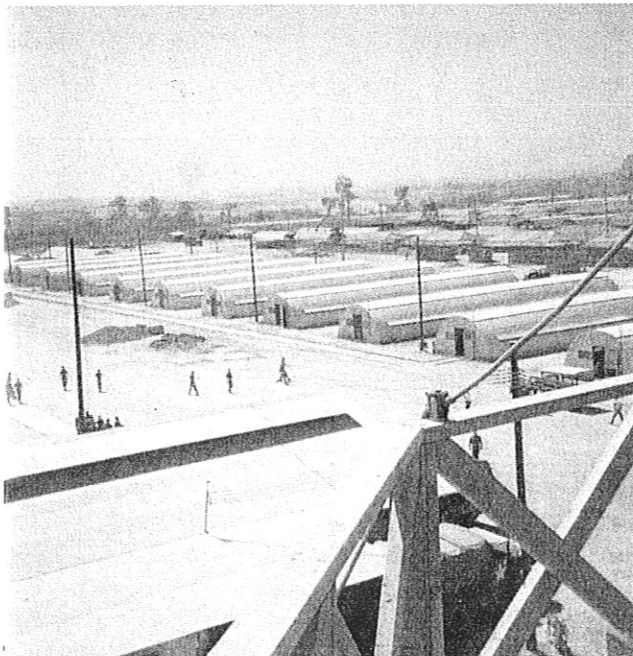
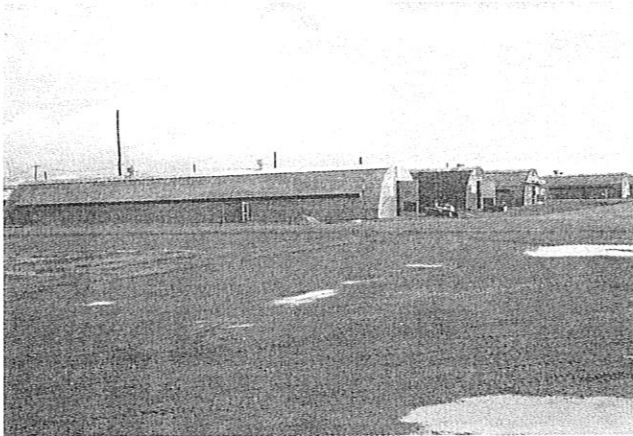
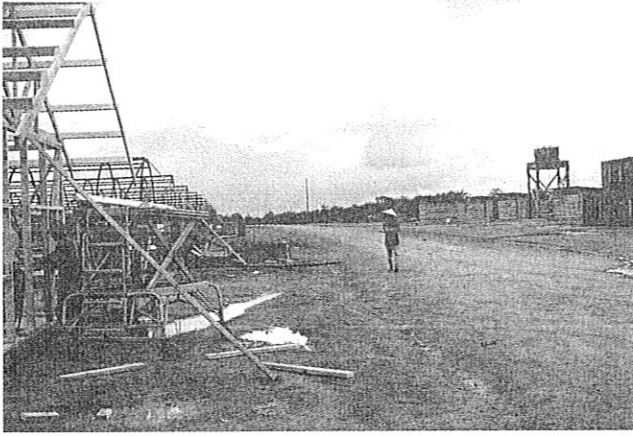
Major Beck, Detachment Commander supervising building of Adam's hut building 1966.

Officer stated "the NCO's and enlisted personnel really deserve the credit for building the hospital. They mixed the concrete for the pads with their bare hands". Each 20 x 80 foot concrete pad formed the base for the tin "quonset hut" type of building. The "huts" were sandbagged up to four feet to protect against shell fragments and other low velocity missiles. And, without air conditioning the "huts" could be miserably hot in the 120 degree heat of Vietnam.

The hospital was built in a rectangle with triage, pre-op, operating room, CMS, wards and administrative areas in positions easily accessible to each other. More personnel arrived in July 1966, to assist with the construction and the layout of the hospital. It is apparent to many, that the hospital was designed by its users. The flow of patients was logical and wasted few steps. Patients proceeded in a linear manner through PAD, A&D, Triage Emergency, X-Ray, Pre-op Holding, Operating Room and Recovery.



175mm round hurled into hospital area after Long Binh ammunition dump explosion October 1966.



Quonset huts almost complete December 1966. The roof of the mess hall is visible on the left with some of the hospital wards on the right.

After completion of the exterior of the hospital, personnel began the long process of unpacking the CONEX containers, completing a supply inventory and establishing patient care areas. By late 1966, a large portion of the facility had been completed. Medical and nursing personnel were on site. The goal was to have the hospital operational by early 1967.

Living quarters were still very rustic. The nurses' quarters consisted of a wooden hut with screens and a metal roof. Male personnel were housed in very primitive tents. Over time, the tents gave way to tents with wooden frames without room separations; then tents with wooden frames with room separations; and finally, the metal Adams pre-fab hut on concrete floors. After approximately six months, electricity was installed in the huts and then personnel scrounged for materials to build room separations. The male quarters did not have plumbing and male personnel will remember using the outdoor privies with "honey buckets" until 1969, when indoor plumbing was installed.



The finished product, the Executive Officer's "hooch".

During this time the 24th Evacuation Hospital was the hosting element to incoming personnel assigned to build the 12th Evacuation Hospital located in Chu Chi. It was the custom for established hospitals to assist new hospitals during the start-up phase. The 93rd Evacuation Hospital assisted the 24th Evacuation Hospital when it first arrived in Vietnam, and now the 24th Evacuation Hospital was helping the new 12th Evacuation Hospital.

The hospital changed commanders in August 1966, LTC John R. Connelly assumed command and LTC Donohoo was reassigned as commander for one of the other hospitals in the area. This was done so all hospital personnel did not rotate out at the same time.

On January 9, 1967, less than five months after arriving in Vietnam, the 24th Evacuation Hospital began treating patients. The initial personnel assigned to the hospital included 30 doctors, 60 nurses, 8 administrative officers, 1 warrant officer, and 225 enlisted personnel. The hospital opened with 200 operating beds. Soon after opening, the hospital was augmented with five USARV surgical consultants and the hospital became the center for neurosurgery, orthopedics, maxillofacial, ophthalmology and otolaryngology, in addition to the regular services of general surgery, urology, vascular and thoracic surgery, internal medicine, physical therapy, radiology, dermatology, obstetrics and gynecology, general dentistry, and optometry.



Medvac helicopter used to transport wounded.

The helicopter changed the way hospitals did business during the Vietnam war. Used initially in Korea, the helicopter rapidly moved casualties from the battlefield to highly sophisticated medical care in a matter of minutes. It was not uncommon to receive patients direct from the battlefield still clutching their weapons. Many patients did not know where they were since they were transported so quickly. The first order of business in the ER was to tell them they were safe and at the hospital.

During this time the first American Red Cross workers arrived at the hospital. Their job was to assist members of the hospital staff with family notification, letters home and recreation.

Several Viet Cong prisoners of war were cared for at the hospital during 1967. Although caring for prisoners caused a certain amount of strain for the medical staff, patient care was never compromised. Each prisoner had an MP guard and every attempt was made to isolate the prisoner from the other patients on Ward 12.

The hospital experienced its first mass casualty situation during the 1967 Tet, when an enemy rocket hit the ammunition dump on Long Binh. The explosion was so enormous that many mortars and artillery rounds fell in the hospital compound. These were later removed by the demolition units from the Corps of Engineers.

In August 1967, LTC G.I. Baker assumed command of the 24th Evacuation Hospital. Under LTC Baker's direction, the bed capacity increased to a maximum of 400 and some reorganization of the administrative staff occurred. By December 1967, the hospital was operating at full capacity.

In the first year of operation the 24th Evacuation Hospital treated 9,010 patients. Over 5,900 received surgical care and 3,000 patients received medical care. Of the over 9,000 patients, over 1,400 were evacuated to the United States and 2,400 were transferred to "in-country" medical facilities. Approximately 3,782 were returned to duty.

During one mass casualty situation, lasting seven days, 880 units of blood were typed and cross-matched. Of this total, 353 units were utilized for 167 patients producing a patient to blood utilization ratio of 2 to 1. Also during that week 496 patients received surgical care and each member of the surgical team worked an average of 126 hours that week.

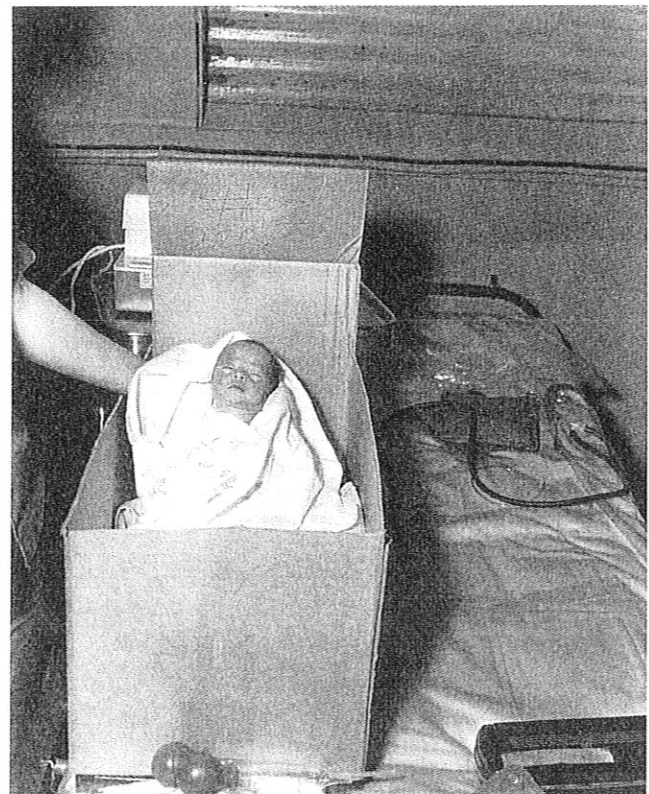
The 24th Evacuation Hospital received its first Meritorious Unit citation for the year 1967. This would be the first of many awards received during the Vietnam years.

Ngyun Thi Mein

The Barbara Rodriguez Story

In late September 1967, a village of native Mountain Yard tribesmen, located near the Cambodian border, was invaded by the Viet Cong. The village suffered heavy casualties. An American unit providing medical assistance to the wounded treated a seriously wounded and very pregnant woman. She was immediately transported to the 24th Evacuation Hospital for more definitive treatment and surgery.

At the 24th Evacuation Hospital she was taken to surgery where she immediately gave birth to twin girls approximately 60 days premature. The date was September 26, 1967. Although the hospital was not equipped to handle premature twin infants, the staff improvised with cardboard boxes, hot water bottles and oxygen tubes to simulate an incubator. Hospital staff named the first-born Sandy and the second twin Cindy. Sandy died shortly after birth. Colonel Virginia Morgan



Baby Cindy, Ngyun Thi Mein (Barbara Lyn Rodriguez) in her incubator on the pre-operative ward.

and Lieutenant Virginia Devine from the nursing department provided the needed care to the infant while the natural mother was recuperating from surgery. After a few days the mother was strong enough to be transferred to a Vietnamese hospital with eventual placement in a refugee camp. The Mountain Yard tribe had a superstition that the surviving twin might bring bad luck to the family. The infant was left at the 24th Evacuation Hospital.

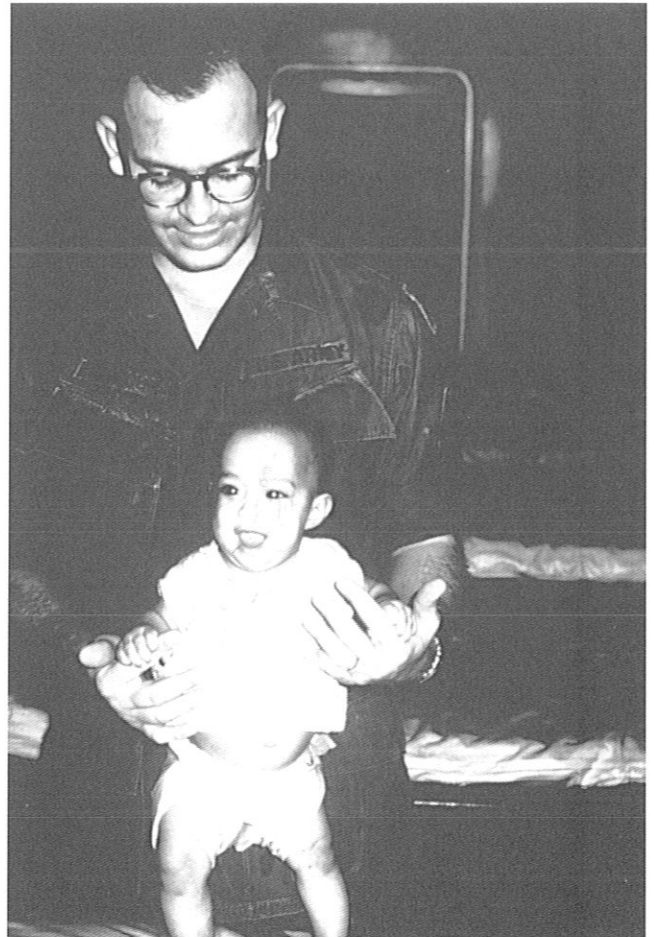
The staff became very attached to the infant called Cindy. Once she was old enough a crib was made and she quickly was the center of attention in the Pre-op ward of the hospital.



Army Nurse Virginia Devine with baby Barbara Lynn 1967.

SFC Leon Rodriguez, a senior NCO in the surgery department became very attached to the infant and began discussing with his wife the possibility of adoption. Contact was made with the natural mother and she agreed that adoption would be best for the child. SFC Rodriguez began discussions with the Vietnamese government and the U.S. Embassy in Saigon to acquire the necessary passport and paperwork needed to transport the baby to the U.S.

The Vietnamese government was very cooperative and at the adoption hearing, the government did everything possible to expedite the necessary Vietnamese permits.



A proud adoptive "papa" SFC Rodriguez and baby Barbara Lynn 1967.

However, SFC Rodriguez faced a significant challenge at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. The 1968 Tet Offensive had just occurred and the staff were occupied with their own safety measures. SFC Rodriguez would not take no for an answer, and pressed the Embassy staff to expedite the paperwork. At one point, SFC Rodriguez walked into the office of the Vice Counsel, explained his case and gained the Vice Counsel's support. From that moment on, Embassy staff were more receptive to processing the needed paperwork.



Barbara Lynn on St. Patrick's Day 1968.

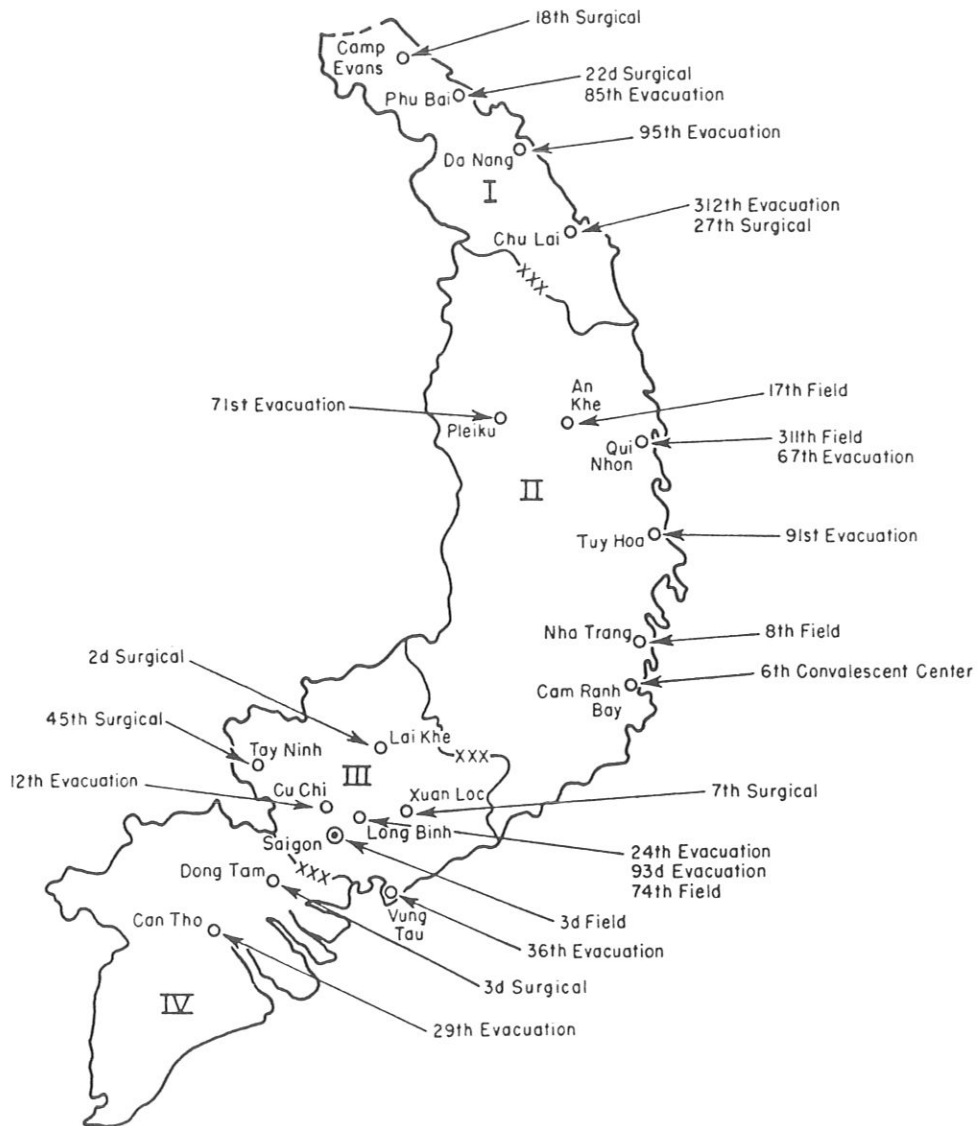
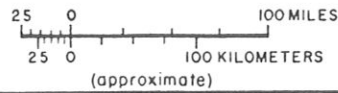
In June 1968, SFC and his new daughter Barbara Lynn were on their way home to the United States. SFC Rodriguez had completed his one year tour of duty and would be reassigned to Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in Denver, Colorado.

Barbara Lynn Rodriguez was baptized at the base chapel at Fitzsimons Army Medical Center. Colonel Leaver the 24th Evacuation Hospital's commanding officer when Barbara Lynn was born and his wife Virginia Devine a nurse at the hospital were Barbara Lynn's sponsors.

Today, Barbara is married to John Nipper and lives in Redmond, Washington with her new infant son Joshua. Barbara graduated from high school in 1986 and attended school to become a veterinary assistant.

U.S. ARMY HOSPITALS IN VIETNAM

31 December 1968

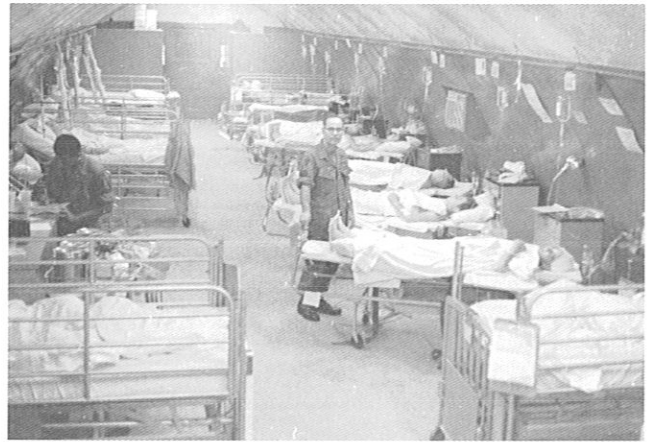


The year 1968 was a year of national tragedy and change for America. The assassination of Martin Luther King, followed by massive urban violence, the assassination of Robert Kennedy and more rioting at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, produced an atmosphere of national chaos. The presidential campaign between Richard M. Nixon and Hubert H. Humphrey brought political passions to the boiling point.



24th Evac Hospital 1968. Note the absence of the POW hospital. POW's were still cared for on Ward 12 at this time.

In Vietnam the year 1968, started with increased activity by the NVA and Viet Cong. On January 30, 1968, in the early morning hours a small group of NVA and VC attacked the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. The attack was repulsed with some U.S. casualties. Shortly after the attack at the Embassy, a series of attacks took place throughout South Vietnam involving many U.S. Facilities, including the ammunition dump at Long Binh. This marked the beginning of an intensive period of mass casualties and resulted in a seven day epidemic of trauma.

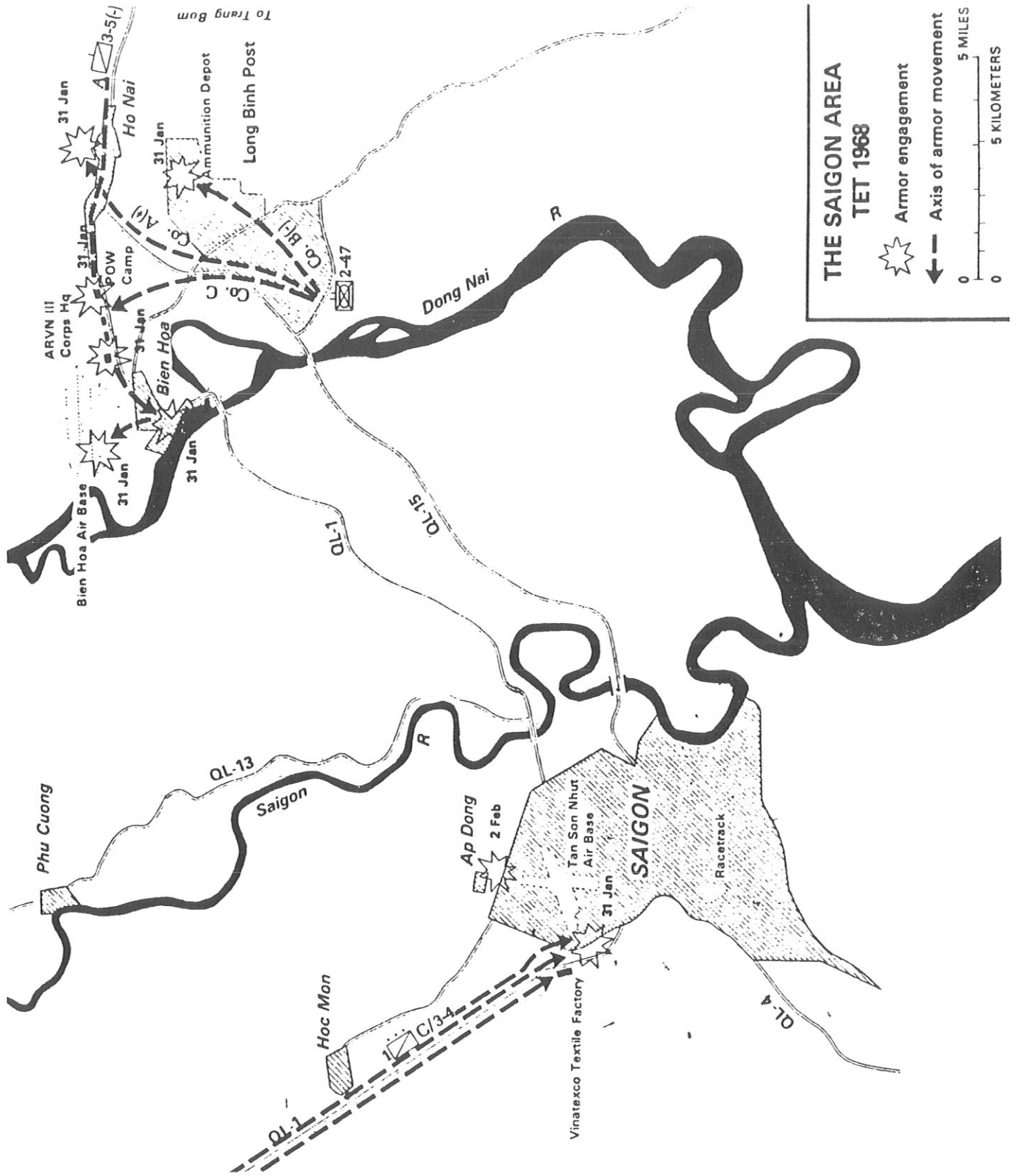


Ward 5 at the 24th Evacuation Hospital. SFC Joe Garcia and Sp5 Morris Cockrell August 1968.

From January 30th to February 5, 1968, there were 401 patients admitted (the majority within the first 48 hours), and an additional 124 were treated, stabilized and evacuated elsewhere due to a temporary overload. The surgical staff worked non-stop for the first few days. Medical regulating was notified of a 12 hour surgical backlog. During that time a team of operating room nurses, technicians, seven general surgeons, three orthopedic surgeons, three neurosurgeons, six maxillofacial specialist, three anesthesiologists and seven nurse anesthetists, performed 183 major surgical procedures. These included 41 craniotomies, nine laminectomies, 12 vascular repairs, 25 laparotomies, and 20 amputations and major debridements. Additionally 218 minor surgical procedures were done. Radiographic studies totaled nearly 2,200. Blood usage was over 350 units. Deaths were 27. The peak admission day was February 1, 1968 when 110 patients were admitted.

Long Binh Post experienced significant hostile activity during the entire month of February. The 24th Evacuation Hospital remained near capacity with everyone working extra hours. Periodically, the roads would be blocked in and around Long Binh Post, thus preventing supplies from getting to the hospital. The hospital was a central water point, providing in excess of 75,000 gallons of potable water a day for neighboring units. The availability of this water and the operation and control of the laundry section enabled the 24th Evacuation Hospital to continue to treat patients when there was temporary loss of the road net in and around Long Binh Post.

A second major mass casualty situation occurred when there was a prison riot at Long Binh Jail (LBJ). On the night of August 29, 1968, following a confrontation among prisoners at the stockade, a full riot occurred. This activity led to serious injuries for the stockade commander, guards, military police, and prisoners. Order was not fully restored at LBJ until almost a month later when the last prisoner was finally controlled. Colonel Johnson, the stockade commander, 26 prisoners, military police and guards were treated at the 24th Evacuation Hospital.





Santa and friends 1968.

Four Red Cross staff were now assigned to the hospital. Their mission was to provide service to military personnel and to promote welfare and morale of members of the armed forces. The staff led by Lynn Lepore, Hospital Field Director, was responsible for family communication, patient recreation, counseling, emergency financial services and distribution of donated supplies.



Red Cross worker Jeanie Hasenbeck with Vietnamese children 1968.

On Thanksgiving Day 1968, under the direction of Chief Nurse LTC Elizabeth Starkey and Sergeant Major Bernard Jenkins, the 24th Evacuation Hospital hosted over 500 Vietnamese children for a Thanksgiving feast. And during the Christmas season 1968, a veterans group in Brookings, South Dakota, sent several hundred presents to the 24th Evacuation Hospital for distribution to Vietnamese children. This project was under the direction of senior NCO's and the nursing staff.



"Santa" hands out presents to Vietnamese orphans 1968.



LTC Elizabeth Starkey, Chief Nurse and Catholic Sisters, Christmas 1968.



Sergeant Major Bernard Jenkins and Vietnamese Children.



Don Barnett, MSC with Vietnamese girl Christmas 1968.

1968 was indeed a busy year for the 24th Evacuation Hospital.

The hospital provided support to the 9th Infantry Division, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 199th Light Infantry brigade, Royal Australian Army, Royal Thai Volunteer Division, 1st Infantry Division, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), 25th Infantry Division and 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile).



Aerial view of hospital 1968-1969. POW hospital run by the 50th Clearing Company can be seen on the right with guard towers and concertina wire.

Some members of the hospital staff began “Medcap” missions into the villages to offer medical and dental care to the local villagers. On most of these missions the staff were welcomed by the local villagers but on at least one occasion staff entered a village that was not secure and had to scramble to safety. The dentist and the dental chair were most popular on these missions. These missions were discontinued in early 1969, due to concern for the safety of the hospital staff.



24th Evacuation Hospital Headquarters 1968.

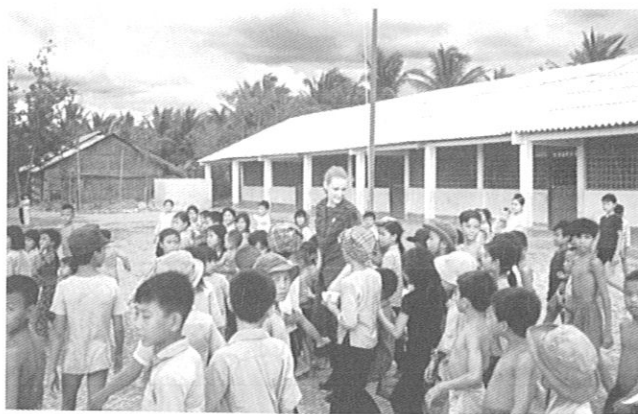


Army Nurse Kay Guthrie with Vietnamese children 1968.

Hospital construction included the addition of air conditioning to patient care areas, connecting corridors between wards, sewage system, upgrading the mess hall from field ranges and immersion heaters to a fully equipped kitchen with gas ranges and other modern equipment and the installation of an automatic film processor in radiology.

During 1968, the hospital had a total of 11,570 admissions which included 9,573 U.S. Military, 811 Free World Military Forces, 1,056 Vietnamese Civilians, and 130 U.S. Civilians. There were 419 deaths. The hospital's outpatient clinic treated a total of 70,145 patients. There were 99,814 x-rays performed and 2,959 cast room procedures for appliance. The hospital laboratory performed a total of 84,765 procedures. A total of 10,967 units of blood were transfused to 3,356 patients.

The Bob Hope show came to the post and one of the 24th Evacuation Hospital nurses was selected as the nurse to travel with Bob Hope and company. The unit earned its second Meritorious Unit Commendation since starting operations in Vietnam.



Army nurse Pat McClaskey on Medcap Mission 1968-1969.

The year 1969 was another busy year for the 24th Evacuation Hospital. Hospital staff had completed most of the needed improvements to the hospital. Medical Detachment work details made improvements to the bunkers, the hospital wards and the enlisted mens club. The hospital supported the following units during 1969; 3rd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, 11th armored Cavalry Regiment, 199th Light Infantry Brigade, 1st Australian Task Force, primarily ophthalmology and neurosurgery, Royal Thai Army Volunteer Force, 1st Infantry Division, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), and the 25th Infantry Division.



Patient treatment in Emergency Room 1969. Army Nurse Lt. Jody Foss is at the head of the litter.

The hospital had 320 operating beds, 200 surgical beds and 120 medical beds with 72 holding beds on wards 15 and 16. The average daily in-patient census was 225 with an increase in the percentage of Seriously Ill and Very Seriously Ill patients. The assigned strength for the unit con-

sisted of 30 Medical Corps, 2 Dental Corps, 7 Medical Service Corps, 63 Army Nurse Corps officers and 1 Army Medical Specialist Corps, 2 Chaplains and 200 enlisted personnel.



OR Nurse taking patient to OR 1969.

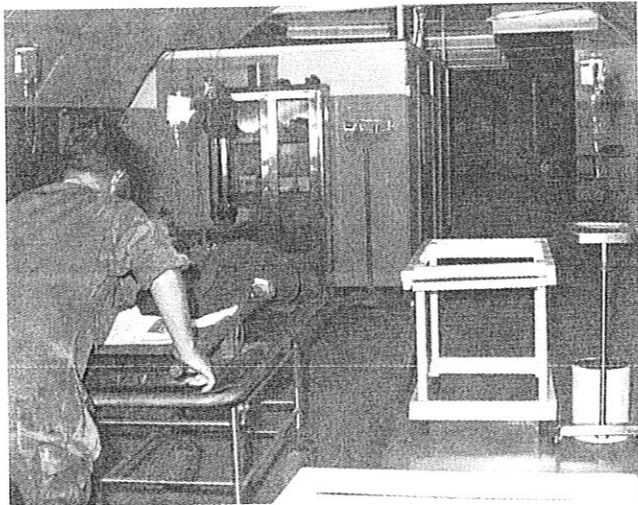
Hospital surgeons dealt with many diverse problems in patient care. Working with the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research Trauma Study (WAIR) Team, studies were conducted in the pathophysiology of stress ulcer, wet lung, coagulation problems and shock, and a test program of hyperalimentation. Many of the nursing staff remember concocting the “WAIR cocktail” for those patients that needed parental nutrition.



Surgery 1969.



Surgery 1969.



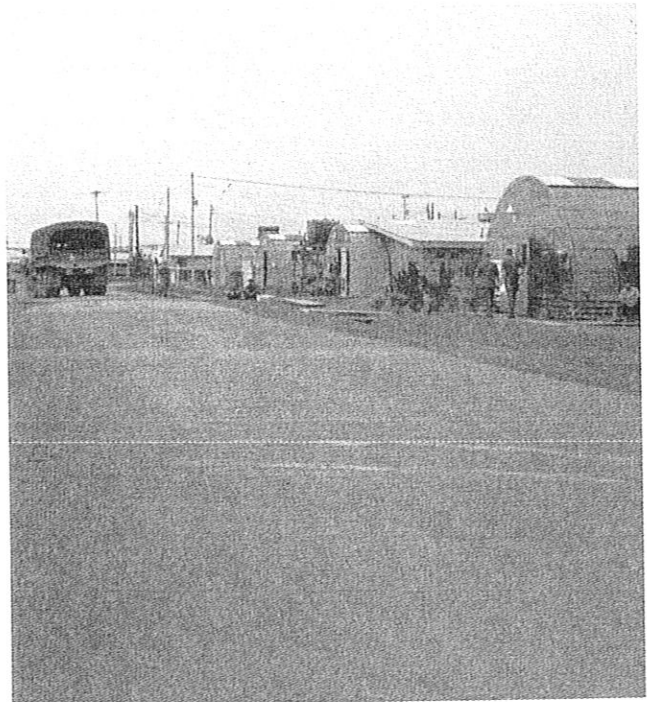
Patient on litter being transported to x-ray and pre-op holding 1969.



Patient receiving care in the Emergency Room 1968-1969.

The neurosurgical section treated the largest number of head and spinal cord injuries in Vietnam. The Orthopedic section performed reconstructive procedures on local nationals in addition to caring for a large number of injured soldiers.

New construction projects included installation of a rather complex central drainage system in the hospital quadrangle thus eliminating the flooding problems encountered in the operating room, x-ray, laboratory and on all the wards.



Front of hospital 1969.

Again, there was increased activity by the Viet Cong during the end of January and early February. The enemy made every attempt to blow-up the Long Binh ammunition dump again and at one point tried to overrun the post, climbing over the barbed wire. Again, the hospital was in a mass casualty situation with many of the patients arriving by jeep. The surgical teams worked non-stop and during the Tet 1969 offensive, medical regulating was notified of a 12 hour surgical backlog.



Emergency room 1969.



Royal Thai Army Nurse Lt. Yenrudee.

With spring, came the monsoon rains. Everyday around 2:00 p.m. torrential rains would fall making for muddy and wet working conditions. Often, hospital wards would have standing water on the floors and hospital staff learned “to tie it down” to prevent it from floating away. With spring came more intense fighting and more mass causality situations.

The hospital treated casualties from other countries who were participating with the U.S. in Vietnam. During 1969, members of the South Korean Army, Australian Army, Canadian Army and the Royal Thai Army all received care at the 24th Evacuation Hospital. The “Thais” were interesting in that they used beebees to blouse their trousers and wore Buddha necklaces which made a lot of noise when walking. So much for sneaking through the jungle! The hospital was assigned a Thai nurse from the Royal Thai Army named Lt. Yenrudee.

Many celebrities and dignitaries visited in 1969. Among them were Mrs. Nixon, former Georgia governor George Wallace, Jimmy Stewart, and Martha Raye. Many hospital staff became angry when the secret service agents with Mrs. Nixon made them move any “bloody” patients off wards that Mrs. Nixon visited. Staff were at a loss for words to explain to a quadruple amputee why he wasn’t good enough to see the wife of the President of the United States and why he had to be moved to another ward.

Martha Raye visited the hospital more than once. She was a great goodwill ambassador. During one visit, one of the Red Cross workers mentioned that they did not have clothes for children. About a week later, a truck showed up with 1000 pairs of thongs, 1000 pairs of black shorts and 1000 yellow shirts. After that date it was easy to identify children who had been treated at the 24th Evacuation Hospital since they all wore the “uniform” of yellow shirt, black shorts and thongs.

During Spring 1969, many of the roads in and around Long Binh were not secure and supplies became limited. Thus, the reason that the Sound of Music motion picture was shown every night for nearly a month. Meat became scarce and the mess hall served a “mystery meat” along with malaria pills.

The nurses quarters were refurbished and the nurses were moved to two vacant hospital wards while renovation to their quarters occurred. Many of the nurses will fondly remember “tent city” where sheets were used as room separations and the lights were always out since someone was always sleeping.

On Christmas 1969, the nurses were allowed to wear their white uniforms to celebrate the spirit of Christmas. There was a holiday cease fire in effect and everything should have been calm. Unfortunately, not everyone agreed with the cease fire. Six American soldiers came to the ER with terrible phosphorus burns that needed to be treated with copper sulfate solution to stop the burning. By the end of the day white uniforms were black but six soldiers were still alive.

As in past years, the 24th Evacuation Hospital was host to Vietnamese orphans for Christmas. Santa showed up to distribute presents. The orphans and the sisters who cared for them had a traditional turkey Christmas dinner with the staff,



Army Nurse Donna Peck on MEDCAP mission 1968-1969.

The number of patient admissions for 1969, were 15,135 and there were 302 deaths. A total of 134,042 x-rays were taken and a total of 6,299 cast room procedures and a total of 73,699 clinic visits were recorded.

The unit received the Meritorious Unit Commendation, Second Oak Leaf Cluster, presented by Brigadier General David Thomas for “displaying commendable generosity and an unselfish dedication to the alleviation of human pain and suffering, staff members participated in numerous medical civic action programs which did much to promote good will between the Vietnamese people and the United States servicemen”.

James N. "Nick" Rowe-POW

Nick Rowe was perhaps the most famous patient to come through the doors of the 24th Evac. A First Lieutenant in the Special Forces, he was captured by the Viet Cong in the area of Can Tho on October 29, 1963, and escaped from his "Forest of Darkness" on December 30, 1969. Admitted to Ward 7, he was suffering from chronic dysentery and a fungal skin infection, malnourishment and several small fragment wounds from an exploding cluster bomb.

During the five years he was a POW, Lieutenant Rowe saw one of his friends executed by the Viet Cong and several others die from disease and malnutrition. He spent every night in a small bamboo cage with his legs in irons. He endured long and repeated "reorientation and correction" sessions by his captors. He was moved frequently throughout his captivity and it was during one of these moves that he was able to escape. Dressed in black pajamas, heavily tanned and no bigger in stature than most Vietnamese, he was nearly killed when the American's thought he was the enemy. Fortunately, his black beard helped to identify him as an American.

Nick kept a diary during his captivity and he later published that diary as a book named "Five Years to Freedom". Although, in his book he stated he was at the 93rd Evacuation Hospital, he was really at the 24th Evacuation Hospital. After returning to the United States, Nick married, divorced and later married again. In late April 1989, Colonel James Nick Rowe was assassinated by "rebels" in the Philippines. He left behind his wife Sue, two young sons and a legacy of unparalleled courage, service and devotion to his country.

In March of 1970 the 24th Evacuation Hospital sustained a direct hit during an enemy rocket attack. The rocket hit the administrative section of the hospital blowing holes in the roof. The major damage sustained was to the Army SOP's, regulations and rules books which had been blown-up into tiny pieces and forced into the holes in the ceiling. Some commented that was a fitting place for rules and regulations! No one was hurt, but it made all the staff more cautious during red alert time.

The hospital changed commanders and Colonel Charles Cochrane assumed command.

Major hospital construction had been completed and minor improvements were made. Tile was laid on the concrete throughout the hospital, and there was a significant electrical upgrade in the hospital area. The Executive Officer, Don Grider, states that the greatest challenge he faced during this time was "when the hot water heater for the nurse's quarters broke down and there was no replacement anywhere in Asia. Every morning I had to face an angry group of nurses demanding to know what was being done to get them some hot water. All of the efforts of PA&E and Army supply system were to no avail and the situation was becoming more and more unpleasant. Finally we rigged a fire hose from the large hot water heater in the mess hall and tied it into the nurses hot water system. This functioned for quite a while until a replacement unit arrived."

Many dignitaries and celebrities visited the hospital, among them were Vice President Spiro Agnew, Neil Armstrong and Dr. Norman Vincent Peale



Main OR 1971.

As Christmas 1970, approached hospital staff longed for a live Christmas tree. CW2 William R. Merideth mess officer of the 24th Evacuation Hospital contacted the quartermaster of the VFW Post 731 in Vancouver, Washington about the possibility of sending a Christmas tree to the 24th Evacuation Hospital.

A live 25-foot scotch pine Christmas tree was secured and transported to Cam Ranh Bay courtesy of Sea/Land Shipping Company. On arrival at Cam Ranh Bay some enterprising individual noted that a genuine, real, live, Christmas tree complete with needles and sap would really look nice in the unit area—the tree was requisitioned on the spot.

Meanwhile, CW2 Merideth at the 24th Evac became worried that the tree had not arrived and started an investigation. Merideth knew that the tree had arrived at Cam Ranh Bay but where had it gone? It is difficult to hide a 25 foot pine tree in the middle of a jungle and the tree was quickly located. After some forceful negotiations, the tree was again on its way to Long Binh and the 24th Evacuation Hospital. The tree arrived on December 23, 1970 and was decorated by staff and patients. The "wayward" Christmas tree was officially lighted by Colonel Charles R. Cochrane, commanding officer of the 24th Evacuation Hospital.

Throughout 1970, the Nixon administration began to “Vietnamize the war” by assigning more combat responsibility to the South Vietnamese Army and by reducing the number of Americans in South Vietnam. Despite this reduction in the number of American forces in South Vietnam, the medical requirements at the hospital remained extensive. The hospital continued to treat thousands of wounded.

The unit earned its third Meritorious Unit Commendation, Third Oak Leaf Cluster. The citation read “...Although hindered by personnel shortages and numerous mass casualty situations, the officers and men of the hospital provided excellent medical support to United States and Allied forces operating in the southern half of Military Region 2 and throughout Military Regions 3 and 4. Through their untiring and vigorous application of specialized professional skills, the hospital staff administered highly effective treatment to over 15,000 patients. In addition to rendering proper care to hospitalized personnel, the members of the 24th Evacuation Hospital willingly participated in a Medical Civic Action Program which provided neurosurgical and maxillofacial services to local Vietnamese health care centers”.

The hospital remained busy throughout 1971. Care was given to over 11,000 in-patients and 100,000 outpatients. Additionally, hospital personnel again participated in the medical civic action program (Medcap) which provided numerous specialized professional services to local Vietnamese citizens and health care centers. Doctor Russell Zajtchuk, a thoracic surgeon and his wife Doctor Joan Zajtchuk, an otolaryngologist were two of the hospital staff that were very active in the Medcap mission.

Doctor Joan Zajtchuk was involved in training several Vietnamese in procedures involving ear surgery. She split her time between the 24th Evacuation Hospital on Long Binh and medical clinics and teaching facilities in Saigon. When Doctor Joan Zajtchuk left Vietnam in September 1972, she was awarded the Silver Health Medal, the highest award which can be presented to Americans by the Vietnamese government.

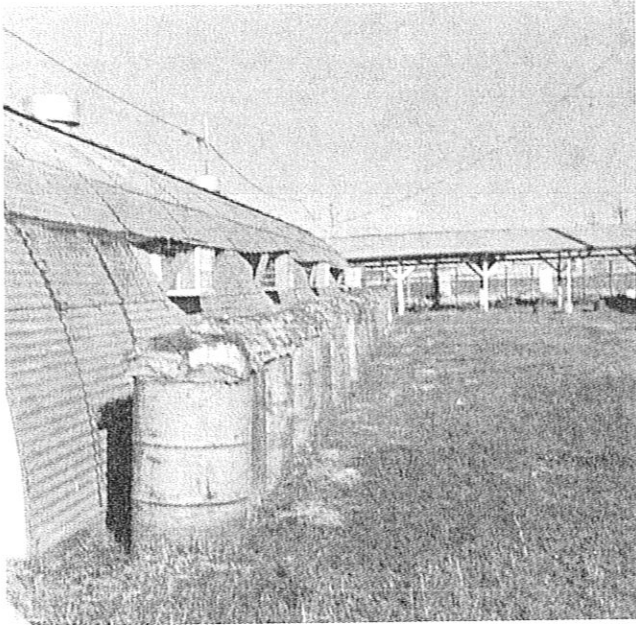


Air ambulance 1971. Note that the helicopters have gone from camouflaged 1967 to white in 1971.

Doctor Russell Zajtchuk was involved in teaching Vietnamese doctors thoracic surgery procedures both at the 24th Evacuation Hospital and in teaching facilities in Saigon. Both the doctors Zajtchuk were instrumental in sponsoring five of the Vietnamese medical families for additional training and relocation to the United States. Many of these Vietnamese doctors have established practices in ear surgery and are widely respected.



24th Evacuation Hospital Headquarters 1972.



Outside one of the hospital wards. Note the improvement of grass between the quonset huts in 1972.

During this time a near tragedy occurred for the staff of the 24th Evacuation Hospital. A wounded Viet Cong was brought to the hospital for medical treatment. While taking his weapon to the appropriate storage area, it was accidentally dropped and it discharged. The bullets penetrated the wall of the nursing area and critically injured Lt. Tim Jacobs. Tim was wounded in the abdomen and suffered severe wounds to his arm. He was immediately treated, had surgery and was evacuated to Walter Reed Army Medical Center for treatment and rehabilitation. Upon discharge from the Army, Tim returned to school to study epidemiology and returned to Vietnam several times for humanitarian purposes. His wounds were the most serious injuries received by any member of the hospital staff during the Vietnam War.



Team members of the first and last "Rice Bowl", a touch football game between the nurses, doctors and enlisted personnel played on the hospital compound. Supplee's Sappers (Nurses) 2 and Doctors 0. January 16, 1972.

Whatever Happened to 'Bones'?

Around 1970, a stray dog became the hospital mascot. He was named "Bones" and he lived with the doctors Zajtchuk. At the end of their tour, the doctors were able to bring Bones to the United States. The dog remained a family pet for 11 more years. About three years after returning to the U.S., Bones became very ill. During an x-ray procedure, shrapnel was discovered in his body. A veterinary doctor performed successful surgery to remove the shrapnel. The doctors Zajtchuk always felt Bones should have been awarded the Purple Heart.

As American soldiers became pawns in an increasingly unpopular war, many turned to drugs and alcohol for relief. The need for detoxification units for drug and alcohol rehabilitation was great. In late 1971, and early 1972, troops began leaving, and the Long Binh Jail was converted into a drug rehabilitation center. Portions of the 24th Evacuation Hospital were also used for alcohol and drug rehabilitation. Any combat patients were quickly stabilized and evacuated out of country for further treatment. In November, 1971 the hospital continued to function with 350 beds, however, by July, 1972, the hospital was down to 25 beds.

The 93rd Evacuation Hospital closed early in 1972, as did the 12th Evacuation Hospital at Cu Chi. Finally, just the 24th Evacuation Hospital remained.

The last days of the 24th Evacuation Hospital were chaotic. There is no graceful way to close a combat hospital in the middle of battle when various sections are still operational and patients are still being received. The closing occurred at the same time Long Binh Post was shutting down. The absence of infantry and defensive forces at Long Binh led to many serious attacks on the post during the last 120 days, as the units were leaving. The 24th Evacuation Hospital was the last hospital to close on Long Binh.

Major Tom Hovey, Acting Chief Nurse, was one of the senior officers in charge of the transition between the U.S. Army and the Vietnamese Army during August, September, October, and early November 1972, when the hospital finally closed in Vietnam. Major Hovey has often been teased throughout his military career by his associates that he “must have left the lights on” since he returned to the 24th Evacuation Hospital for a second tour of duty. Major Hovey was with the advance party that arrived at the hospital site in 1966. He gives the following description of activities:

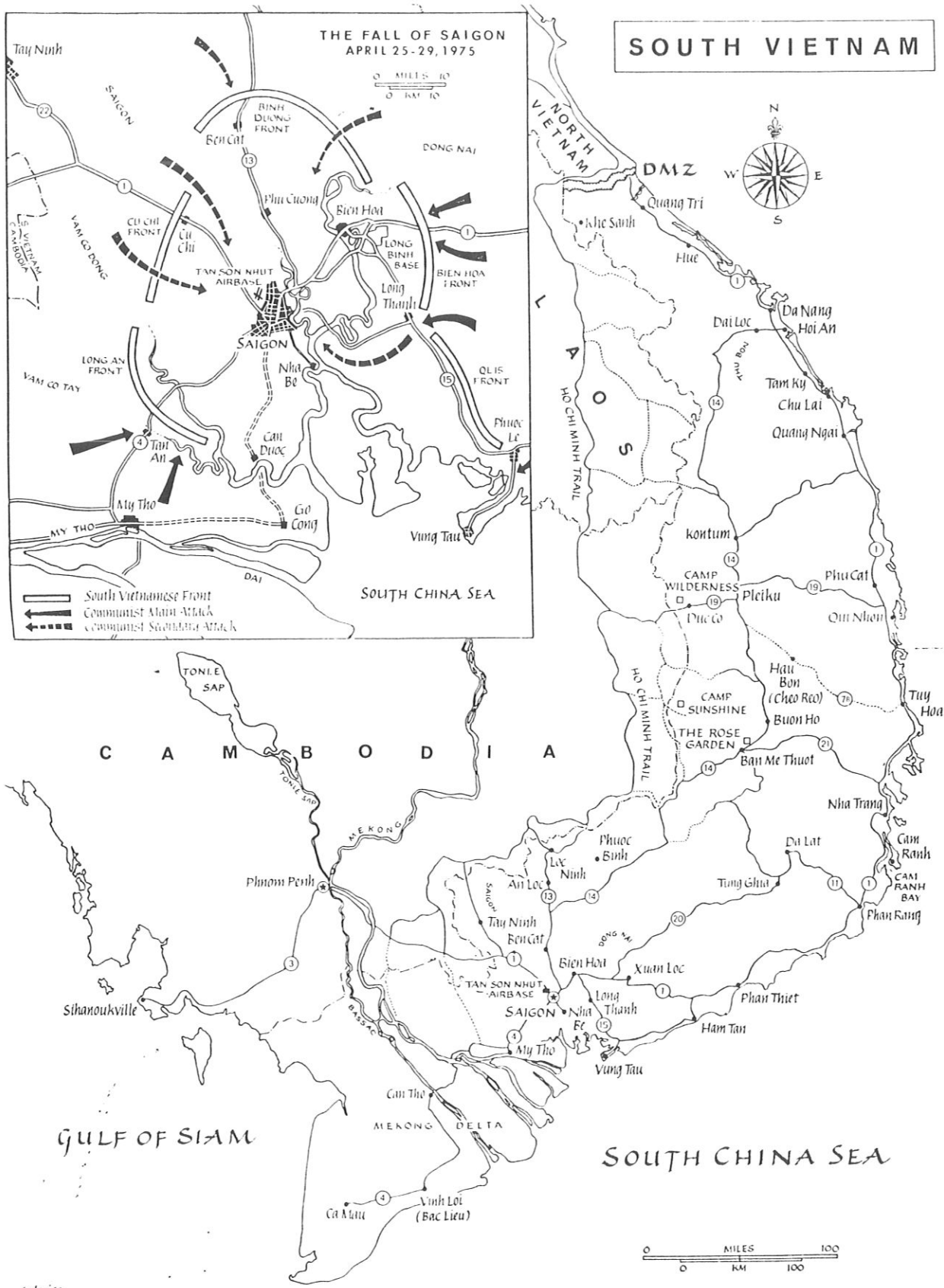
“At the end, many of the hospitals were rapidly shutting down. Personnel were transferred to the 24th Evacuation Hospital to serve the balance of their one year period of service in Vietnam. Because of so much turbulence in personnel, it was difficult to maintain high morale and develop solid teamwork. However, the hospital continued to function and treat patients up to and including November, 1972”.

During July and August, the hospital had less than 10 nurses, one anesthetist, and only a few doctors. During the final 120 days, four separate doctors were appointed as Hospital Commander. One doctor stayed only for three days before being shipped out of country. Staff worked hard to shut down the various hospital sections, pack equipment into CONEX containers, and work with the 104th Transportation Battalion to ship the hospital equipment to a medical depot and storage area on the island of Okinawa.

At the end, the hospital was still receiving emergencies but only those that were life or death. The order to evacuate the hospital came quickly. The final 48 hours were very stressful. Orders were received to transport the last of the nursing personnel within 48 hours. The order was received on Monday and by Wednesday evening, the last nurses were transported to Saigon and immediately placed on an aircraft. They were flown to Travis Air Force base for final processing.

Captain Hammond, the ranking MSC officer, supervised the administrative transition of the hospital to the Vietnamese. It is believed that Captain Hammond was the last American to leave the hospital.

Within a few weeks after the final departure of American forces, the Vietnamese began to immediately 'salvage' the structures. The buildings rapidly decayed. The hospital did not become a Vietnamese hospital; it was abandoned by the Vietnamese Army at the end of the war. The Vietnamese made every effort to eliminate every trace of war at Long Binh. Over 90% of the buildings, paved roads, concrete foundations, and other evidence of American activity, have been removed completely from Long Binh. Only the USARV Headquarters buildings remain. Today, nothing exists of the 24th Evacuation Hospital on Long Binh Post. No buildings, no concrete, no blacktop....nothing. The place many of us called home, and where nearly 200,000 people received medical care exists only in our minds.



Images from the Past: An Army Nurse in Vietnam

by

CPT Timothy A. Jacobs

Time and again I see it and sense it, like in a dream, yet I am awake...

The brown, hot, oily cracked earth...

The green jungle and countryside shimmering in monsoon rains...

The clear blue skies and billowy white clouds...

The droning whir of the medvac choppers slicing the humid air, heavy with their warm cargo...

The dull rusting tin roofs, sandbags, and bright red crosses on the hospitals...

The distant muffled booms of artillery barking at an unseen enemy...

VIETNAM.

It all comes back — vividly, starkly...

The land and its people seem eons away in space and in time yet, in a moment, I am there once again...

The young unshaven soldiers in the field, perhaps only 19 or 20: tanned, rumped fatigues, faded OD boonie hats, blue-black '16's, shades, beads...boredom, frustration...endless fear.

It's all a part of their experience...and their memories, these young men of America.

Mine is the reality of illness and injury...grim remnants of war...

The long open wards of the field hospital...

GI's in beds, bandaged, IV's running, dim lights, sounds in the shadows...

Gunshot wounds, burns, pain...depression, uncertainty — a long way from home.

That's everyone's reality.

Though these images return time and again, they are those of an era past...

A past which we must all hope shall never be repeated.

GOODBYE, VIETNAM...

Mr. Clayton M. Peterson
503 6th Street South
Montesano, WA 98563
(206)249-3065

April 7, 1993

To the people of the 24th Med. Evac:

I am writing this to thank those who had a hand in treating me and setting me on the road to recovery. But I'm not writing this just for myself, but for the hundreds or thousands who were carried through your doors. For those that may be dead or left unable to say a thank you to those who were there when they were needed.

Who am I? If there is an average soldier, I guess I am it. That is partly why I am writing: for the average soldier. Someone has said 70% of the soldiers who get wounded get it in the first or last month of their tour.

I arrived in Nam the first week of April 1969; was assigned to the 9th Division Riveren Force. I was wounded during my third fire-fight on April 30th. It was an average fire-fight, short, loud, and violent. I was hit by fragments from two M-79 (grenade launcher) rounds, 5 or 6 bullets from an Ak-47, AND A 45 caliber bullet, which went through my jaw.

After a "life after death" experience, which are more common than people think, I was pulled from the poncho I had been wrapped in because the medic believed I was dead. I was actually stacked with the dead bodies. I knew I had been there for a least 45 minutes by the information I had gathered after the fact.

After my glimpse of heaven, I knew that I would live; but the trauma and the pain were real. And so I ended up on the doorstep of the 24th Med. Evac. A wayward traveler in need of a "good samaritan" and I found many.

The doctors whose eyes told me I was a hopeless case, yet they went to work anyway. The corpsmen who shuffled me from x-ray to surgery. The chaplin who was giving me the "last rites", who startled when I sat up, I might add. The red cross girl who wrote a letter for me to my family; especially the nurses. Those Florence Nightingales who put the human element back into healing.

It wasn't until a nurse held my hand and cried while gauge-packing was removed from my sinuses (a painful experience) that I then realized I was not just in professional hands but in caring hands of those who wanted me healed.

When the sailor in the next bed died, I could tell that the whole staff felt the loss. After various medical problems, gangrene, heart attack, etc. I was then sent to Camp Zama, Japan. Almost 3 months later at Fort Ord, Army Medical Hospital, I met a nurse from the 24th Med. Evac Hospital in Nam; she told me she thought I had died after I left Nam.

No, a lot of us are still alive because the men and women of the 24th reached out with healing hands to help strangers. I can't thank you by name because I do not know your name nor do I expect you to remember me. I know with all the many faces and names that went through your doors it would be a hard task. So consider this a thank you from the unknown patient of the 24th to the unknown healers of the 24th.

Thanks for being there and going through the fire with us. We do remember, and we always will.

Sincerely,

Clayton M. Peterson SP 4; US Army Retired w/100% disability

David Lloyd Smith
Attorney at Law
1472 Rocky Hill Drive
Exeter, California, 93221-9706
(209) 592-5742

Mr. Don Barnett
24th Reunion Chairman
460 So. Marion Pkwy., 181C
Denver, CO., 80209

5-30-93

Re: *One Courageous Nurse*

Dear Mr. Barnett:

I was an infantryman with the First Army Division. On 08-07-67, I was wounded by shrapnel. Shot in the arm, through the leg and in the back, eleven pieces, two five inches long, exited by abdomen.

I was placed on a Stryker frame and stayed in your hospital for twenty six (26) days.

While I was there, the base was shelled. Pieces of steel two feet long were coming through the walls.

One of your nurses, whose name I cannot recall, was young and pretty and very brave.

She threw herself over me to protect me from harm!!!

I have never forgotten her and I would like to meet her again and thank her personally for the bravest act I have ever witnessed.

Please post copies of this letter at your reunion. Please make some mention of this for me, so that I can find this most courageous woman.

Sincerely,

D. L. Smith
Attorney at Law

This letter is addressed to all of the Healing Angels at the 24th Evacuation Hospital

Let me start by expressing my deepest heartfelt thanks to all of you for the superior, professional care which I received throughout my stay at the 24th Evac in November 1968. These wishes are expressed on behalf of several family members, many friends, a number of men who served with me in combat in Vietnam, all of whom were recipients of your care after being wounded. All of us were in dire need of expert medical care when we arrived at your door and most of us had already been passed along by 1 or more field hospitals.

I was an Assistant District Senior Advisor to a Vietnamese unit that was in a remote site far away from any U.S. forces. We occasionally had Special Ops missions and were involved in a lot of enemy contact. I had 13 American advisors on my team and I guess the knowledge that expert medical professionals were available in area hospitals made us more secure as we faced a continuing array of dangerous and unpredictable operations against Main Force Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces.

On November 13, 1968, I was blown 80 feet through the air by a Viet Cong command detonated mine and suffered wounds over 90% of my body. I suffered severe head wounds, abdominal and chest wounds, amputation of one leg and the other foot, a severed artery and jugular vein in my neck, and numerous flesh wounds all over my body. It is no wonder, therefore, that other patients, less injured, were assigned a higher priority for treatment after being triaged as we were all carried through the door around the same time. I am very thankful for the surgeon who later pulled me out of the low priority area sooner than normal and had me carried to the operating area where the dedicated team of surgeons, nurses, and O.R. assistants spent long hours trying to sort through my torn body and pieced me back together again. Although I was blind and heavily sedated during my stay at the 24th Evac, I remember Mary Lou Kneible Brown, R.N., Cathy Solomonsen, R.N., Col. William Hammond, M.D., Col. William Thompson, D.D.S., and several other surgeons, nurses, ward assistants, and Chaplains whose names I forget, but who all spent so much time helping to restore my body and spirit. In reality, as severely wounded as I was, there was no reason to believe that I would even survive in spite of all of your expert and dedicated treatment. You all refused, however, to let me give up my mortality at the door and worked tirelessly to stabilize me to the point where I could be safely evacuated first to Japan and then to the States for further surgery and hoped for rehabilitation.

I eventually ended up at Walter Reed where Dr. Hammond was reassigned and he oversaw two additional neuro-surgical procedures which finally, successfully implanted a cranial plastic plate to correct a sizeable skull defect caused by my wound. It was very reassuring to have a veteran of the 24th Evac in charge of my care once again.

Although the surgery and rehabilitation process dragged on for 5 years, I am now completely independent, have earned a graduate degree in Healthcare Administration, and have worked as an Administrator in a variety of settings including hospitals, rehab services, home health agencies, and managed care plans. In summary, you can say that I am a walking, talking, example of what good, timely, professional, and consultative medical care is all about.

I owe you each a deep debt of gratitude for the excellent care you gave me and the faith you had in my recovery. I know that your dedicated treatment of me started as I arrived at the 24th Evac and continued until I was put on the flight home. Even then, one of your surgeons had to accompany me to Japan due to the critical nature of my medical condition. I can well imagine the pressures, frustrations, exhaustion, and burn-out that you each must have felt as you treated the seemingly endless parade of broken bodies being cycled through the 24th Evac with little or no sense of success or resulting feedback for your long hours and professional efforts. I am a living success story that testifies to your professional competence, your dedicated efforts, and your loving support that set the stage for my ultimate recovery and return to productive life. You all have my undying appreciation for treating me and not giving up so that I am now in a position to give help and encouragement to patients undergoing a medical crisis in their lives. Thanks again for your care and may God richly bless each of you for all the help and encouragement that you have shared with so many men and women.

With deepest appreciation,

William G. Haneke
Cpt, USA (Ret.)

TOPIC: VIETNAM VETERANS
TIME: 03/11/93 8:46 AM
TO: IRVIN JENKINS
FROM: JERRY ADAMS
SUBJECT: 24TH EVAC REUNION

IRVIN

ALTHOUGH I WAS NOT A MEMBER OF THE STAFF, I DID PASS THROUGH YOUR FACILITY DURING THE TET OF 68. YOU ALL ARE THE GREATEST. THERE'S NO WAY I COULD EVER THANK EVERYONE INVOLVED ENOUGH. PLEASE PRINT THIS NOTE AND TAKE TO YOUR REUNION. THANKS.

J.L. ADAMS FROM WV (West Virginia)

Statement of Service
24th Evacuation Hospital

Constituted 3 January 1923 in the Organized Reserves as Evacuation Hospital No. 24

Organized in November 1924 at Little Rock, Arkansas

Redesignated 23 March 1925 as the 24th Evacuation Hospital

Withdrawn 1 October 1933 from the Organized Reserves and allotted to the Regular Army

Activated 15 June 1942 at Camp Rucker, Alabama

Reorganized and redesignated 12 March 1943 as the 24th Evacuation Hospital, Semimobile

Inactivated 4 February 1946 in Germany

Activated 20 September 1950 at Fort Benning, Georgia

Redesignated 29 June 1953 as the 24th Evacuation Hospital

Inactivated 21 November 1972 in Vietnam

CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION CREDIT

World War II

Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Central Europe

Vietnam

Counteroffensive, Phase II
Counteroffensive, Phase III
Tet counteroffensive
Counteroffensive, Phase IV
Counteroffensive, Phase V
Counteroffensive, Phase VI
Tet 69 Counteroffensive
Summer-Fall 1969
Winter-Spring 1970
Sanctuary Counteroffensive
Counteroffensive, Phase VII
Consolidation I
Consolidation II
Cease-Fire

DECORATIONS

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army),
Streamer embroidered Vietnam 1967-1968

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army),
Streamer embroidered Vietnam 1968

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army),
Streamer embroidered Vietnam 1968-1969

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army),
Streamer embroidered Vietnam 1969-1970

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army),
Streamer embroidered Vietnam 1971

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, United States Army Vietnam
APO San Francisco 96375

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 3275

AWARD OF THE MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION - 1967

For exceptionally meritorious achievement in the performance of outstanding service: The 24th Evacuation Hospital (semimobile) for the period 9 January 1967 to 25 February 1968 distinguished themselves in support of military operations in the republic of Vietnam during the periods stated. Alerted for deployment in January 1966, the hospital became operational in Vietnam in less than one year, providing hospitalization for all classes of patients within the combat zone. During this period, the hospital has recorded a total of 9,010 admissions and has returned 3,782 persons to duty, demonstrating the highest standards of professional competence. The most noteworthy example of the outstanding degree of professional skill displayed by the 24th Evacuation Hospital (semimobile) was its selection by six United States Army Vietnam surgical consultants as the site in which to establish the services of neurosurgery, orthopedics, maxillofacial, ophthalmology, otolaryngology and oral surgery. While maintaining outstanding medical techniques for the combat soldier, the hospital personnel gave their available time to contribute their professional knowledge towards the education of Vietnamese medical and nursing students. The outstanding service performed by the hospital contributed immeasurably to the mission of the Free World Military Forces movement toward peace, security and freedom in the Republic of Vietnam. The remarkable proficiency and devotion to duty displayed by the members of the 24th Evacuation Hospital (semimobile) are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, United States Army Vietnam
APO San Francisco 96375

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 1745

AWARD OF THE MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION - 1968
(First Oak Leaf Cluster)

The 24th Evacuation Hospital (Semi-mobile) and its attached units distinguished themselves in support of military operations in the Republic of Vietnam during the period 1 March 1968 to 31 August 1968. The members of this unit demonstrated extraordinary diligence, initiative and consummate skill in providing medical service to United States Army personnel and other Free World assistance forces throughout the combat zone. The miraculous speed, efficiency and lifesaving measures executed by the entire staff enabled them to provide quality medical and surgical care for the immense number of casualties injured as a result of hostile action during the TET, May and August Offensives. Their incisive understanding of the great importance of superior medical care improved the treatment rendered to patients during mass casualty periods. In spite of the overwhelming requirements of their basic mission, the personnel of the 24th Evacuation Hospital (semi-mobile) unselfishly utilized their professional talents during off-duty hours in an effort to raise the local health standards of the Vietnamese people in outlying areas by providing direct medical and dental aid. Manifesting rare dedication and expertise, the hospital personnel consistently furnished the finest medical support possible in the Republic of Vietnam. The remarkable proficiency and devotion to duty displayed by the members of the 24th Evacuation Hospital (semi-mobile) are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, United States Army Vietnam
APO San Francisco 96375

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 409

AWARD OF THE MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION - 1969
(Second Oak Leaf Cluster)

The 24th Evacuation Hospital (semimobile) and its attached units distinguished themselves in support of military operations in the Republic of Vietnam during the period 1 September 1968 to 31 August 1969. Demonstrating singular initiative, diligence and consummate skill, the officers and men of the hospital provided truly outstanding medical support to Allied forces operating in Military Region 3 and 4. In addition to furnishing superior treatment to numerous combat casualties, the members of the 24th Evacuation Hospital (semimobile) also rendered unsurpassed medical care to military and civilian personnel suffering from disease and non-combat injuries. Displaying commendable generosity and an unselfish dedication to the alleviation of human pain and suffering, staff members participated in numerous medical civic action programs which did much to promote good will between the Vietnamese people and the United States serviceman. With professional pride, humanity, and personal fortitude, they contributed immeasurably to the Free World medical effort in the Republic of Vietnam. The remarkable proficiency and devotion to duty displayed by the members of the 24th Evacuation Hospital (semimobile) are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves, their unit and the Armed Forces of the United States.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, United States Army Vietnam
APO San Francisco 96375

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 2264-183

AWARD OF THE MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION - 1970
(Third Oak Leaf Cluster)

The 24th Evacuation hospital (semimobile) and its attached units distinguished themselves while in support of military operations in the Republic of Vietnam during the period of 1 September 1969 to 31 December 1970. Although hindered by personnel shortages and numerous mass casualty situations, the officers and men of the hospital provided excellent medical support to United States and Allied forces operating in the southern half of Military Region 2 and throughout Military Regions 3 and 4. Through their untiring and vigorous application of specialized professional skills, the hospital staff administered highly effective treatment to over 15,000 patients. In addition to rendering proper care to hospitalized personnel, the members of the 24th Evacuation Hospital (semimobile) willingly participated in a Medical civic Action Program which provided neurosurgical and maxillofacial services to Vietnamese health care centers. With singular initiative, brilliant technical skill and profound dedication to mission accomplishment, the hospital's members contributed immeasurably to the Free World military effort in the Republic of Vietnam. The remarkable proficiency and devotion to duty displayed by the members of the 24th Evacuation Hospital (semimobile) are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves, their unit and the Armed Forces of the United States.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, United States Army Vietnam
APO San Francisco 96375

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 2245

AWARD OF THE MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION - 1971
(Fourth Oak Leaf Cluster)

The 24th Evacuation hospital (semimobile) distinguished itself while in support of military operations in the Republic of Vietnam during the period of 1 January 1971 to 31 December 1971. Although hindered by personnel shortages and a number of mass casualty situations, the officers and men of the unit provided excellent medical support to United States and Allied forces operating in the southern half of Military Region 1 and throughout Military Regions 3 and 4. Through their untiring and vigorous application of specialized professional skills, the hospital staff administered highly effective treatment to over 11,000 in-patients and 100,000 out-patients. In addition to rendering proper care to hospitalized personnel, the members of the 24th Evacuation Hospital (semimobile) willingly participated in a medical civic action program which provided numerous specialized professional services to local Vietnamese citizens and health care centers. With singular initiative, brilliant technical skill and profound dedication to mission accomplishment, the hospital contributed immeasurably to the Free World military effort in the Republic of Vietnam. The remarkable proficiency and devotion to duty displayed by the members of the 24th Evacuation Hospital (semimobile) are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon themselves, their unit and the United States Armed Forces.

HOSPITAL COMMANDERS

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1943 | Colonel Bolend |
| 1943-1946 | Colonel Carl M. Rylander (Deceased) |
| 1957-1961 | LTC William J. McKinley |
| 1966-1967 | LTC Albert C. Donohoo LTC John R. Connelly (Deceased) |
| 1967-1968 | LTC G.I. Baker |
| 1968 | LTC Robert Leaver |
| 1968 | LTC Robert Stanek |
| 1968-1969 | LTC William Hammon |
| 1969-1970 | Colonel Claude McClure |
| 1970-1971 | LTC Charles Cochran |
| 1971-1972 | Colonel Albert Stratten |

Between March, 1972 and November 1972, five "short-timers" served as Hospital Commander. Some, for as long as three days, unfortunately, those names were unavailable for printing.

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

| | |
|-----------|---------------------|
| 1966 | Major Hazel Green |
| 1967-1968 | LTC Gerald Allgood |
| 1968-1969 | Major Irvin Jenkins |
| 1969-1970 | Major Neal Walls |
| 1970-1971 | Major Don Grider |
| 1971-1972 | Major Ed Blodgett |

During the last few months of hospital operations, Captain Hammond was the Chief Administrative Officer during the transition to the Vietnamese Army. Captain Hammond is believed to be the last officer to leave the 24th Evac when it was turned over to the Vietnamese government.

CHIEF NURSES

| | |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1967 | LTC Angie McCloud |
| 1967-1968 | LTC Virginia Morgan |
| 1968-1969 | LTC Elizabeth Starkey |
| 1969-1970 | LTC Doris Ledbetter |
| 1970 | Colonel Lyndsey Stone |
| 1970-1971 | LTC Ramona Delaney |
| 1971 | LTC O'Dell |
| 1971-1972 | LTC Jeannie Supplee |
| 1972 | Major Tom Hovey |