

CHAPLAINS WITH MARINES IN VIETNAM 1962-1971



Chaplains with Marines in Vietnam
1962-1971

In the field hospitals and on the line, the U.S. Navy chaplain in Vietnam could be found with the Marines who needed him most. His ministry and compassion extended into the villages, as well—as he sought to provide aid and comfort to all those victimized by the harsh blows of war.

The first chaplain arrived in country with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 362, in April 1962. Over the next nine years, more than 700 others followed in his footsteps. Technically speaking, the chaplain was a non-combatant; but he could not serve the Marines of his unit without sharing the hardships and dangers they faced on a daily basis.

It was not unknown for a chaplain to brave intense fire, in order to be at the side of a grieving infantryman who had just lost his best friend in combat. With skill and patience, he helped the survivor deal in human terms with the pain of inevitable—yet still traumatic—losses in battle, even while he comforted the wounded, the sick, and the dying.

In the relative safety of the rear areas, the chaplain's efforts did not diminish. He provided counseling over a wide range of subjects, to improve and ennoble the lives of Marines. He became a builder and restorer of orphanages, schools, and hospitals that had been destroyed or damaged. At least 46 new chapels became visible across the land.

As exemplified by the chaplain who received a posthumous award of the Medal of Honor, a common bond of sacrifice linked the U.S. Navy chaplain with the Marines he served. In this, the chaplain remained true to his heritage:

*Greater love hath no man than this;
That a man lay down his life for his friends.*

CHAPLAINS WITH MARINES IN VIETNAM 1962-1971

by

Commander Herbert L. Bergsma, CHC, U.S. Navy



HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
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FOREWORD

This is the first of a series of functional volumes on the Marine Corps' participation in the Vietnam War, which will complement the 10-volume operational and chronological series also underway. This particular history examines the role of the Navy chaplain serving with Marines, a vital partnership of fighting man and man of God which has been an integral part of the history of the Marine Corps since its inception.

The first Marine aviation units to support the South Vietnamese Government forces entered Vietnam in 1962 and with them came their chaplains. When major Marine ground forces were first assigned to Vietnam in 1965, the number of assigned chaplains increased apace. By 1968 the III Marine Amphibious Force, occupying the five northernmost provinces of South Vietnam, numbered over 80,000 Marines and had under its command the better part of three Marine divisions, a greatly expanded Marine aircraft wing, and a U.S. Army corps of multi-divisional strength. The number of Navy chaplains serving ashore with Marine units exceeded all past experience, and the scope of their ministry had expanded into new and sometimes troubling fields. When the American involvement in the war gave way to Vietnamization, Marine units phased down in strength, eventually departing the country from 1969-1971. Then, as today, they stood ready in the Pacific, on board ship and at bases in Okinawa, Japan, Hawaii, and California, to provide, as needed, a ready force to meet their country's call. And with them, as always, stood their chaplains, in peace or war ready to provide the counsel, comfort, and religious experience that are so much a part of military life.

The author, Commander Herbert L. Bergsma, Chaplain Corps, U.S. Navy, is a minister of the Christian Reformed Church and a graduate of his church's affiliated Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After serving a congregation in Michigan, he became a Navy chaplain in 1965 and served two tours in I Corps in Vietnam with Navy Mobile Construction Battalion 74 supporting the III Marine Amphibious Corps. Subsequently, Chaplain Bergsma served at Mare Island Naval Shipyard; with Destroyer Division 112; on board the destroyer tender USS *Bryce Canyon*; at the Marine Corps Air Station at Kaneohe, Hawaii; at the Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Quantico, Virginia; and with Submarine Group 2, Atlantic Fleet. In 1976 he earned a master of theology degree in homiletics at Princeton Theological Seminary. Promoted to captain, he is at present serving at Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California.

E. H. SIMMONS

Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

PREFACE

This work was begun in 1977 with agreements between Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired), Director of Marine Corps History and Museums, and Chief of Chaplains Rear Admiral John J. O'Connor, Chaplain Corps, U.S. Navy. Detailed arrangements were made by Mr. Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Chief Historian of the Marine Corps, and Captain Carl Auel, CHC, USN, Director of Professional Development and Religious Programs in the office of the Chief of Chaplains.

General Simmons and his staff provided office space; research suggestions; editorial, design, and production assistance; and administrative support.

Commander Herbert L. Bergsma, CHC, USN, who served as Head, Chaplain Corps History Project during the years 1978-80, completed the first draft. Mr. Shaw and his staff continued Chaplain Bergsma's work, bringing it through the review, editorial, and production stages.

Commander H. Lawrence Martin, CHC, USN, Head, Chaplain Corps History Branch, and others reviewed the manuscript. Chaplain Martin additionally served as photographic editor.

The approach of the writer was to provide basic history of the war in Vietnam and to use it as the framework for dealing with the overall experiences and contributions of the chaplains involved and for highlighting the work of some individual chaplains. For the former, he used books, articles, and news releases; for the latter he used chaplains' end-of-tour reports, interviews, and correspondence addressed to the Chief of Chaplains and the Chaplain Corps historian.

No attempt was made to chronicle the known work of every chaplain who served, or even of those who submitted materials concerning their work. What is presented is that which was judged most significant historically, most representative of the whole, and most interesting.

Concurrent with the preparation of this volume is that of another which is expected to be a companion to it—*Chaplains With U.S. Naval Units in Vietnam 1954-1975*—to be published by this office under the editorial management of Chaplain Martin and the authorship of Rear Admiral Withers M. Moore, CHC, USN (Retired); Chaplain Bergsma; and Lieutenant Timothy J. Demy, CHC, USNR. With the publication of these two volumes the history of the naval chaplaincy in all the wars in which our country has been engaged will have been treated.

NEIL M. STEVENSON
Rear Admiral, Chaplain Corps, U.S. Navy
Chief of Chaplains

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The risks of writing the history of almost-current events are great. Being too close to them chronologically may reduce objectivity and surely open the author to the legitimate differences of opinion of many who lived the experience. Yet, being too far from the events either chronologically or experientially invites a revisionist perspective or sugar-coated reminiscences which may be profitable for entertainment and human interest, but rarely for the elucidation of the times as they were.

If the history in question is of the Vietnam conflict a writer's problems are compounded. The attitude toward this event is anything but unified even today. Neither the nation, her churches, nor the chaplain corps of her military services manifest a singular approach or categorical understanding of it. I have tried therefore to avoid opinions, taking positions, or interpreting circumstances. I have attempted rather to show the texture of chaplains' contribution to the Marines: their sense of fulfillment in their calling, the personal and often emotional investment in their people, and the broad fabric of the clergyman in uniform.

To facilitate the achievement of these goals I chose a chronological rather than a topical approach. This renders the volume less handy as a reference work to find "what the chaplains did then in a case like this," but I hope preserves it as a cohesive framework of this momentous ten-year period. Hopefully all the topics germane to the Chaplain Corps were exposed within this chronological treatment and should, in any event, probably not be treated as a reference out of the context of the entire milieu in which they took place.

One piece of advice I received from an institutional historian when I began the writing was, "mention everybody's name." With mild apologies, I did not. It was not only impossible but unnecessary. Many of us simply arrived and served, following the pattern of those who preceded us, without uniqueness, without innovation, without distinction—as history measures distinction—but with infinite faithfulness. We are not mentioned because we did not serve at the time or in the place of focus upon which events turned. Yet in many ways it should be to those "unmentioned" to whom this and any history is dedicated, for they constitute its impact. The world may never know. We know.

I am particularly grateful to those many individuals who helped to contribute to the following pages. Much of my gratitude goes to chaplains who responded to questions, questionnaires, and interviews. Their perspectives were invaluable. Appreciation is also extended to the professional writers at the Marine Corps History and Museums Division, Dr. Graham Cosmas and Mr. Jack Shulimson, whose chapter reviews and comments were of the most patient, sensitive, and substantive kind; to Second Lieutenant Thomas E. Mead, USMC, who prepared the index included with these pages; and to Mrs. Catherine A. Kerns, who typeset the volume and dealt with many author's corrections, and Mr. William S. Hill, who designed and laid out these pages.

But special laurels are reserved for the Chief Historian of the History and Museums Division, and my friend, Henry I. Shaw, Jr., whose guidance and tenacity were a lesson in professionalism.

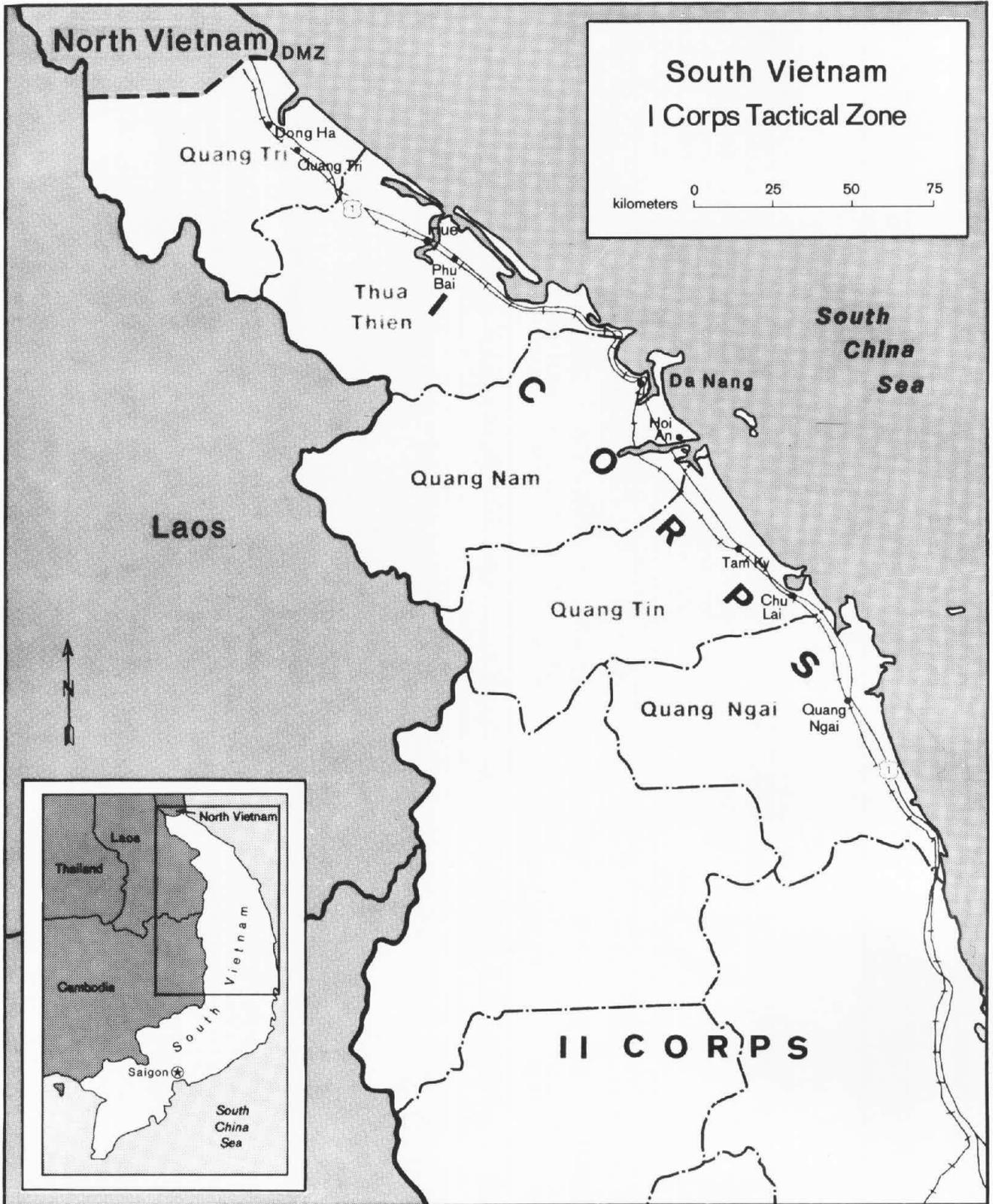
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PART I
THE DRIFT INTO TURBULENCE



Photo Courtesy of Chaplain Samuel Baez

CHAPTER 1

“Ministering in a Mini-War” (April 1962-February 1965)

*Helping “Those Who Want to Be Free”—Relocation to Da Nang—Chaplains’ Routines Stabilize
“. . . To Preserve the Freedom and Independence of South Vietnam”*

The kinship between chaplains and Marines is as old as the United States itself. Both the Chaplain Corps and the Marine Corps were born in November 1775, and the admiration each has for the other has always been an important factor in their history. The late Lieutenant General Homer Litzenberg, USMC, said, “We are a peculiar breed of cat, and we like to have Navy . . . Chaplains with us who understand us and who like to be with us.”¹ Perhaps this affinity has been fueled by the mutual concern of Marines and chaplains for the worth and dignity of the individual and the common understanding that this concern is never greater than when the individual has committed himself to a cause larger than himself for which he may have to lay down his life. Since the Marine Corps has no Chaplain Corps of its own, Navy chaplains have shared these motivations and beliefs with them and have encouraged, comforted, and endured the stress of separation and combat with the Marines.

It was in 1914 that chaplains first were assigned to full-time duty with Marines. In that year a chaplain was ordered to the Marine Expeditionary Force of the Atlantic Fleet. In 1917 chaplains were sent to the 5th Marines and the 6th Marines to serve with them overseas. Thus began a ministry to combat troops that has become an essential ingredient in Navy Chaplain Corps and Marine Corps history. Most Marines would agree with General Matthew B. Ridgway who referred to chaplains and combat when he said: “When the chips are down, the men turn more and more to their chaplains, and the bigger the man, the greater good he does. His influence goes right down in the heart.”²

Tin Lanh Evangelical Church, Soc Trang. Under the leadership of Chaplain Samuel Baez, Shufly Marines constructed a ceiling in the church, which involved the labor of 50 volunteers over a period of four weeks and the contribution of more than 300 dollars.

In World War II the six chaplains who went ashore with the Marines at Guadalcanal were the first Navy chaplains to see combat in that conflict with Marines on the offensive. Chaplains accompanied the Marine on every subsequent invasion from the Solomons through the Gilberts, Marshalls, and Marianas to the final operation of the war on Okinawa. The combat accomplishments of chaplains with Marines showed more conclusively than ever before that the role of the chaplains is vital. Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz summed this up nicely on 25 September 1946 with this statement: “By their patient sympathetic labors with the men, day in and day out and through many a night, every chaplain I know contributed immeasurably to the moral courage of our fighting men.”³

It is apparent that the Marine Corps recognized this need for the reinforcement of moral courage, because after World War II a Marine division’s complement of chaplains was 16, but by the time of the Korean outbreak in June of 1950, the table of organization of a division called for 26 chaplains, plus those assigned to attached units. The Corps’ request for more chaplains was in itself acknowledgment of their worth to Marines.⁴

In 1962 sufficient chaplains were serving in the 3d Marine Division and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, which were to supply the initial units entering Vietnam, to fill most of the table of organization billets.*⁵ With a few exceptions these chaplains were detailed to the division and wing generally and the senior chaplain would assign them to the units he determined would be most valuable for the chaplain and the unit. The senior chaplain was also able to adjust assignments so that the best possible denominational coverage could be achieved.

*The table of organization lists what a specific unit requires to function ideally. Money and personnel constraints often hamper the ideal from being reached.

As the tension in Vietnam mounted in the early 1960s it was reasonably clear to the chaplains serving the 1st Wing at Iwakuni, Japan, that at least one of their number would be going to Vietnam should a unit or subunit be ordered there. Finally in April 1962 the decision was announced.

The ministry of Navy chaplains to Marine personnel ashore in Vietnam began 12 April 1962. The arrival of Lieutenant Earnest S. Lemieux (Methodist) inaugurated what was to become the most comprehensive religious coverage ever given to Navy-Marine personnel under warring conditions. The Vietnam conflict marked the heaviest concentration of Navy chaplains ever committed to shore combat in a single geographical area, eventually involving more than 700 chaplains over a nine-year period. No American war would ever be fought over a longer span of time, demand so much, or disturb so many; but no one realized that in April of 1962.

Although the situation in Vietnam was serious and unstable at that time, it was not yet viewed as a war in terms of U.S. involvement. The intent of the American commitment was assistance and defense. Early indications were that additional helicopter strength would be needed to support an Army of the Republic of Vietnam swift-strike capability. The Chief, Military Advisory and Assistance Group, General Charles J. Timmes, USA, recommended that U.S. Marine helicopter pilots be assigned to temporary duty with Army helicopter companies already in Vietnam for familiarization. When asked to study the proposal, Major General Carson A. Roberts, Commanding General (Air), Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Air FMFPac), suggested that the Commanding General, FMFPac, Lieutenant General Alan W. Shapley, offer a counter proposal that one complete Marine Corps helicopter squadron with support units be committed to a mission similar to that of the Army helicopter companies. This recommendation was approved and a Marine Corps helicopter squadron with its supporting Marine air base subunit was ordered to Soc Trang, Ba Xuyen Province, in the Mekong Delta, with the understanding that, when the tempo of operations in the northern corps tactical zone permitted, it would exchange places with the Army unit at Da Nang. The decision was approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Vietnamese Government on 9 April 1962 and Operation Shufly was launched.

The personnel of Marine Task Unit 79.3.5, con-

sisting of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron (HMM) 362, and Subunit 2, Marine Air Base Squadron (MABS) 16, began to arrive at Soc Trang on board KC-130F Hercules transports from Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS), Futenma, Okinawa, on 9 April 1962 and immediately established a functional base. They were joined on 12 April by Chaplain Lemieux. The initial reaction of the task unit to duty in Vietnam was mirrored in Chaplain Lemieux's 1967 reflections. He wrote:

I shall never forget that first night. Most of the men were posted on security watch outside. It really made little difference since there were holes in the walls, and the windows had given up years before. We had a few cots and a few flashlights. Filth and debris littered the area. After a meal of "C" rations, we settled down to a restless night of watching ARVN soldiers and sleeping intermittently. I learned that we were in some kind of ARVN headquarters area and that the airfield was under the protection of about twelve hundred ARVN soldiers who were positioned about an outer circle of defense. The big question was whether we could safely entrust our security to people whose loyalties were uncertain. It was a new experience and we were all uneasy about it.⁵

By 16 April, the major body of HMM-362 arrived on station off the mouth of the Mekong River. The transfer of men and material from the amphibious assault ship USS *Princeton* (LPH 5) began immediately. Embarked as ship's chaplain in the *Princeton* was Commander Henry E. Austin (American Baptist). Recalling that experience, he wrote:

It was my custom to hold daily Bible classes on board the *Princeton* and when we were committed to lift a troop unit, I always held an embarkation service. One hundred twenty-five Protestant men of Lieutenant Colonel Archie J. Clapp's Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-362 attended the service. Our Catholic Lay Leader, Joseph Tucci, conducted a Rosary Service for the Catholic men of the unit.⁶

By the end of that day the airlift was complete and the elements of Shufly were ready to undertake their mission the following morning.

The Marine command was located near an old World War II Japanese airstrip, surrounded by patches of flat, sunbaked brown earth, laced with occasional glimmering squares of water-filled rice paddies. One building, a tin-roofed hangar of Japanese construction and sturdy enough to have withstood spring and fall monsoon rains for nearly 20 years, remained standing but in barely useable condition.

The airfield had the appearance of having been ravaged by some type of rats. The hangar, and even the runway itself, were full of holes and in a general state of cluttered untidiness and disrepair.⁷ During the summer monsoon season the entire region was under 6-8 inches of water. In the months to come, helicopters were seen to sink to their wheelhubs when not parked on steel runway matting, even in the dry months.

The nearest village to the Soc Trang airstrip was 12 miles away; it could be reached over one, narrow, and at times, impassable road. The Marines made daily trips to the village's muddy reservoir for drinking water and contracted with a Vietnamese owner of a tank truck to resupply them daily with fuel. Both the water and the fuel runs braved sniper fire almost daily, a constant reminder to the Marines that they were in a mini-war, but a war nonetheless.

During the first weeks at Soc Trang, Chaplain Lemieux's chapel was a general-purpose tent; he experimented with its location until he found a spot that was most accessible to the troops at the base. Chaplain Lemieux recalled the conditions:

As life in the camp progressed a tent city was erected and personnel moved out of the hangar into more permanent and more suitable quarters. A complete restoration was necessary before other buildings near the strip and tent areas could be used. Four months later they were being used for office space and living quarters as the number of Shufly personnel increased.⁸

After erection of the tent chapel at its permanent location, Chaplain Lemieux had a plywood partition constructed inside and arranged his office on one side and the sanctuary on the other. The sanctuary was then equipped with an altar, lectern, communion rail, and crude but serviceable wooden benches for the worshippers. Thus the chaplain could counsel in his office, which had a separate entrance, while other Marines could meditate or pray in the chapel, neither disturbing the other.

The chapel had electricity and it seated 40 to 45 people very comfortably. Chaplain Lemieux later reported, "Even so, there were those who preferred to sit beyond the tent flaps, outside, on the blanket of grass surrounding the new location. Because of these "outsiders" it was difficult at times to determine just how many persons were "at church."⁹

The activities that Chaplain Lemieux undertook to provide worship facilities did not detract from his personal ministry to the troops. In the perpetually

uneasy, confusing, and often-troubled atmosphere of the Vietnam conflict, it was mandatory for the chaplain to be with the troops in a material and personal way. He had to live in the dust and mud with them; eat the same rations; drink the same lukewarm kool-aid; sleep fitfully, sweat, and pray with them. The presence of the chaplain was a ministry in itself. Living in intimate association with the men of their units, sharing the trauma of modern warfare was a reminder of divine concern and involvement.

The scope of spiritual service to the Corps also includes the familiar symbols of organized religion, and Chaplain Lemieux was to herald the hundreds of other chaplains to serve the Marines when he took great pains to supply traditional circumstances of worship for all faiths. The chapel, altar, the crosses, the candles, the vessels, the elements of communion, all were reminders and stabilizers of their faith and that of the church and the home of the Marines' youth.

Attached to Subunit 2 of MABS-16, the chaplain still provided religious coverage to all personnel of the task unit. The number of Roman Catholic chaplains then available in the Western Pacific did not allow both a Catholic and a Protestant chaplain to be in Vietnam. Consequently, Catholic Marines were trucked, often in full combat gear, to the Vietnamese Catholic Church in Soc Trang village for Sunday Mass. While this alternative was adequate and contributed significantly to the healthy cementing of relations with the village, it was not the ideal answer. The Roman Catholic Marine deserved and desired his own Catholic chaplain and he soon got him, although at first on a shuttle basis from Okinawa, in the person of Lieutenant Anthony R. Peloquin.

Chaplain Peloquin was attached to the parent unit, Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 16, at MCAS Futema, Okinawa. Chaplain Peloquin recorded:

When I heard that most of MAG-16 was to be assigned to South Vietnam, I volunteered to accompany them. The Commanding Officer said that they had selected Chaplain Lemieux, a Protestant, to go. I was the only Catholic Chaplain in the group and would be needed both in Okinawa and in Vietnam, and knew the job would require me to shuttle between the two places. From April to December 1962, that is what I did. Every month I would board a Marine C-130 and go South for about ten days. Some months I went more often, for shorter periods. I brought down supplies and necessary equipment that could be constructed back at home in Futema, Okinawa.¹⁰

Even though the unit was served by a Catholic chaplain on a regular basis, the men who had made initial contacts in Soc Trang still attended Mass there and continued to cultivate these relationships, undoubtedly beginning what was soon to be called "the second war," the battle for the allegiance of the people of South Vietnam. It is not surprising that the preponderantly Judeo-Christian characteristics of the American nation would display themselves by reaching out very naturally to the Vietnamese people, nor is it remarkable that the chaplain should find himself intimately involved in an effort of this type. In traditional fashion the Marines soon started people-to-people programs. Chaplain Pelouquin reported:

Chaplain Lemieux and I helped them contact local orphanages, and schools. I would bring back pictures and information about these places to Okinawa and return with generous donations of money, clothes, food, medicine, etc., for these projects. On most of my trips I had opportunity to participate in the various humanitarian activities and had opportunity to use my background in French to good advantage in the English language classes which were held several evenings a week in Soc Trang.¹¹

During his visits to Shufly, Chaplain Pelouquin held daily Mass, confessions, counseling, and religious instruction. His impact was even broader; not only was he a Catholic priest and therefore able to minister uniquely to the Vietnamese Christians, the greater portion of whom were Roman Catholic, but Chaplain Pelouquin also was conversant in French, known by many Vietnamese. He thus found opportunity for a very helpful ministry to Vietnamese soldiers and their families. Following his regular Sunday Mass for Shufly personnel, he went to a chapel built by Vietnamese Army personnel to say Mass for Vietnamese Catholics.

Chaplain Pelouquin's facility in French also was tremendously valuable when he visited the local clergy of Ba Xuyen and neighboring provinces. He remembered:

Many outlying villages had untended Catholic populations. I arranged to have our helicopters carry local priests into these remote areas. I went with them to say Mass as the Vietnamese priests heard confessions. I also accompanied the commanding officer and the province chief to inspect villages which had been attacked the previous night. In fact, I spent many hours a day in the helicopters accompanying the men on every kind of mission. Some of the outposts visited on resupply missions had American advisors who had not seen a chaplain for a long time and who were always glad to see a priest.¹²

There was never a question of the chaplain's ability to fly in operational aircraft in the discharge of his ministerial tasks. As the conflict intensified, however, the relationship of the chaplain to hazardous operations became a concern. Chaplains generally found it necessary to involve themselves in the same circumstances as the men they served in order to understand their needs. Still, some commanding officers were forced to restrict their chaplains' operational involvement, both due to the need for the chaplain to have as broad a coverage as possible, and the incredibly heavy operational schedule kept by the units. By the time HMM-362 was relieved by HMM-136, Lieutenant Colonel Clapp's squadron had, for instance "executed 50 combat helicopter assaults, had flown 4,439 sorties, and had amassed 5,262 hours of combat flying time. All in unarmed aircraft."¹³ The whole Marine posture was strictly defensive at all times, and Chaplain Lemieux reported:

The helicopters carried only light arms and no machine guns. Marines on sentry duty for inner perimeter security employed only minimum weaponry, the M-1 rifle, a few BAR's and light machine guns, but no heavy machine guns, no mortars, no grenades, and no mines. Ammunition was issued in limited, carefully measured amounts. In no way could the conduct of the U.S. Marine Corps in Soc Trang be construed in any way but defense and supporting.¹⁴

Operational requirements, restricted mobility, limited recreational facilities, isolation, and danger all combined to intensify the demands normally placed on the chaplains. The 1st MAW Chaplain, Commander Elihu H. Rickel (Jewish), charged with the rotation of operational chaplains in Vietnam with Shufly recognized this, and identified emotional maturity and stability, imagination and inventive resourcefulness as essential to a successful Shufly ministry.

He said:

The chaplain had to improvise, motivate, enthruse. The men were available and had ample time. It was up to the chaplain to develop a religious program and maintain interest in it. Daily worship, Bible study, formal discussion groups and other such activities were included in the program. I supplied the unit with religious literature and with general reading material from Bibles to whodunits.¹⁵

Chaplain Rickel regularly rotated the Shufly chaplains on a three- to four-month basis. To survey the religious situation in Soc Trang, he made one official visit with concurrent permission of Com-

mander in Chief, Pacific (CinCPac), FMFPac, and MACV. Permission to visit Vietnam was difficult to obtain and could not be acquired for routine, recurring visits. Although the United States was not a signatory to the 1954 Geneva accords, the nation voluntarily maintained a posture of no appreciable buildup or increase in U.S. military population in South Vietnam, or any acceleration of military activity. The situation was further complicated by the agreements then in force with the Government of Japan; United States military units stationed on Japanese soil (for example, the 1st MAW was at Iwakuni) were forbidden to engage in military activity against any other Asian nation.

Helping "Those Who Want to Be Free"

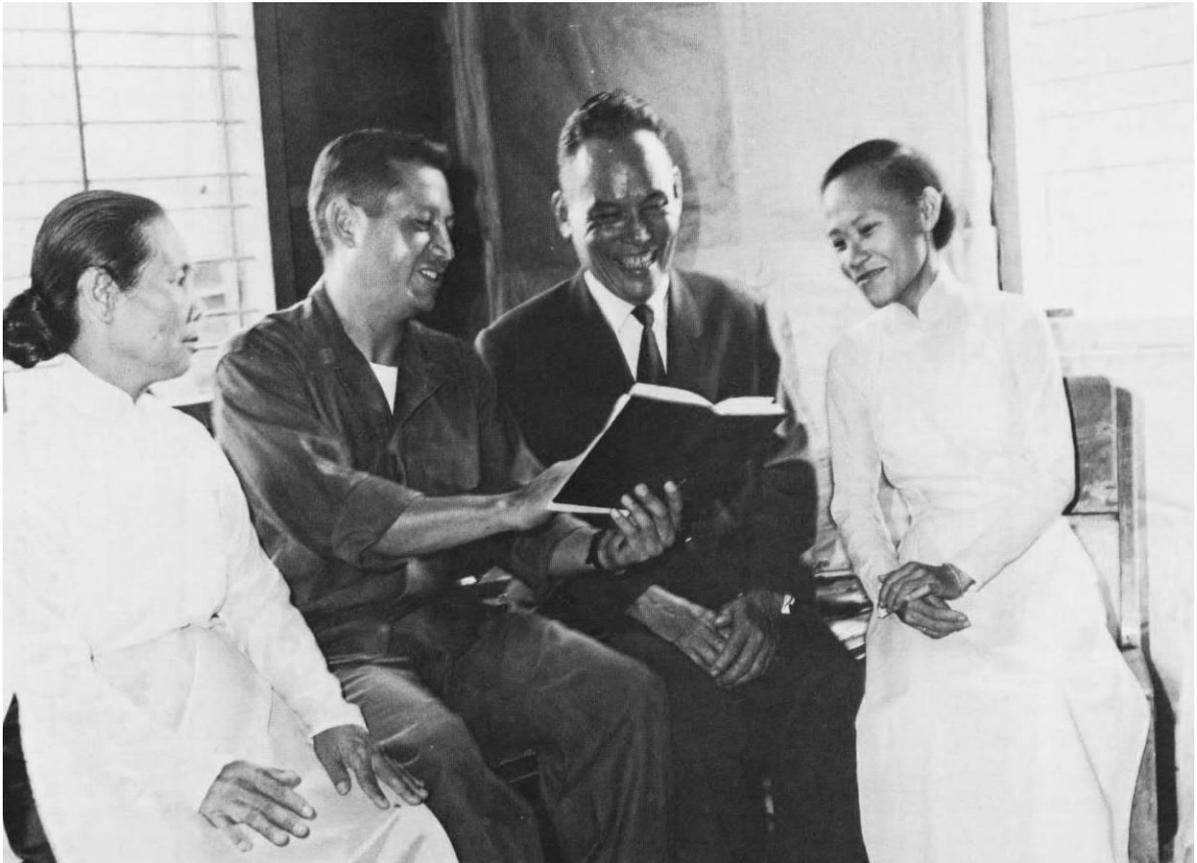
On 12 July 1962, exactly three months after the first chaplain came ashore in Vietnam, Chaplain Rickel sent Lieutenant Commander Samuel Baez (United Presbyterian) to relieve Chaplain Lemieux,

who returned to Iwakuni to complete his overseas duty. During his months of duty with the subunit, Chaplain Baez made a sizable impact upon it, and perhaps a still more remarkable impact upon the local Vietnamese. Following the excellent example of his predecessor, and during a lull in operation activity, Chaplain Baez concentrated on expanding the people-to-people effort. Within a few days of his arrival, he arranged for Shufly Marines to sponsor two benevolent projects among the people of Soc Trang and Ba Xuyen Province. The first was construction of a ceiling within the Protestant Church at Soc Trang.

Immediately after Chaplain Baez had arrived he participated in a rare type of pulpit exchange. During his trips through Soc Trang Chaplain Lemieux had discovered a Protestant church, which he was able to visit twice. The pastor and his son, also a Christian clergyman, were hospitable and friendly. One Sunday, therefore, when both chaplains were present, a dual exchange was effected. With a

Chaplain Samuel Baez enjoys Christian fellowship with the Reverend Nguyen Dang, pastor of the Tin Lanh Evangelical Church at Soc Trang, and his wife and daughter.

Photo 1st Marine Aircraft Wing



chaplain and an indigenous pastor in both places of worship, those portions of the service which caused the least linguistic problems were exchanged. It was a unique display of the unity of the faith.

In the aftermath of this experience, the need for a new ceiling in the Tin Lanh Evangelical Church at Soc Trang was pointed out to Chaplain Baez by the pastor, Reverend Nguyen Dang. Marines provided engineering expertise, the labor of more than 50 men over a period of 4 weeks, and contributed funds of more than \$300 to complete the repair. Chaplain Baez noted the remarkably high level of enthusiasm with which the Shufly Marines carried out their people-to-people projects.¹⁶

The second such humanitarian activity was initiated by the men of HMM-163. The chaplain found a Roman Catholic orphanage run by the Sisters of Providence in Soc Trang. Response to a routine appeal for funds for humanitarian projects has always been disproportionate in the United States Marine Corps, and so it was again. Sponsorship of the orphanage required funds which had to be donated by the men of the task unit, and in typical fashion more than \$450 was collected. The entire amount was used to buy a three-month supply of milk, 40 dozen diapers, 72 bottles of vitamins, and other infant supplies. This extraordinary expression of concern and outreach was to be duplicated time after time during the next nine years of Marine involvement in Vietnam.

A third project was implemented in response to a request initiated by Ba Xuyen's Provincial Chief, Lieutenant Colonel Chiu Nguyen. The chief invited the chaplain, two medical officers, the dental officer, and the Marine interpreter to teach the English language to a group of 150 women of the province. Many of them walked several miles, 3 nights a week, for a period of 2 months to attend classes. The project was judged of exceptional value to intercultural relations, and it was noted that, when secure and in a practical circumstance, the people of Vietnam responded to American cooperation dramatically.

One people-to-people effort that pleased both HMM-163 and relieving HMM-362 was the support and encouragement of the "Fighting Priest," Father Hoa, and the "Sea Swallows," as his followers were known. Father Hoa resided at the tip of the Vung Mau Peninsula in a village called Bing Hung. Father Hoa had been a colonel and a guerrilla specialist in China's war against the Japanese. Now, having been

granted a piece of land along one of the main canals at the southern tip of South Vietnam by the Diem government, the priest employed his military skills against the Viet Cong who controlled the entire peninsula except for his area. The fighting priest and his people sustained a disproportionately large number of casualties, but their courage and determination won the admiration of the Americans. Chaplain Baez wrote, "The Marines evacuated many of his casualties. The American commanders were so impressed with Father Hoa's organization that they regularly stocked him with supplies and equipment."¹⁷

Chaplain Lemieux recalled much the same attitude when he reported:

As we landed at Father Hoa's camp, my feelings changed from that of adventure to sober appreciation. At their very crude landing pad was a ragtail outfit, mostly boys and girls with bugles, drums and flags, attempting to give honors. The official honor guard of veteran fighters bore the unmistakable scars of battle, including arms and legs conspicuously absent. I shall never forget the faces of those people who were so earnestly attempting to present their best military manners. Their courage, and the conditions in which they had to live always serve to remind me of our nation's obligation to help those who want to be free.¹⁸

Relocation to Da Nang

On 14 September 1962, the Operation Shufly unit redeployed to the former French airfield at Da Nang in Quang Nam Province, northern I Corps. The city, called Tourane by the French, was a principal port of eastern French Indo-China and the second largest city in South Vietnam. The airfield was southwest of the picturesque city, beginning almost at the apex of the halfmoon-shaped bay that served the city as a quiet, deep-water port. The men and equipment of Subunit 2 and HMM-163 were established on the west side of the sprawling airfield. The airstrip was considerably longer than the one at Soc Trang, and was already in use by the Vietnamese Air Force. It was a mile-and-a-half long and was operated from a control tower housing radar and other essentials for all-weather, 24-hour operations. Both hangar facilities and barracks were in good repair and required no extensive renovation prior to moving in.

The strip was 375 miles north of Saigon and 84 miles south of the demilitarized zone (DMZ), which, at the 17th parallel, divided South Vietnam from the Communist-controlled Democratic

Republic of Vietnam, or North Vietnam. The Marines had become used to flat, canalized, segmented delta land at Soc Trang; the terrain at Da Nang was completely different and varied vastly. White sandy beaches bordered the coastline, backed by a narrow coastal plain which rose toward jungle-covered mountains with inaccessible peaks of 6,000 feet and higher. The terrain was a new experience and a fresh challenge for the men of the task unit.

Because of the difference in terrain, the climate was almost the exact reverse of that at Soc Trang. The monsoon season, which so heavily affected operational ability, occurred in the winter at Da Nang, extending from September to March. In the extreme south it occurred during the summer. High altitude, high temperatures, high winds, coupled with low ceilings, fog, and heavy rains presented operational problems not experienced in the delta.

Weather was not the only problem to irritate the task unit. Security also proved to be awkward. Initially, a permanent sergeant of the guard was detailed to maintain a security force of men from Subunit 2 and HMM-163. Posts were manned around the flight line, the hangar, the motor pool, the communications area, and the billeting compound. This arrangement was workable but caused problems in effectiveness and morale. Marines who served all night as security guards often were expected to put in a full working day at their regular jobs. The command, realizing the problem, initiated a request via ComUSMACV to FMFPac for a permanent security force. This resulted in the assignment to Vietnam of a security platoon from the 3d Marine Division on Okinawa. As harassment continued the platoon was increased to a reinforced company.

The chaplain was active in the support of security personnel during this initial, difficult period, but was hampered by another problem area that affected everyone: transportation. The barracks compound was three miles east of the runway and connected by incredibly poor roads. Still further away were the motor pool and the communications section. The remarkable foresight of Shufly's first commander, Colonel John Carey, had caused the task unit to be supplied with three used school buses which were on hand when the Marines arrived from Soc Trang, but the chaplain visits to the flight line and the work spaces were difficult to coordinate with the bus schedule, and visits to the men on security watch were even more complicated.

Shufly's operational mission at Da Nang was essentially similar to that at Soc Trang, but there were important differences produced by the terrain, weather, and general plan on military activity in the I Corps Tactical Zone (ICTZ). In these northern provinces, landing zones for the most part had to be hacked out of the jungle, so surprise was difficult to maintain when moving to strike the enemy. When flat-bottomed, walled valleys with dangerous wind currents had to be used as landing areas, it was not uncommon for landing zones to be too far from the point of need, so effective employment of retaliatory troops was questionable.

The resupply of U.S. Army Special Forces outposts produced the single most important shift in HMM-163's mission, a mission not assigned in the Soc Trang area. It was clear that strategic hamlet defense would have to depend largely upon Special Forces units permanently positioned in the mountains and in the jungles whose primary duty was to halt infiltration. Chaplain Baez capitalized on this circumstance by offering an extensive ministry to Special Forces personnel at the outposts.

From the beginning of American involvement in Vietnam, the Chaplain's Division of MACV encouraged the concept of "area coverage" because of the vast dispersion of American personnel. American Navy, Army, and Air Force chaplains were asked to broaden their ministries to include internal coordination to serve the geographical areas. This was not an easy concept to put into practice owing to the intense loyalty chaplains with Marines tend to build with their specific unit and the resultant possessiveness of senior commanders toward the activities assigned their chaplain. The rapport a chaplain builds with "his people" is usually greater in kind and scope than even that which exists between a pastor, priest, or rabbi in a civilian setting, and enormously affects his spiritual impact. This relationship is, understandably, not readily transferable to any group or unit the chaplain happens to engage. With some reluctance, the demands of this strange conflict made area coverage a necessity, and chaplains and commanders supported it to the greatest possible extent, and it was rare that the practice was not found of special blessing to the chaplain and to all units.

A second major change to the operational mission occasioned by the Da Nang deployment was the relocation of some important hamlets that could not

be successfully defended. This meant transporting people, belongings, equipment, livestock, food, and fuel to areas more secure. The chaplain was often invaluable on missions, contributing to the positive relationship being built with the citizens of South Vietnam, by retaining a warm relationship with village dignitaries and pursuing an aggressive civic action program. These two major operational changes presented opportunities for the Shufly chaplain to make frequent flights with medical and resupply missions as a part of his routine, and his ministry was enriched by the opportunity to extend himself to Special Forces personnel and to the Vietnamese villagers and refugees.

On 6 October the men of the Shufly mission received a grim reminder of the fact that they were in genuine conflict filled with all the dangers accompanying warfare. A search and rescue helicopter crashed and burned 15 miles west of Tam Ky while participating in a 20-plane helilift of 2d ARVN Division units. Seven died in the crash, five Marines, a Navy doctor, and his corpsman assistant. These were the first casualties suffered by the Marine task unit since arriving in Vietnam, and they were deeply felt. The ministry of Chaplains Baez and Peloquin gave the Marines of Shufly occasion to express those feelings. Chaplain Baez reported:

A Requiem High Mass and a Memorial Service were held at which over three hundred persons were in attendance. Present were personnel of the Staff, CTU 7.35, MABS-16, Subunit 2, HMM-163, the Vietnamese I Corps Chief of Staff and his party, and several civilians, mostly missionaries who had been helpful in our program. The High Mass was conducted by Chaplain A. Peloquin and Chaplain S. Baez of MABS-16 conducted the Memorial Service. Four of the deceased were Catholic and three were Protestants. Letters of condolence, bulletins of the service and pictures of the ceremonies were sent to the next of kin by the respective chaplains.¹⁹

Chaplains' Routines Stabilize

Among the American missionaries present at the memorial service for the victims of the 6 October crash was Pastor G. H. Smith, of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Mission, a remarkable man who had already befriended Chaplain Baez and who was to become the steadfast friend of many chaplains who would serve Marines in I Corps. During the Shufly era and the years immediately following, Pastor Smith was invited to speak to Marine groups about the Vietnamese people and their religions. His

lecture included the presentation of the film, "Jungle Beachheads," a study of the adjustments necessary when western culture comes into contact with a Vietnamese village. This became a part of the standard orientation for all incoming Marines, thus initiating a general program which, greatly expanded and carefully represented, was to acquire tremendous significance in the years ahead. Pastor Smith was also of invaluable aid to the Marines in understanding the cultural situation in which they found themselves. He was uniquely qualified to speak about Vietnamese customs and religious traditions, since he had been in missionary service in Vietnam for more than 24 years, and had only been recently displaced by the Viet Cong.

Lieutenant Richard P. Vinson (Methodist), who relieved Chaplain Baez on 12 October 1962, quickly became involved in what was beginning to be called civic action. He utilized Reverend Smith's insights liberally. During the period of Chaplain Vinson's tenure with Shufly, Reverend Smith was preparing to become an official for the Christian Children's Fund of Richmond, Virginia. The site selected for his orphanage, then in the planning stages, was surveyed by a Marine engineer, and the progress of the institution was closely followed by many of the task element's Marines. Shufly's men already actively supported an orphanage in Da Nang which was maintained by an American missionary family. On Christmas day the Marines participated in a "Father-For-A-Day" program which had been arranged by Chaplain Vinson. Each orphan spent the day with a Marine who had volunteered to serve as his "father." One Marine author observed:

The Vietnamese children were treated to dinner in the mess hall, presented with Christmas gifts, and then joined in singing carols with the Marines. At the conclusion of the festivities, Chaplain Vinson presented the director of the orphanage with a gift in Vietnamese currency equivalent to over \$800.00, money which the men of the task element had donated.²⁰

From the very beginning, the Marines were concerned with civic action and compassion for children of the land. A supervisory chaplain, Lieutenant Commander George D. Lindemann (Lutheran) referred pointedly in his reports to the same kind of events. Chaplain Lindemann gained his insights on a mid-December inspection tour of the Da Nang facility sponsored by Wing Headquarters in Iwakuni. He spent 19 days with Chaplain Vinson,

meeting with key religious leaders and evaluating the religious program. He formulated a number of recommendations for extending the chaplain's ministry and enhancing its effectiveness.²¹ One major observation, relative to the spiritual equipping of individual Marines for the environment of the particular conflict, was:

On the one hand the duty of the chaplain with Marines is the same as it has always been since the Chaplain Corps began; 'To bring men to God and God to men': to be by their side. On the other hand . . . in guerrilla warfare it is physically impossible to remain by the side of very many men at any given time and place. The men are widely dispersed; they hit and run; they withdraw and vanish into their hiding places. It seems to me that it is imperative that a fighting man who will operate alone or with small groups be trained and equipped not only in a military way, but also in a spiritual and moral way to withstand isolation and all the pressures that the feeling of being "cut off" brings to bear upon the mind and soul of man.²²

In guerrilla warfare, Chaplain Lindemann suggested, the chaplain should:

. . . work his way from patrol to patrol, from post to post, from aid station to aid station, or back at the base of operations, extending his ministry on a personal or small group basis; and along with spiritual direction, collaterally, he would be able to help men of his unit to understand both the rationale and the responsibilities of their involvement. In both spiritual and moral realms, the chaplain's role must be a dynamic one including the inculcation of values and ideals for which men not only die, but for which they will also live.²³

Recognizing the need to acquaint prospective chaplains who would serve in Vietnam with the customs, religious climate, and the social traditions of the Vietnamese people, Chaplain Lindemann conducted a course for the chaplains at Iwakuni highlighting those matters. The course was open to all interested personnel, laying the foundations, at least perceptually, of a Chaplain Corps-wide program which would be initiated on a more comprehensive scale in the months to come.

His inspection completed, Chaplain Lindemann returned to wing headquarters before the first of the year, 1963. He was followed less than a month later by Chaplain Vinson who had been relieved by Lieutenant Hugh D. Smith (Southern Baptist). Commander Earnest E. Metzger (Methodist) was then Wing Chaplain and the Catholic responsibilities fell to Lieutenant William M. Gibson,

when he relieved MAG-16's Catholic Chaplain Pelouquin.

During Chaplain Smith's first two months with Operation Shufly, chapel services were held in the airbase mess hall, where the services had moved some months earlier. This was an adequate but not altogether satisfying arrangement. In March the results of the persistence of all the Shufly chaplains were realized when a specific chapel building was dedicated. Chaplain Smith wrote:

One of the buildings in the compound was renovated and remodeled to make a nice chapel. It was dedicated on the third Sunday of March. In the rear of the chapel was a large area used for the chaplain's office. Sunday services and weekly Bible study were held in the chapel. Evening prayers were given at 2200 over a loud speaker system for the entire compound.²⁴

While the routine of ministering was becoming progressively more consistent, there were always circumstances in the experience of chaplains which called for the resources of the deepest recesses of their faith. In a letter to his Bishop, Chaplain Gibson wrote:

Tragedy struck again in our group. We had twelve men killed while trying to locate an Air Force plane that had crashed. It had an Air Force pilot and a Vietnamese pilot, so that a total of fourteen were killed. I would presume by this time you have heard and read all about the tragedy.

To me it was more personal. One of my closest friends was killed. He was a Navy doctor. This man, Bishop, was a daily communicant and did work for the orphans in town and for the sisters at the orphanage. A more dedicated man you would never find. He also took care of the Vietnamese people and had a program all worked out whereby he could do much for the local people.

I do hope that you will remember this young doctor in your prayers. I know he was prepared—but am certain he would like for us to remember him.

I was in Vietnam on the day he was killed. I left on Tuesday evening. His last words to me were, "Father, don't leave. We need you down here." I laughed and told him that they weren't doing anything. With that I shook his hand and left. When I read his name on the dispatch I was deeply grieved, remembering his last words to me. I will always remember them.²⁵

The same personal suffering and sense of loss was recalled by Lieutenant John G. Harrison (Lutheran), who served Shufly during the following year. He was having a conversation with a lieutenant colonel, prior to leaving Iwakuni for Vietnam:

"Chaplain," the Colonel said, "I hope you like your assignment. You have an opportunity to help a lot of men to understand their faith."



Photo Courtesy of Chaplain Hugh F. Lecky, Jr.

The interior of the Shufly Marine detachment's chapel photographed on 4 July 1965.

"I'm sure I will," I replied, not knowing at all why I would but confident that it was true.

He smiled and then said, "It will break your heart a lot of times."

I didn't fully realize what they meant until a month later when an Army helicopter was shot down by the Viet Cong. The young pilot, a husband of a few months, was killed. His mechanic, flying with him in the plane, was never found. That evening we held a memorial service. The small chapel could not hold all who came, and the driving rain outside was made such a noise on the metal roofs that much of what was said that evening was not heard. But a need was present that none of us will forget. Suddenly the glamour of war faded with the death of friends. At times like that everyone instinctively looked to God to heal the broken hearts and to give a word of hope and promise.

No one longed to be a hero after the first few days in the humid, tropical climate where death was only a breath away, but everyone felt willing to show that we as Americans were concerned about the Vietnamese people and willing to stake out all in showing this concern.

Somehow this made sense because it had a purpose that was as big as Christ himself, "Greater love has no man than

this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

What a wonderful opportunity it was to have been a Navy Chaplain preaching and living these timeless truths in an atmosphere and country where such insights were necessary for survival and for victory itself.²⁶

The mood was subtly changing during these months in Vietnam, and nothing contributed more to the dark forboding than an event that took place 13,000 miles from Vietnam, in Dallas, Texas. On 22 November 1963, the United States was dealt a stunning blow when its President, John F. Kennedy, was shot by an assassin and died shortly thereafter. Lieutenant Herman F. Wendler (Methodist) was the Shufly chaplain at that time, having relieved Chaplain Smith in June of 1963. He served a little over a month past the assassination of President Kennedy, and when relieved on 31 December, completed the longest tenure of any chaplain with Marines in Vietnam to that point. Chaplain Wendler reported the shock and solemn sense of

tragedy that characterized the attitude of the armed forces personnel in the I Corps generally and the deep grief of the men of Shufly particularly. During the period of mourning the chaplain conducted memorial services for his own personnel and for Army and Air Force service members in Da Nang.

“ . . . To Preserve the Freedom and Independence of South Vietnam ”

Seven months prior to the terrible events of 22 November, the opinions of officials in the Defense Department were bouyant and positive. Predictions that the conflict would soon end could be heard. “The corner has definitely been turned toward victory,” a government spokesman said.²⁷

But such was not the case, and deterioration was swift. Buddhists, objecting to Roman Catholic domination of the Diem government, rioted, and, some, while the world watched incredulously through media eyes, immolated themselves. The activities of some 2,000 Buddhists were interpreted to represent the attitude of the entire country and the United States believed that all Vietnam was

afire.²⁸ In November a military coup overthrew Diem’s government and he was assassinated.

Having received the mantle of the United States Presidency, Lyndon Johnson immediately was faced with burdensome decisions concerning Vietnam. Some Americans had begun to see the conflict as a civil war in which America had no honorable involvement. Others saw it as a blatant attempt on the part of Communism to annex the whole of Southeast Asia nation by nation, an encroachment that had to be resisted. The troops in Vietnam seemed largely to favor the latter view and found themselves adopting increasingly belligerent attitudes as they saw, though most American citizens did not, the terror and maiming carried on by the Viet Cong against innocents, as well as atrocities conducted against missionaries.²⁹

The darkening mood of the American serviceman in Vietnam was fed by confusion in the direction of the war and increased activity on the part of the Viet Cong. Chaplain Harrison recorded this eloquently:

The tempo of the Viet Cong activity stepped up. Ambushes increased around the perimeter of the base. Snipers

The first meeting of all Navy chaplains in Vietnam, photographed in front of the Shufly Chapel in June 1965. Seated, left to right: Chaplains R. G. DeBock; A. B. Craven; P. H. Running; P. J. Bakker (1st MAW); R. “Q” Jones (III MAF); J. J. O’Connor (3d Mar-Div); W. M. Gibson; R. J. Usenza; H. F. Lecky. Standing, left to right: R. C. Osborn; M. Goodwin; R. W. Hodges; T. Dillon; E. E. Jayne; E. V. Bohula; T. G. Ward.

Photo Courtesy of Chaplain Hugh F. Lecky, Jr.



began to fire upon guard posts. Vietnam became an issue in the Presidential election of 1964. There were charges of poor supplies and old equipment. Suddenly everything coming to Vietnam took on a high priority. Vietnam entered the spotlight, and everything tightened up. War was no longer romantic.

As the war intensified, and security tightened in response to stepped up Viet Cong activity, my ministry moved into another sphere. There were Memorial Services; there were more troops in the area, and thus more formed, and the religious life of the camp took on a new vitality, a quality of honest devotion I had never before experienced in a group of men.

The last month I was with the Subunit, we had full alerts perhaps five to eight times. We knew without a doubt that something big was up. We were all frustrated because no one seemed to be making any decisions as to our involvement.³⁰

It was apparent that the United States stood at a crossroad. To leave Vietnam now would make the investment of the past two years appear futile; to remain would entail stronger, more aggressive responses to the provocations and belligerency of the Communists. The tension was felt by the Americans in the States but not nearly as intensely as among the Marines in Vietnam. Chaplain Harrison gives a small picture of the character of the tension within some of his Marines:

On the day that I left, the C-130, which was the only real link with the outside world, was full of Marines returning to Japan after completion of their tour. We were flying over the Tonkin Gulf when word passed through the plane, "We're at war with North Vietnam." For some reason everyone broke out in a tremendous cheer. As it turned out, the North Vietnamese had attacked some of our ships with armed torpedo boats, and we retaliated. Somehow it indicated a new direction in our struggle to preserve the freedom and independence of South Vietnam, and it made sense. It made sense because we had witnessed at first hand the increasing infiltration of the North Vietnamese. We had visited villages where the leaders had been murdered because they had cooperated with the government. We had seen schools, which we helped to build, burned. We had seen our friends in the Special Forces wounded or killed by Communist insurgents. We had buried shipmates who had been killed because they could not fire until we had been fired upon, even though we knew the enemy was there.³¹

This psychological change was also noted by Lieutenant Robert V. Thornberry (Southern Baptist), who relieved Chaplain Harrison. He corroborated the Shufly mood:

It was evident that tension was high, probably due to the nature of the work. Even though the HMM people

were directly involved in the struggle, they never had the opportunity to assert themselves in battle, as such. Neither were the MABS personnel related to the war in such a way as to give real meaning to their presence in such an environment. I would imagine this to be frustrating to a Marine, a man who has developed aggressive skills for use in combat.³²

Despite the quickening of the military heartbeat, combat concerns were put aside on 10 November 1964, but not to celebrate the Marine Corps birthday as may be supposed. Early monsoon rains flooded the coastal and piedmont areas of I Corps, threatening the lives of the Vietnamese living in the lowlands. The squadron was ordered to assist in the evacuation of civilians from the critical flooded area. The helicopters flew late into the night and all the next day through sniper fire, wind, and chilling rain. More than 2,000 flood victims were evacuated to the Da Nang airfield, wrapped in blankets and trucked to the city for food and medical care. A few, seriously injured, were flown to the USS *Princeton* cruising offshore. The refugees were frightened and cold; most were women, children, and the aged. Lieutenant Robert P. Heim (United Presbyterian) noted that the Shufly Marines exhausted themselves in the lifesaving mission and "even shared their Birthday cake with the refugees when they were brought into the hangar that night."³³

The distraction of the monsoon flooding did not halt the somber intensification of the military situation late in the year. In December the security platoon, which had deployed to Da Nang from the 3d Marine Division in March was replaced by a reinforced company from the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines. The threat of the Viet Cong was growing. After dark, travel was curtailed, as were routine people-to-people visits to the countryside. Terrorist activities within the villages just outside the airbase compound, and sniper fire at guard posts made the increasing hazards of Shufly duty a clear reality. Shortly thereafter a Marine light antiaircraft missile battery arrived to defend the airfield against possible air attacks from the North. By March of 1965 the situation had clearly changed, and Operation Shufly was officially terminated when the helicopter squadron and subunit were reassimilated by the arriving Marine Aircraft Group 16.

Lieutenant Commander Hugh Lecky (Lutheran) was the last Shufly chaplain to fly with the squadron. During this period the policy concerning the



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A186867

Marine Sgt Dale McAnulty of Texarkana, Texas, prepares to receive Holy Communion from Chaplain LCdr Otto E. Kinzler, 12th Marines regimental chaplain. Chaplain Kinzler, from Da Nang, held services at many remote artillery and observation outposts.



Photo courtesy of Chaplain Hugh Lecky

Chaplain Hugh F. Lecky, Jr., conducts a service for men of HMM-163 in February 1965.

chaplain flying with the squadron also changed. Chaplain Heim had flown only 20 missions during his five month's assignment. The policy, restated during the February-March transition period, was that the chaplain should avoid flying missions except when essential to his duties. While Chaplain Lecky observed the policy meticulously, he still became known to MAG-16 personnel as the "Heli-Padre," and, even though flying only "safe" missions, he was wounded, becoming the first Navy chaplain to be awarded the Purple Heart for action in Vietnam.

The defense-oriented American involvement was coming to a close. In response to Communist activities, such as the Gulf of Tonkin incident and the

Viet Cong attack on the U.S. Bachelor Officers' Quarters in Saigon on Christmas Eve 1964, which killed 2 Americans and wounded 109, President Johnson ordered retaliatory air strikes on North Vietnam. The VC continued their attacks by mortaring the U.S. compound at Pleiku on 7 February 1965. By the 27th, the President decided to commit a brigade-sized force to Da Nang with the mission of protecting that major base.

On 6 March 1965 the signal was sent to elements of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) off Vietnam shores: "Land at once at Da Nang MEB command and control elements, a surface battalion landing team" ³⁴ The mini-war was no more.

CHAPTER 2

Supporting Amid Confusion (March-August 1965)

The 9th MEB Comes Ashore—The III Amphibious Force is Created—Landing at Phu Bai—Chu Lai is Born—The Seabees Arrive—MAG-12 at Chu Lai—Chaplain Organization at Da Nang

The events of March to August 1965 in the area of Da Nang, South Vietnam, bear eloquent testimony to the combat readiness of the United States Marine Corps. During the first week of March of that year, only the Shufly detachment with but one security company was situated at the Da Nang airstrip. By the end of the summer, Marine infantry regiments, the 3d, 4th, 7th, and 9th Marines, were in Vietnam, together with four Marine aircraft groups; MAGs-11, -12, -16, and -36.

The achievement of this incredibly rapid buildup produced understandable, though temporary, confusion and the chaplains' sections were not exempt from the headaches of rapidly changing circumstances, expectations, and projections.

In March there was one chaplain serving MAG-16, and, at best, two when a Roman Catholic priest could be broken loose from his duties with personnel in Okinawa. By late summer a total of 32 chaplains were located in the greater Da Nang area, with some 8-10 more projected to report. Writing at the end of the period about change in the Da Nang complex Lieutenant Paul L. Toland (Roman Catholic) observed:

This past year I have seen three general phases to this Marine operation. From December 1964 to mid-March 1965, the operation was relatively small and quiet. Mid-March to mid-June saw the arrival of several thousand Marines and an acceleration in activity. Since mid-June the buildup had been astronomical. There is now a full scale war in progress. In the first phase the Marines were offering small helicopter support to the ARVN's; in the second phase we had buildup of security and the operation was largely defensive; in the third phase the Marines began their own great offensive.

Today as I go about the Da Nang area, it is like a different country. The airfield which in the beginning serviced a single squadron of helicopters and a squadron of U. S. Air Force fighter planes, is a beehive of activity; planes of every description and size come and go. The city of Da Nang has been taken over by the Marines, the Seabees, the Air Force, Army and Navy. American servicemen crowd

the sidewalks; American vehicles fill narrow streets. There are vast camps, compounds and complexes to house the thousands upon thousands of American Service personnel. Many of the old RVN camps are now taken over by Americans. Where there were rice paddies and thatched huts and grazing cattle, there are now huge American camps filled with troops, vehicles and supplies.¹

Contributing hugely to the confusion of the period was the continual instability of the government of South Vietnam in Saigon. After the assassination of President Diem, a succession of heads of state paraded to the position of power only to prove unable to secure it and stabilize the national structure. Foremost among the influences that contributed to the undermining of confidence in the Saigon-based government was the often bitter rivalry between Buddhists and Roman Catholics which continued until June of 1965, when it quieted somewhat under Vice Air Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, who became Premier of the eighth government for the RVN in 20 months.

The 9th MEB Comes Ashore

Since mid-1964 battalion landing teams from the 3d Marine Division on Okinawa had rotated as special landing forces on board the Navy's amphibious ready groups in Vietnamese waters. BLTs functioned within the command structure of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), which varied in size and composition from one to two battalions according to the requirements of specific crisis. In the north of South Vietnam they were poised against the potential need to defend Da Nang or evacuate American personnel at Da Nang and Qui Nhon. In the south they were positioned off Cape St. Jacques to support Saigon-based Americans, to bolster the regularly constituted government, and to demonstrate the capability of American military might in the area while observing the 1954 Geneva agreements by remaining out of the country in international waters.

The events of this fascinating and complex period had their initial focus at 0600 on 8 March 1965 when the order to land the landing force was given to the 9th Brigade embarked in four ships of Amphibious Task Force 76. The USS *Mount McKinley* (AGC 7), USS *Henrico* (APA 45), USS *Union* (AKA 106), and USS *Vancouver* (LPD 2) had closed to within 4,000 yards of Red Beach 2, north of Da Nang. The ships, with Battalion Landing Team 3/9 and its chaplain, Lieutenant John F. Walker (Episcopal) on board, had been steaming off the coast of South Vietnam for the past two months, awaiting the contingency that would require the Marines to land. The possibility of such need had loomed greater toward the end of 1964 and early 1965, when the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese appeared to risk U.S. intervention by asserting their ability to infiltrate and employ terrorist tactics in the south. To counter, President Johnson ordered air retaliation and then, after an offer of negotiations received no North Vietnamese response, ordered the landing of the 9th MEB.

The mission of the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines was to land in the vicinity of Da Nang and move to the airfield, taking up defensive positions on the perimeter, augmenting and absorbing the security company, Company D of 1st Battalion, 3d Marines, in country from Okinawa since February. Deploying about the perimeter, the Marines of 3d Battalion, 9th Marines dug fighting pits and prepared to defend the airstrip and the compound which housed MAG-16 and the newly arrived 9th MEB command group. Concurrent with the arrival of the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines over the beach, the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines started landing in C-130s from Okinawa. The men continued to arrive for the next two days and upon the establishment of unit organization, relieved the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines of close-in defense enabling the latter battalion to deploy further west on the slopes of the surrounding hill country, dominated by Hill 327.

Lieutenant Commander Paul H. Running (Lutheran) with the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines was the second 9th MEB chaplain to deploy south from Okinawa to Da Nang. He and his battalion had just completed cold weather training at Camp Fuji, Honshu, Japan, when word concerning the 7 February guerrilla attack at Pleiku and the bombing of the Saigon BOQ arrived. Upon return to Okinawa, Company D departed immediately to reinforce the

detachment of security personnel guarding the airbase at Da Nang. On Sunday afternoon as Chaplain Running, his battalion commander, and two other officers returned from an officers religious retreat and entered the gate at Camp Schwab, they were informed that 1st Battalion, 3d Marines was mounting out. Within a few hours the battalion was standing by at Marine Corps Air Station, Futema, Okinawa, awaiting immediate transportation to Vietnam.

Chaplain Running later reflected:

Our battalion deployed around the airfield upon arriving in country, replacing 3d Battalion, 9th Marines who moved west to Hills 268 and 327, where some of the LAAM (Light Anti-Aircraft Missile) batteries were emplaced. From the time of our arrival on we received sporadic sniper fire, especially from the southwest. "B" Company was on constant alert.²

Chaplain Running set about organizing the structure of his ministry and was quickly made aware of one of the major organizational necessities of the Vietnam chaplain's experience; the necessity for cooperative, cross-unit ministry. He commented:

Sunday services were conducted in all company areas, and in the missile batteries and engineer battalion areas where no chaplains were attached. Chaplains Walker 3/9, Lecky with MAG-16 and I, divided up Protestant responsibilities roughly in a three piece pie and arranged for an Army and an Air Force chaplain to provide Roman Catholic Masses. In those days it was simply a matter of locating a unit, passing the word, assembling the men and proceeding with the service. With the advent of patrols on a seven-day-a-week basis, religious services sometimes slipped from Sunday to Monday or Tuesday, but they were always held.³

While the center of the city of Da Nang was only two miles east of the airbase compound and approximately seven miles from Hills 268 and 327, neither Marines nor their chaplains had any extensive contact with indigenous Vietnamese during the first month of their assignment. The task of the Marine units did not as yet stress civic relationships with the Vietnamese. Their task was purely defensive. Security personnel were ordered to refrain from firing unless first fired upon. At first only defensive patrols were sent out, and these were deployed along the perimeter and within the confines of the enclave, which included the city, its airfield, and the countryside immediately adjacent to them. Travel for any distance beyond the confines of the command post, whether on foot or by vehicle, was considered hazar-

dous. From the very first, however, chaplains were noted for the facility with which they moved from position to position to minister to the religious needs of their scattered personnel. Chaplains Walker, Running, and Lecky made their way by hitching rides upon the first available transportation, or later, when more vehicles were available, by moving from one isolated outpost to another in a "mighty mite" or jeep in company with an armed driver and a clerk riding "shotgun." Setting the pattern for all other chaplains in country with Marines, they looked upon regular visits among personnel of the unit outposts, as an important professional duty which must at all costs be fulfilled.

The defensive character of the Marine Corps stance at the time does not mean that the pain and suffering that results from combat experience was foreign to chaplains or to the individual Marine. In fact, the regulation not to carry a loaded weapon and not to fire unless fired upon, contributed to the potentiality of heightened anger, frustration, and agony. Lieutenant Clarence A. Vernon (Disciples of Christ) wrote:

In 1965 I saw our power applied so gently that we were using only our presence. The last words of the Marine corporal who died in my arms were: "I couldn't get my clip" . . . Under orders not to fire unless fired upon and not to carry a loaded weapon, he was shot in the back by the Viet Cong. In his hands were soap, bandages and medicine for the sore-covered children of the village.⁴

In the early days of the 9th MEB's presence in Vietnam the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines and the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines had reasonable contact and good-natured competition between them that contributed to the easing of the tensions produced by the gravely serious business at hand. Nor were the respective chaplains exempt from such competition. Chaplain Walker would enjoy reminding Chaplain Running that Walker's unit was, after all, the first infantry battalion in country. Chaplain Running is reported to have countered with his characteristic twinkle that, while it was true that Walker's outfit was the first battalion physically in country, Running's was the first "effective" infantry unit to land.⁵

The III Marine Amphibious Force is Created

Following the initial landings in Vietnam, the 3d Marine Division Chaplain, Captain Robert Q. Jones

(American Baptist), and his assistant, Commander John J. O'Connor (Roman Catholic), at division headquarters in Okinawa, assembled equipment and supplies and made preparations necessary for combat ministry, should the entire division be committed to duty in Vietnam. Attempts had been made to arrange a trip for either the division chaplain or the assistant even before the initial landing of 3d Battalion, 9th Marines. During March Chaplain O'Connor visited the units of the 9th MEB and MAG-16 and conferred with Chaplains Running, Walker, and Lecky. Upon his return to brief the division chaplain, it became reasonably obvious that a sizable buildup was certain, and Chaplain O'Connor was assigned 30 days of temporary duty as brigade chaplain, and returned to Vietnam the following month.

On 2 April 1965 Chaplain O'Connor arrived in Da Nang to join the command group of the 9th MEB as brigade chaplain. Since Chaplain Toland with MAG-16 was on Okinawa with the parent wing at that time, Chaplain O'Connor was the only Roman Catholic chaplain serving the Marines in the enclave. With characteristic zeal and competence that was later to contribute to his being chosen the Navy Chaplain Corps' fourteenth chief of chaplains, Chaplain O'Connor coordinated the entire religious program of the brigade, provided Catholic coverage for the two battalions in country and for MAG-16, and was virtually ever-present at the field hospital being established by Company A, 3d Medical Battalion.

Chaplain O'Connor remained in Vietnam much longer than the scheduled 30 days. Near the end of his first month in Da Nang the next significant step in the buildup of forces occurred. Early in May, the 3d Marine Division, with its skeleton staff, moved from Okinawa to the Da Nang base to become the 3d Marine Division (Forward), and the 9th MEB was shortly absorbed into a new superior command, the III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF). The battalions of the 9th MEB were then restored to the command of the 3d Marine Division. At this point Major General William R. Collins commanded both the III MAF and the 3d Marine Division.

III MAF, with its headquarters in the cramped, crowded Da Nang Airbase compound, exercised command over the 3d Marine Division (Forward), 1st MAW, and the forming Naval Component Command which was to include all U.S. Navy commands

ashore in the five I Corps provinces. When the entire 3d Marine Division, most of the remaining aircraft groups of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, and Seabee Battalions 3 and 10 arrived in the spring of 1965, the command structure of the III MAF would be fully formed. Shortly after the reorganization was complete, Major General Lewis W. Walt relieved Major General Collins as Commanding General, III MAF, and one of his initial acts after arriving in country was to redesignate Chaplain O'Connor as 3d Marine Division chaplain, anticipating that the remainder of his senior staff, temporarily remaining on Okinawa, would soon arrive in Vietnam, and that Chaplain Jones, former division chaplain would be assigned to the new senior billet with III MAF.

Considerably before there was any large-scale commitment of chaplains to Vietnam, Chaplain Jones, on Okinawa, was identifying problem areas and moving to solve them. The most pressing of these areas was chaplain preparation and training, and the availability of religious supplies. Upon the conclusion of his most demanding tour Chaplain Jones remembered:

As the Division Chaplain on Okinawa, where most of the Marine Chaplains remained (early in 1965), it was necessary for me to make periodic trips to Vietnam to obtain first-hand-information on the chaplain's duties, responsibilities, and hardships. Such information was inculcated into the continuous training program for chaplains on Okinawa as preparation for their ministry under arduous circumstances in Vietnam. On these trips I was able also to carry religious supplies to the combat area to be stored and await the arrival of unit chaplains.⁵

The training program spoken of by Chaplain Jones was designed to equip each combat-bound chaplain with a fundamental knowledge of guerrilla warfare, and specifically the working environment in war-torn Vietnam within which his ministry was to be conducted. The division chaplain insured that plans were formed for all chaplains attached to the division to receive two weeks of intensive orientation to guerrilla warfare. This training was conducted at the Northern Training Area on Okinawa under simulated combat conditions. It was arduous and taxing, but the profitable results were to be in evidence a few months later in the jungles of Vietnam. Chaplain Jones reported:

The major portion of our weekly chaplains' conferences were devoted to the chaplains' ministry in the field and the chaplains' ministry in combat. Chaplains were instructed on the availability of resources, personal initiative, over-

coming hardships, and related subjects. During this predeployment period, chaplains held religious weekend retreats for their individual battalions. Ten Protestant and twelve Catholic religious retreats were held involving over 1200 enlisted personnel. The weekend prior to the initial Marine landing in Vietnam, a religious ecumenical retreat for 170 Marine officers was held at Okuma, Okinawa. Seventy-two hours after the retreat terminated Marine Battalions with forty-eight officers who attended the retreat were walking ashore in Vietnam to face combat, hardship, and loneliness.⁶

Having organized and supervised these extensive preparations, Chaplain Jones would be directed to the war zone itself in June of 1965, and would observe the fruits of his foresight.

Landing at Phu Bai

The second enclave* to be established by Marine Corps ground units in Vietnam was at Phu Bai near the ancient capital city of Hue, in Thua Thien Province. Three chaplains were involved in the four-day operation which began on 11 April 1965. Two of those chaplains were attached to Marine battalions; Lieutenant Colin E. Supple (Roman Catholic) was with the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, which landed the first day, and was followed up three days later by Lieutenant Commander William A. Lane (Southern Baptist) with the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines. The third chaplain was Lieutenant Edward Wilcox (United Presbyterian) in the Amphibious Landing Ship Dock, USS *Vancouver* (LPD 2) part of Task Group 76.7 which also included Attack Transport USS *Henrico* (APA 45), Attack Cargo Ship USS *Union* (AKA 106) and Attack Transport USS *Linawee* (APA 195). Chaplain Wilcox, whose ship participated in the initial landing at Da Nang a month earlier, recalled:

Once again *Vancouver* was called upon to perform her primary mission, along with *Henrico* and *Union*. *Vancouver* loaded Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 2/3 at White Beach, Buckner Bay, Okinawa, and three days later, anchored two miles from the mouth of the Hue River. Precisely at H-hour, tractor landing vehicles (LTVs) hit the beach and were followed by landing craft carrying land vehicles and cargo. Convoys of landing craft in company with Marine fire teams were dispatched to patrol the river banks. The operation was more time consuming than originally planned due to the fact that the staging area was

*An "enclave" was the designation given a protected area immediately surrounding the major population centers in the I Corps Tactical Zone (ICTZ) of South Vietnam.

13 miles up the river. Helicopters were also employed by *Vancouver* to airlift supplies and equipment over the distance.⁷

On the first day of the operation, Chaplain Supple landed with the main body of his battalion at Red Beach 1 near Da Nang. The landing was without incident, and two line companies of the battalion were immediately flown by chopper to the Phu Bai strip to join the advance party and its equipment, while the remainder of the BLT assumed defensive positions in the hills west of Da Nang. Chaplain Supple remembered, "I went immediately to Phu Bai where we set up a defense for the airstrip and an adjacent Army Communications Camp. Never before did the Army welcome Marines more cordially!"⁸

Chaplain Supple's work assumed the classic Marine chaplain's pattern. The companies of 2d Battalion, 3d Marines lived on the ground in shelter-halves and proceeded to send patrols throughout the area. It was cold and damp during those early days and Mass, confession, and worship were held out under the open sky.

Although the two companies of 2/3 remained in Phu Bai only two weeks, the character of Chaplain Supple's ministry broadened immediately. Even as the Phu Bai enclave was being secured, he was asked by the U.S. Army chaplain in Hue to cover Catholic service at a remote Special Forces Camp.

My clerk and I flew by TWA or, to use the term employed by Army personnel, "Teeney Weeney Airlines," from Hue to the Special Forces Camp. Our single engine Army bird landed us in the jungle about forty miles to the west at a small fenced and mostly underground camp containing seven Army and about one hundred fifty irregular ARVN troops. Only one American was Catholic. We began Mass with three people. Just after the Consecration, nearly all the Vietnamese men trooped in and took over. Continuous loud singing of native hymns, taught by their French Nuns, was impressive. Talk about participation, and in the vernacular!⁹

On Easter Sunday, just two weeks after the initial landing at Phu Bai, the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines relieved the two companies of 2d Battalion, 3d Marines which returned to the parent body in Da Nang. Chaplain Lane landed with his battalion following a trip up the Hue River. From the city of Hue it was transported to the Phu Bai defensive perimeter. Heavy sniper fire plagued the convoy and the battalion sustained its first Marine killed in action.

Chaplain Lane was with 3d Battalion, 4th Marines for only a month as he had 30 days left on his current tour of duty when the battalion landed. That month was comparatively quiet, although a reconnaissance platoon under the command of First Lieutenant Frank Reasoner, who was later to be awarded the Medal of Honor, was routinely engaged in operations against the Viet Cong.

When he arrived to relieve Chaplain Lane at the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, Lieutenant Leroy E. Muenzler, Jr. (Cumberland Presbyterian), found Hue-Phu Bai to be a fascinating area. Phu Bai lies approximately 50 miles north of Da Nang along the eastern coastline. It was strategically well chosen as a coastal enclave in that it was capable of defense and support by naval force offshore, and provided military cover for the historically and psychologically important former home of the Annam kings, the city of Hue. The terrain presented the white sands of the beachline blending into a strip of coastal plain and then rising sharply westward through dense, jungle-covered country to the heights of the Annamese Cordillera running northwest to southeast, parallel to the coastline of South Vietnam's panhandle.

The impact of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines on Phu Bai and the contribution that Chaplain Muenzler was able to make to the Vietnamese of the area, would prove to be extremely significant. When the chaplain reported for duty the battalion was still engaged in searching and clearing the tactical area of responsibility (TAOR) assigned to it. The units were widely scattered and Chaplain Muenzler's time was heavily committed to providing religious coverage throughout the entire area. The battalion TAOR included several villages whose population totalled about 12,000 people. Medical aid and civic action teams began going into these villages about the first of June. In addition, the chaplain's workload increased when the battalion commander formed a civic action council and assigned him to direct its expanding humanitarian efforts.

Out of the work of this council a practice evolved which was to become supremely important for Marine Corps pacification efforts in Vietnam. It was noted that the villagers lived in fear of the Viet Cong, and for fear of reprisal were hesitant to accept badly needed self-help material and medical aid offered them by the Americans. It was obvious that they urgently required protection if they were to

make the best use of assistance available to them. A combined action company, charged to formulate a workable plan of protection for the village Vietnamese, was established. Within a brief period each hamlet was assigned a Marine squad. Riflemen were committed to live in the hamlet, with and among the Vietnamese, to train defensive Popular Force troops and become an integral part of a Popular Force platoon. They also attempted to implement what civic action programs they considered workable. Chaplain Muenzler noted, "The Marines learned enough of the Vietnamese language to engage in simple conversation. The villagers grew to know, to trust and to love the Marines through this close contact."¹⁰ The combined action concept proved to be sound and workable, and soon attracted the attention of General Walt, the III MAF Commander, and in time became a major instrument upon which the Marine Corps pacification efforts were to be based in the following years.

The heaviest burden placed on the chaplain involved in a civic action program as extensive as the one in which Chaplain Muenzler was active, was in terms of the time required to discharge the responsibility. Both transportation difficulties and necessary public relations with local dignitaries are up vast amounts of time. The increased civic action, Chaplain Muenzler reported:

... meant that the chaplain was in the villages increasingly more frequently. I went to Hue and met the Archbishop, who in turn introduced me to the Roman Catholic Priest living and serving in the area. Everyone was immediately receptive and extremely responsive. The same method was employed in meeting Buddhist religious leaders and laity. The American Consul in Hue was more than happy to introduce me to Doctor Ba', who took me to the Dom' Pagoda, and to the area Buddhist headquarters. I toured their facilities in the area, including an orphanage, and saw a number of areas where we could be of help. Eventually several projects were completed in the orphanages at Hue, in a refugee camp then being establishing in our TAOR, and in the villages of the area. This involved a great deal of local traveling on the part of the chaplain, as did religious coverage of the combined action squads living in the villages. Every man, however, had the opportunity to attend church services at least once a week.¹¹

At this time, midyear 1965, the Phu Bai enclave produced a remarkable example of chaplain commitment and cooperation. It was nothing dramatic like a life-saving effort or dangerous rescue, simply the day-by-day dedication to outstanding goals. Lieu-

tenant Paul E. Roswog (Roman Catholic) was completing his tour with the 3d Marine Division on Okinawa. In view of the rising need for additional chaplains in Vietnam, he offered to use two weeks of the leave he had expected to take en route to duty at the Naval Station, Key West, Florida, to provide additional Catholic coverage in the I Corps. Division Chaplain Jones agreed and made the appropriate recommendation to the G-1 section. In view of the needs he saw upon arrival in Phu Bai where he joined Chaplain Muenzler, Chaplain Roswog requested a three-month extension and eventually a second. His two-week tenure in Vietnam lasted from July to November!

That there was profound need for Chaplain Roswog in Phu Bai is amply demonstrated by a recounting of the units that he, in conjunction with Chaplain Muenzler, served in the TAOR. These units included the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines with attached tank, antitank, reconnaissance, engineering, and truck platoons; Company A, 3d Medical Battalion; Force Logistics Support Unit 2; four batteries of the 2d and 4th Battalions, 12th Marines (Artillery); and Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 161 (HMM-161) of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. Also included within the Marine camp perimeter were the Hue civilian air terminal, the U.S. Army Eighth Radio Research Unit (RRU-8), an ARVN artillery regiment, and the Dong Da ARVN Basic Training Camp.

The units to which Chaplains Muenzler and Roswog traveled each day were located within a 1½ mile radius of the center of the compound. Chaplain Roswog reported, however, that the average jeep mileage for a day on which he did not leave the perimeter was 30 miles. He was quartered in the field hospital to facilitate care of the wounded and to afford more efficient unit coverage which he shared with Chaplain Muenzler. Each chaplain was available at all times for religious counseling and ministrations to the troops throughout the area. As a practical matter, however, Chaplain Muenzler assumed responsibility for the units on one side of the highway which divided the compound, and Chaplain Roswog covered the others. Chaplain Roswog served the field hospital and the medical battalion, the artillery units, and the helicopter squadron. Chaplain Muenzler was available to the infantry company, the units attached to reinforce the battalion, and the detached support platoons. While

Chaplain Muenzler was the overall coordinator of the civic action program, both chaplains shared the Combined Action Platoon (CAP) ministry.

The work that Chaplain Roswog did in the refugee village was significant for several reasons, not the least of which was that it represented the first occasion of III MAF chaplains formally working in South Vietnamese Government-sponsored refugee camps. "Having once made liaison with the Reverend Francis Thuan, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Hue and director of all refugee settlements in the Hue area," reported Chaplain Roswog, "my specific role in civil affairs was coordinator of programs for refugees."¹² The chapel funds at Phu Bai were collected with the understanding that they would be used solely for these villages or civic action generally. Numerous donations were made to both the Christian communities and to the outreach program of the Buddhist structure in the Hue-Phu Bai area. Lieutenant Roswog reported:

All communications with and projects for the Buddhist orphanage were handled through the office of the American Consul General. We concurred in the opinion that we should help the orphanage, not only as a means of promoting good will among the people of the city of Hue, but more basically because of the dire need of the orphans and the sad lack of facilities available for their use. At his suggestion we did not give money, but rather determined what they needed most, purchased it, and then presented it to them.¹³

Chaplain Roswog also reported at length on the initial successes of the combined action platoons. In one of the villages, while the Marine squad and Vietnamese Popular Forces were out on patrol, the Viet Cong slipped in and visited the home of an ARVN soldier. The intruders ordered his wife to have her husband at home the following night and prepared to join the Viet Cong. No choice or alternative was stated. None was required; the consequences for refusal were clearly understood. Instead of attempting to influence her husband to desert, she approached the Marine squad leader and informed him of the threat. She was reassured by the promise of a continuing night-watch on her home. Five weeks passed before Chaplain Roswog left the area, and the Viet Cong had not returned. The significance of the story, he suggested, was the fact that the Vietnamese housewife had sufficient faith in the CAP personnel to approach them with her story rather than succumbing to the threats of those whom she sensed were the real enemy. Every day the threatened family re-

mained free from Viet Cong reprisal further improved the mutual trust which was developing between the South Vietnamese and their Marine benefactors.

The Phu Bai chaplains record that their religious ministry not only did not suffer because of their Combined Action Platoon involvement, but their spiritual ministry was extended by it. Tuesdays and Thursdays were reserved for services at the CAP units in the villages. While attendance varied from three to five with the various squads, Chaplains consistently reported the majority of CAP personnel attended. The men in the CAP squads obviously looked forward to the weekly visits of both chaplains.

Chu Lai is Born

The almost-white sand is deep and soft, about the consistency of sugar. It sucks at your feet; it fouls wheeled, even tracked vehicles. It blows up easily into eyes and nostrils in the dry seasons and is cloying quagmire in the monsoon. The sun-washed days are squinted at through half-closed eyes, and the heat is like a weight, making each step an effort. Perspiration never stops, it just slows with the lessening of activity. Next to his rifle, salt tablets are the Marine's best friend. This is Chu Lai, Vietnam.

Chu Lai is not a royal city or an ancient seaport. You will not find it on Vietnamese maps. It was merely sun and sand until 13 July 1964 when Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, Commanding General, FMFPac, on an exploration flight in search of a suitable site for an additional airstrip in I Corps, noted this spot 57 miles southeast of Da Nang. The Civil Engineer Corps officer flying with the general remarked that the site looked good but there was no way to identify it. General Krulak quickly replied. "The name is Chu Lai." He later explained "In order to settle the matter immediately, I had simply given (him) the Mandarin Chinese characters for my name."¹⁴ Thus was Chu Lai christened. It was to receive its baptism by fire in the not too distant future.

In early March 1965 when it became obvious that the 3d Marine Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing were to be committed to action in Vietnam, tactical concerns centered upon backup reserve. The decision was made to restore the 4th Marines (which had belonged to the 1st Marine Brigade in Hawaii since 1954) to the division. On 10 March, the 4th Marines embarked and sailed for Okinawa with Chaplains Lieutenant Commander John P. Byrnes

(Roman Catholic), Lieutenant Commander William A. Lane, and Lieutenant Commander George S. Thilking (United Churches of Christ), remaining with their units through a training period on Okinawa and eventually landing over the sands of Chu Lai.

Chaplain Byrnes landed with Lieutenant Colonel Joseph R. "Bull" Fisher in the first wave of boats that carried their battalion to the shore. The sand was soft and marching was difficult. "Had it not been for the LVT's, tank and other vehicles, most of the men would have been marching into the night just to reach the Command Post. It was quite an experience for all of us. There were no lights, no fires, no noise. We ate cold C rations and remained on the alert."¹⁵

Since Chaplain Byrnes, with the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines was the only Catholic Chaplain ashore at Chu Lai, he set about coordinating his religious ministry with Chaplain Thilking with the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines positioned several miles away but about equal distance from the beach, and the 4th Marines Regimental Command Post which was strategically deployed between them and closer to the beach for security. This positioning was fortunate at the outset of the enclave since it allowed both chaplains to cover all units with relative ease. Even so, Chaplain Thilking who rotated out of country in just 33 days, his tour with the brigade ended, recorded 35 helicopter flights and countless trips by jeep and foot in the discharge of his ministry.

Chaplain Thilking noted, as did Chaplain Byrnes, that worship services at Chu Lai were first held under the open sky. In the midst of heavily wooded ground in the 1st Battalion area, Chaplain Thilking found a configuration of five trees with arching limbs forming a natural, open-air cathedral. He pointed out the location for his commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Harold D. Fredericks. That evening at the officers' meeting the colonel announced that all officers and staff NCOs who were available were to meet the chaplain under the trees with the appropriate instruments to clear away the dense underbrush. On Saturday morning a sizable group prepared the area and on Sunday, 16 May, the 1st Battalion chapel was used for both Protestant and Catholic worship services.¹⁶

The initial mission for the Regimental Landing Team (RLT) 4 was the protection of the area within which the projected airstrip was to be built. It was a monumental task, trying to construct a stable strip

on the huge expanse of shifting sand. Joining the 1st and 2d Battalions, 4th Marines in RLT 4 were the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines with Lieutenant Commander Eugene M. Smith (Presbyterian Church in the United States) as Chaplain, and Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 10 (NMCB-10), the unit which would actually build the strip. Later Chu Lai would be the home of the 1st and 3d Battalions, 7th Marines; 3d Shore Party Battalion, Naval Beach Group, supported by the Force Logistic Supply Unit; companies of the 3d Reconnaissance Battalion; and Company A, 3d Tank Battalion. But for now there was RLT 4, the airstrip to be built, and the Seabees were ordered to do it—on the double.

The Seabees Arrive

On 7 May 1965, in coordination with the amphibious landing of RLT 4 at Chu Lai, the first Seabee battalion to make an amphibious landing into a shooting conflict since World War II, moved across the beach. Lieutenant George M. Sheldon (Episcopal), battalion chaplain of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 10, became the first Seabee chaplain to enter South Vietnam.

Chaplain Sheldon reported that the Seabees took their "Can Do" motto very seriously. In keeping with the decision to establish shoreline defense enclaves which had the capability of air support and vertical envelopment, NMCB-10 threw itself into the construction of a modern, jet-capable airstrip and helicopter pad, on the sandy beachfront. The Chu Lai airfield developed rapidly into the projected 8,000-foot runway with taxiways and support facilities capable of accommodating two jet fighter squadrons of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, then slated for immediate in-country deployment. In record time, 29 days later, the strip was opened for limited air operations and received the first planes of MAG-12. When General Krulak notified his superiors in Washington of the operational capability of the airstrip in so short time, he received a one word message in reply, "incredible!"¹⁷

Since chaplains were providing a kind of complementary, cooperative religious coverage across organizational lines, MCB-10's chaplains regularly cared for Company B, 3d Medical Battalion, and provided Protestant coverage for the hospital. Coverage there included a crisis ministry to casualties and the conduct of religious services appropriate to the need of patients, medical officers, and corps-

men. In return Catholic chaplains attached to nearby Marine units brought the ministry of their church to the Seabees.

Although the location and situation at Chu Lai never lent themselves to extensive people-to-people projects, Chaplains Sheldon of NCMB-10 and Smith of the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines cooperated in benefiting an orphanage in Quang Ngai and refugee camp sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church south of the perimeter. Both of these efforts required the passage over roads controlled by the Viet Cong at the time, and necessitated the use of a convoy of trucks from the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines when materials were delivered. NMCB-10 also dug surface wells and drainage ditches and did extensive construction work for the Chu Lai New Life Hamlet, a Vietnamese relocation effort.

With the remarkable buildup of Marine battalions and support units, the need for new construction was keenly felt and the commitment of Mobile Construction Battalions to Vietnam continued. On 26 May 1965, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 3 arrived at Da Nang to begin construction of cantonments for the field hospital of the 3d Medical Battalion. Additional projects included cantonments for the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing headquarters, lately arrived in country, and for a permanent Seabee camp from which the new Seabee battalion could proceed with its part of 150 million dollars worth of construction planned for Vietnam during 1965.

Lieutenant Edward E. Jayne (United Methodist) accompanied the battalion of 20 Civil Engineer Corps officers and 600 professional construction men ashore. He wrote:

Following a full eight-month deployment on the island of Guam, MCB Three was ordered to execute a total mountout operation to Da Nang, South Vietnam. This movement was one of the first full scale Seabee mount-out operations utilizing both air and sea services since World War II. Approximately thirty C-130 aircraft were used to transport the advance party to Da Nang for the purpose of selecting a site for MCB Three's base camp and initiating construction. The main body of the battalion departed Guam on the LSD's *Point Defiance* and *Belle Grove* and the USS *Tallegaga*.¹⁸

For the first two months MCB-3's Sunday worship services were conducted in the messhall, which was the only early building of sufficient size to accommodate the worshippers. The Seabees chaplain usually enjoyed exceptional attendance at worship

due to the professional closeness of the members of the battalion and the practice of keeping the entire battalion quarters within the perimeter of the camp as much as possible. The camps thus tended to become more permanent as did the daily pattern of the Seabees. Chaplain Jayne conducted the Protestant services and the Catholic Masses were covered by the chaplain from the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, Lieutenant Edwin V. Bohula. In keeping with the practice of crossing unit lines to provide broader religious coverage, Chaplain Jayne offered his services to the Force Logistic Support Group (FLSG), which was without a chaplain. For three months, until the first unit chaplain was assigned to FLSG, Chaplain Jayne conducted worship services, a weekly Bible study, and daily counseling sessions. He also gave professional assistance to the 7th Engineer Battalion which was without a chaplain during the early months of the buildup of the Marine force.

Chaplain ministry to a Seabee battalion was much like that which was offered the men of the U.S. Marine Corps, but it did differ in one major respect. A Seabee was ordered to spend a number of years attached to one unit, and he deployed with that unit and not as an individual. The result was that a Seabee could deploy two or three times during his years with a certain unit, regardless of how many months he'd already spent away from his family. Before and during Vietnam, Seabee deployments usually resulted in the constructionman's being with his family only four or five months a year, for a succession of years. This often strained marital ties and created personnel problems with which the chaplain had to cope. The recurrence of a familiar pattern of family problems over the years demonstrated the need for a workable system of communication between the deployed Seabee and his family. Lack of communication had proven to be a major cause of deficient relationships in the past. Acting as personal representative of his deployed counterpart, the chaplain at the Construction Battalion Center in the U.S., visited and counseled with the families at home. Voluminous correspondence, both detailed and confidential, equipped the Center chaplain to function as a trusted and objective third party to smooth rough edges of strained family relationships.

Intimate knowledge of the 600 men of his battalion which the chaplain derived from extended deployments with them, coupled with his long-range facility in dealing with family problems, serv-

ed to enrich the chaplain's religious influence upon the personal lives of individual constructionmen. It also served to enhance and maintain the high level of unit morale consistently apparent among the Navy's Seabees.

MAG-12 at Chu Lai

On 22 May 1965, two weeks after the Seabees, the 4th Marines and part of MAG-13 landed at Chu Lai, and two weeks before the airstrip was ready to receive the first jet aircraft, the first of two Marine aircraft wing chaplains arrived for duty. He was Lieutenant Richard A. Long (Roman Catholic) attached to MAG-12. Chaplain Long moved into Chu Lai with the group's Marine air base squadron sent to set up housekeeping support facilities for the jet fighters.

The squadron had left Iwakuni, Japan on 16 May for the six-day passage to Vietnam by LST. The chaplain found the voyage to be profitable as he employed the time as he could for ministry. Each morning the working day began with a prayer over the ship's loudspeaker system. He wrote:

I believe the men enjoyed beginning the day with a prayer, and as I looked over the deck from the bridge, I could see that the men stood with heads bowed in a reverent attitude. The captain offered me a compartment where I spent the morning hours counseling with men who wished to see me in private. Then at 1130 I said Mass on the forward mess deck. Mass was well attended each day. Afternoons were spent moving about the ship, giving the men an opportunity to talk with the chaplain in an informal atmosphere. By the time we were ready to land in Vietnam I had met more men and had come to know them better than I had in four months at Iwakuni. Familiarity in its right perspective breeds, not contempt, but confidence.¹⁹

When the LST beached at Chu Lai, Chaplain Long and the Marines of his unit were met by an advance party of MAG-12 who had left Iwakuni two weeks earlier. A small compound was already established but it did not admit of any office space, or any space large enough to hold services. The form of ministry adopted by Chaplain Long, therefore, was that time-honored elemental methodology known as walking and talking. He recalled:

For two weeks I spent the entire day from 1500 to 1900 walking. My office became the entire MAG enclave, and services were held wherever a cool spot could be found. I walked from one end of the proposed airstrip to the other, and from the beach to the sand dunes west of the strip. I merely made my presence known to the men working

under the hot sun sometimes offering a canteen to a sweating man, sometimes accepting a canteen from a Marine who was generous enough to offer it. At first the men would merely return the greeting I gave them; later they would ask if I had a few minutes, and we would sit on a packaging box or in the sand while he unloaded his mind of a problem that was bothering him. Before long it became customary to do most of my counseling this way. If I missed a particular spot, the following day the men would comment on my absence.²⁰

Two weeks after Chaplain Long's arrival in Chu Lai, Lieutenant Charles L. Reiter (United Methodist) reported as the group's Protestant chaplain. When he arrived the temporary compound was completed, but conditions were still Spartan and space was at a premium. Having to share quarters with six other officers, the two chaplains repeatedly advised future planners to include an all-purpose tent with chaplain's mount-out gear to facilitate worship area and counseling privacy. This, they contended, could usually be done at least with the wing groups as their stability was more predictable than was that of the infantry battalions.

The experience of beginning a ministry with virtually nothing, in a place that was, to all purposes, "nowhere," was frightening to Chaplain Reiter, and occasioned his reflections concerning the need for the chaplain to be the embodiment of his faith and not merely the carrier of the external accoutrements of it. Once the chaplain had proven his commitment to his unit and its men, he said, "He need not . . . give a testimony; in fact he need not say anything at all. The chaplain's presence is a very ameliorating influence."²¹

Chaplain Organization at Da Nang

Although this period was characterized by confusion and rapid change in all the enclaves, it was in the Da Nang area that it was felt most seriously. Until the arrival of Chaplain Jones as Force Chaplain III MAF, the burden fell most significantly on Chaplain O'Connor, the senior and supervisory chaplain who had the responsibility for coordination of the Navy Chaplain Corps ministry throughout the entire I Corps Tactical Zone which included the three enclaves and all isolated units. In the relatively slow paced beginning of the Marine commitment to combat, chaplains pooled their efforts and went anywhere and everywhere, wherever there were troops and whenever they were needed. With the arrival of more chaplains, it was obvious that specific



Photo courtesy of Chaplain H. F. Lecky

Chaplain O'Connor offers Mass in the Cathedral at Da Nang on Memorial Day, 1965.

responsibilities had to be assigned and a comprehensive concept of organization established.

Since March, battalions had operated independently of their parent regiments, and sometimes, when operating in the vicinity of another regimental command post, were attached to it for purposes of operational coordination. Describing organizational conditions as he saw them, Chaplain O'Connor said:

A regiment has become a "sometime thing." Elements of one regiment may be in three different enclaves. The title of regimental chaplain has substantially less significance. It is useless to think of a regimental chaplain as a coordinator of battalion chaplain activities. On the other hand the concept of sector or area coordinators is developing.²²

Because organizational structures and conditions were as Chaplain O'Connor described them, he made a continuing effort to establish a "pool" of chaplains, responsible directly to the division chaplain. It was believed that only thus could mobility and flexibility be achieved to meet the highly fluctuating needs of the expanding war. The pool concept was realized and proved feasible. The division chaplain was in a position to rotate chaplains among units; to broaden their professional experience; to relieve a chaplain of one faith by a chaplain of another, periodically, in order to establish equity for all faiths; to hold chaplains of various faiths available to be dispatched to an area or a unit where a sudden need had arisen; to "ease" a chaplain out of a difficult command relationship,

where, because of personalities, neither the chaplain nor the commander was profiting, though each may have been quite sincere; to position chaplains in accordance with their talents and, perhaps with their desires, as far as possible.

Supporting this concept still further, Chaplain O'Connor reported:

It should be noted in this regard that many current (Marine) Tables of Organization are chaotic. Units of several thousand persons, e.g., Force Logistics Support Group, may have no chaplain in the T.O. An entirely new concept, a Base Defense Group of 1,000 men drawn from all units except infantry to release the latter for forward lines, has no chaplain in its T.O. The old deep-rooted conviction that a specific chaplain must stay with his battalion because of esprit, knowing the men, etc., must be dramatically revised because transplacement battalions are being fragmented. Every week or two companies are detached from their original battalions and attached to others; battalions will no longer transplace as battalions, but on individual orders and on a draft basis.²³

While it is true that after the initial period of fragmentation and confusion experienced by the Marine units involved in the rapid buildup there was a return to the more formal and traditional organizational relationships, many of the moves made according to the insight of the division chaplain were retained as highly profitable concepts. The ability of the division chaplain to move chaplains from unit to unit as the need was perceived remained as established by Chaplain O'Connor. The concept of area coverage continued in effect for years to come, and in some instances was employed by the Chaplain Corps in other parts of the world. The single-unit, single-chaplain idea did not die, however, and a preponderance of chaplain after-tour reports speak longingly, nostalgically, and proudly of "my men." The traditional, formalized command relationships were married to the area coverage and mission-oriented need in a most stable way.

In June Chaplain Jones, Division Chaplain, 3d Marine Division (Rear), arrived in Da Nang with his headquarters command groups. Chaplain Jones had been among the senior staff officers who remained with the division's rear echelon on Okinawa to provide for a planned and orderly transition of personnel and equipment to Vietnam as required. On 15 June, the decision was made that the division chaplain transfer his headquarters to the Da Nang enclave.

Chaplain Jones reported:

Shortly after I arrived in Da Nang, General Lewis Walt, CG III MAF, was made Commander of the I Corps Area. My area of cognizance as staff chaplain for Commander, I Corps, included Wing, Division and Construction Battalion Chaplains plus two Army and three Air Force Chaplains. Since General Walt was responsible to General William Westmoreland for coordination of all United States Military activities in the I Corps area, it was strongly recommended that, as his advisor on matters of religion, I be assigned to his III Marine Amphibious Force Staff as Force Chaplain. The recommendation was approved The new assignment as Force Chaplain, III MAF placed me in a better position to lend direction and purpose to all religious activities in the area. With this responsibility came the authority to reassign chaplains to units or activities to assure full religious coverage.²⁴

The first broad policy implemented by the new force chaplain related to the chaplain's image as a non-combatant. To preserve that image, pursuant to the provisions of the Geneva Agreements on military chaplains, he set forth a broad prohibition against chaplains carrying any kind of defensive weapons. Each chaplain, was given the option to comply with the policy or be transferred to Okinawa for the remainder of his tour. Every chaplain complied with the directive.

Chaplain Jones' second policy related to the provisions of instruction in the mores and folkways of the Vietnamese people for every chaplain in country. Neither the substantive content of the instruction nor the importance attached to its dissemination were new. The first Shufly chaplains had engaged the services of distinguished Christian missionary personnel to instruct both chaplains and newly arriving Marines. The real innovation was to be found in the extension of such instruction without exception to every chaplain, with the intention that he would further disseminate the information to personnel of his unit. Similar efforts based on more careful and comprehensive academic research, and broader in scope, were then being implemented by FMFPac and the Chief of Chaplains in Washington. Nevertheless, Chaplain Jones' calling upon local missionaries to share their knowledge and insights into typical Vietnamese thinking and to enhance intercultural understanding and respect represented a significant contribution to Marine Corps and Chaplain Corps efforts in Vietnam.

The third major policy consideration to which the force chaplain addressed himself related to the establishment of independent unit, division, and



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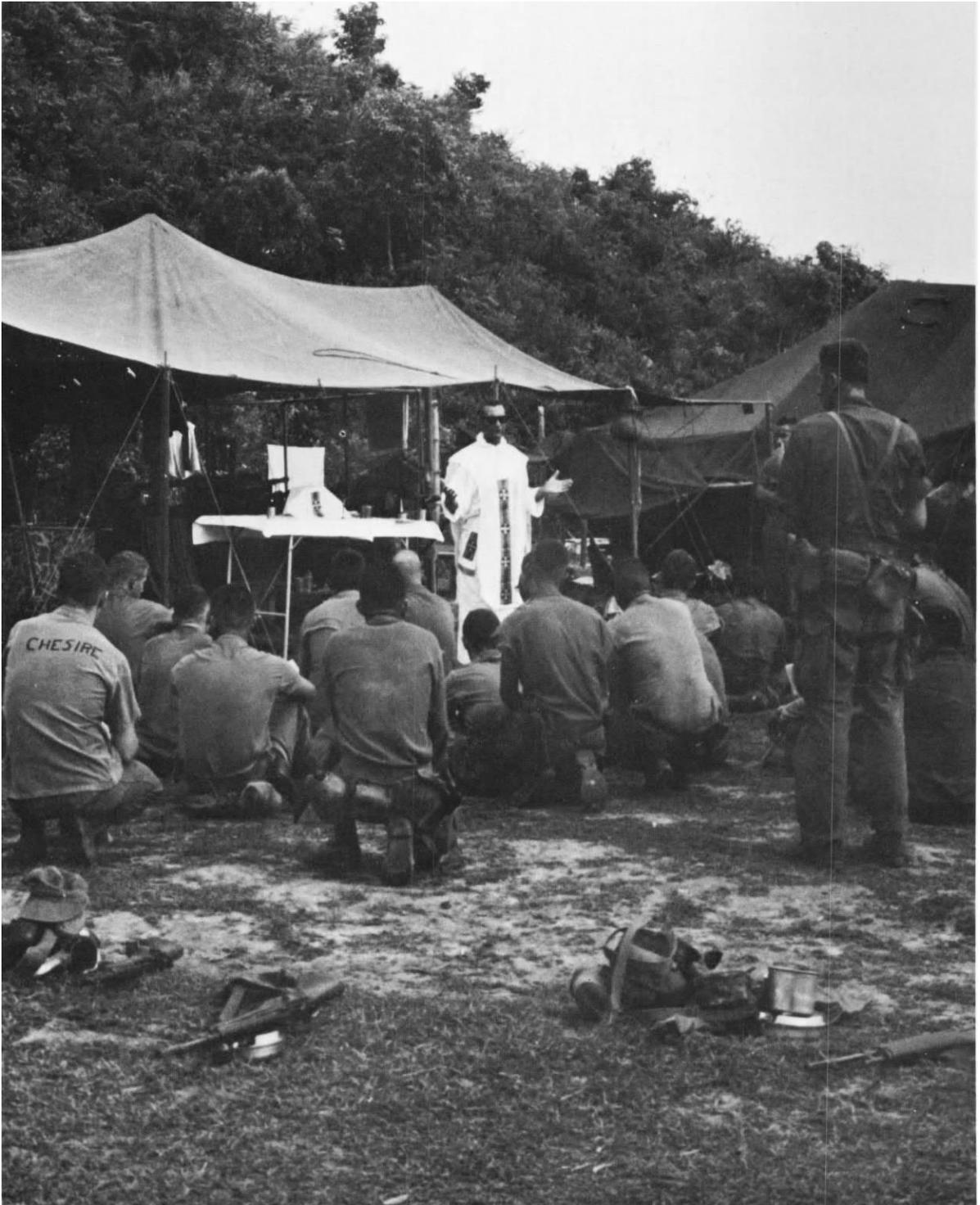
Stacks of C-ration cartons serve as both seating and altar for the Protestant service conducted by Chaplain Lt L. L. Ahrensbrak for members of the 3d Platoon, Company G, 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, at a cleared and sandbagged position on a steep hillside in 1966.

wing chapel funds. These were monies received by the chapel program for Christian distribution. On Okinawa, chapel funds were administered at the division level. As the battalions deployed to Vietnam, unit chapel funds were established but were never officially authorized by division policy. It became clear, when Marine air and ground units were again located in close geographical proximity to each other, that the lines of Chapel Fund administration should again be drawn taut, and broad III MAF policies should be formulated for their most effective employment. Officially authorized unit funds, according to Chaplain Jones, "enabled the chaplains to extend their missionary ministry to the local Vietnamese villages. A large proportion of the chapel funds was used to build or restore Catholic, Protestant, and Buddhist houses of worship. A portion was turned over to the local Catholic bishop for

his work in providing food and shelter for refugees."²⁵

These broad policy designations came none too soon. The volume of Marine units arriving with their chaplains and other chaplains ordered individually to the 3d Division was increasing by the day. Since for almost all chaplains in Vietnam this experience was the first large-scale field deployment with combat potential they had ever had, it was extremely reassuring to be met at Da Nang with not only courtesy but also stable direction. Many chaplains remarked in their final reports that the welcoming face and smile of a fellow chaplain from the III MAF staff did much to ease the apprehension, confusion, and uncertainty they felt when deplaning at Da Nang. Acquainting these incoming chaplains with the broad guidelines of their ministry was doubly reassuring.

PART II
THE BUILDUP ACCELERATES



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A184673

Roman Catholic Chaplain LCdr J. P. Byrnes conducts tentside Mass for men of the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, their weapons and gear left aside, at the unit's base in June 1965. Father Byrnes, in church robes, makes use of a high folding table for the altar.

CHAPTER 3

Growing and Responding (July-September 1965)

Civic Action Assumes Greater Importance—Arrivals and Adjustments—The Arrival of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing—The Seabees Continue Their Buildup

On 1 June 1965 10 chaplains were serving Marines and Seabees in Da Nang. Chaplains Lecky and Toland were attached to MAG-16; Chaplains O'Connor, Walker, Running, Craven, Vernon, and Bohula were on duty with battalions of the 3d Marine Division and the field hospital. Chaplain Jayne was the only Seabee chaplain in the area. By the end of September, however, a total of 32 were located in Da Nang, for a net increase of 22 or one new arrival every six days. At the same time the number of Marine units in the enclave also increased. Thousands of Marines arrived each week; the tactical area of responsibility was rapidly expanding and new facilities were feverishly constructed to accommodate increased personnel levels.

Early in this period of phenomenal increase in numbers of Marines, Seabees, and naval support personnel, it had become obvious both to III MAF Chaplain Jones and to Division Chaplain O'Connor, that the requirement for chaplains other than those organically attached to arriving units, was steadily increasing. The field hospitals in each of three enclaves were being covered by chaplains actually attached to other units in the vicinity. Increasing numbers of casualties from illness and accident as well as from defensive combat activity, made it necessary to man the hospital with fulltime chaplains who were available 24 hours a day. In response to the analysis done by Chaplain O'Connor, Chaplain Jones began requesting that chaplains be ordered to Headquarters Battalion, 3d Marine Division (Rear), and not to specific battalions as in the past. This established a pool from which they could be assigned as required. Lieutenant Ronald G. DeBock (Assemblies Of God) and Lieutenant William M. Gibson (Roman Catholic) were among the first to be so assigned. Upon their arrival at the division they received further orders to Company C, 3d Medical Battalion, for duty with the field hospital at Da Nang. To provide for full utilization of all chaplains,

Chaplain John Craven requested that FMFPac Headquarters be authorized to transfer chaplains in WestPac with Marines, and this was approved.¹

Shortly after the arrival of Chaplains DeBock and Gibson, the field hospital was relocated to a gentle slope between Marble Mountain and a large rice paddy near the city of Da Nang. Chaplain DeBock wrote:

Friendly Vietnamese farmers cultivated the rice crop during the daylight hours and returned to their homes at night. Harrassment by the Viet Cong was anticipated from this rice paddy. Because of this ever-present possibility, our Marine sentries kept watchful eyes over the field at night. When the watch sounded an alarm, infantry troops were quickly dispatched to the scene. One such attempt at infiltration by a band of five or six Viet Cong in late June was quickly contained by the troops.²

Chaplain DeBock and Gibson met helicopter and jeep ambulances, day and night, and initiated their ministries by being among the first persons to greet and assist the casualty when he arrived. Chaplain DeBock further noted:

I discovered, I was most appreciated in the role of comforter to the more seriously wounded men, sometimes reassuring them in the operating room, sometimes just mopping their brows with a piece of gauze dipped in cool water. I visited the patients in the wards several times daily distributing literature, praying, or merely engaging men in conversation. A few men made commitments to Christ.³

On a typical Sunday the hospital chaplains conducted worship services in the fly tent hospital chapel and in several nearby troop sites. They had pitched the chapel tent near the edge of the rice paddy. Chaplain DeBock recalled:

It had no stained glass windows or even a single picture, but our blessed Lord was ever present, and the men knew it. They sang and worshipped as they had back home. They gradually adjusted to the sights and sounds of the area, and continued to pray or sing despite the noises of jets, helicopters or artillery fire. Attendance at worship services was generally in small groups. In the hospital area

and in nearby troop sites large assemblies of personnel were neither practicable or desirable. Nevertheless, they came weary from long days and sleepless nights, they came to worship God. The Marines seemed to take their religion as seriously as their duties.⁴

Chaplain Gibson was the first Navy chaplain to serve two tours of duty with Marine units in Vietnam. In 1963 he rotated between Okinawa and Da Nang providing Roman Catholic coverage for Operation Shufly personnel of MAG-16. His second tour began in 1965 and ended in May 1966. He remained at the field hospital until later in 1965 when he was reassigned to Force Logistic Support Group Alpha.

Chaplains continued to arrive in Da Nang as the units to which they were organically attached deployed in country. The first of these, during June 1965, was Lieutenant Robert W. Hodges (Christian Science) with the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines. The battalion was deployed to Da Nang to relieve the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines which had been the first BLT to arrive in the country three months earlier. In effect Chaplain Hodges relieved Chaplain Walker, when his battalion moved into the perimeter defense positions formerly occupied by the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines.

The itinerary and organizational evolutions affecting the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines from its departure as a unit from the west coast of the United States until its arrival in Vietnam, provides an important insight into the movements of chaplains toward the area of conflict. For several years, while the 3d Marine Division was garrisoned on Okinawa as Far East contingency unit of the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, troop replacements were effected by transplating battalions from the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, California. Overseas tour lengths were maintained at 13 to 14 months. In its 13th month, an Okinawa-based battalion could expect to be relieved by fresh troops of a 1st Marine Division battalion. Upon arrival on Okinawa they were redesignated as a 3d Marine Division battalion and relieved the battalion then concluding its tour of duty overseas. The 3d Battalion, 1st Marines of the 1st Marine Division to which Chaplain Hodges was attached became the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines of the 3d Marine Division upon arrival on Okinawa. The battalion immediately began intensive guerrilla warfare training, sending companies both to the Northern Training Area and to the Raid School.

When the training was completed, the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines deployed from Okinawa as a unit, to relieve the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines on the outskirts of the Da Nang enclave. The practice of transplating battalions from the 1st Marine Division, continued for several months after the buildup of forces in Vietnam began. This practice was phased out when the entire 1st Marine Division, itself a reinforcing unit of the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, prepared for its own mount-out deployment to Okinawa.

When the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines relieved the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, it spent the first weeks regrouping within the Da Nang perimeter.

Chaplain Hodges remembered:

Less than two weeks later, we were alerted to move the entire battalion from the airstrip to previously unoccupied positions on the southwestern perimeter of Da Nang. The company commanders were given word to move at 2000 in the evening and the entire battalion moved the following day. We positioned the battalion so as to secure the area into which the field hospital was soon to be relocated.

On 1 July the VC infiltrated Da Nang air base, destroying several aircraft and inflicting light casualties. The 1st Battalion, 9th Marines was ordered to move back to the airstrip where it remained for the next two months. During this time I had additional duty as chaplain for the newly formed Airstrip Defense Battalion, an off duty defensive unit comprised of supply and administrative personnel. In late August it moved to new positions south of Da Nang on the northern bank of the Da Nang River. Two companies remained in this position for about a month before the battalion CP joined the relocated companies. From this new position, where the battalion was a consolidated unit once again, several battalion sized sweeps were conducted in the vicinity of Marble Mountain.⁵

During the operations in and around Marble Mountain the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines cleared the countryside of Viet Cong in preparation for the arrival of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing's MAG-16 which was soon to take up position there.

By July it was apparent that the buildup of forces in Vietnam would include all battalions of the 9th Marines and, for that matter, the entire 3d Division and possibly the 1st. Immediate steps were taken to consolidate the 9th Marines in the Da Nang enclave, manning it with fresh troops from Camp Pendleton.

On 18 July the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines arrived on Okinawa and was redesignated 3d Battalion, 9th Marines. On 15 August Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Peter D. McLean (Episcopal) the newly designated Chaplain, 3d Battalion, 9th Marines joined the regiment at Da Nang. For a time 3/9 established posi-

tions at the airfield and prepared to move into the rice paddies beside the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines south of the river. Chaplain McLean wrote:

The ministry within an infantry battalion is broken up by the very structure of the unit. I found that I was chaplain to five different companies, four letter companies and one Headquarters and Service Company; each has its own personality, largely created by the Commanding Officer, his First Sergeant, and his Gunny. In some cases I had to fight my way into the process of arranging services, and in others everything was ready.

Some companies were more willing to turn out for services: all unnecessary work was dropped; a space was provided, and the word was passed. In others nothing was done. There were surprises, for as it happened in one company where no preparation had been made, I spent one night talking almost until dawn with a group of men over the very deepest thoughts of their lives.

Often our talk centered upon our relationships with the Vietnamese people. For the most part, our older Marines were not emotionally equipped for a counter guerrilla-counter insurgency type of warfare. This one area alone took up more time than any other during the first months.

There were crises also. Our Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Tunnell, USMC lost one of his legs when he triggered off a mine on a recon mission, and two days later 13 men from Mike Company were killed in a classic VC type ambush. The make-believe war for us had become an open and bitter reality.

Back at "C" Med I found Colonel Tunnel just coming out of his unconscious state, following the operation on his leg. We had spent many hours talking with each other coming across the Pacific. Words didn't fail us even under these lousy circumstances, and as is often true of those who suffer, he was more concerned about the others who had been wounded with him and for the battalion than he was for himself. I said good-bye that night to one of the big men in my life.⁶

Civic Action Assumes Greater Importance

In one way or another during the first half of 1965, every chaplain in Vietnam had some part in people-to-people projects and in the developing concept of civic action. In Da Nang, Chaplains Walker and Running were personally involved. In a brief report to the Chaplain Corps Planning Group, Chaplain Walker wrote:

I established a food run to the orphanage in Da Nang and to the orphanage at Marble Mountain which was run by the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres. After the evening meal each night my clerk and I along with an armed driver and an S-2 scout, would go into each company area, pick up unused food, deliver it to one of the orphanages and return before dark.⁷

Chaplain Running noted that in the spring, contacts with the Vietnamese were limited but that the situation soon changed. He began to accompany patrols of his battalion into the villages of the countryside and before long established an impressive program of humanitarian projects. Chaplain Running took with him a field organ which he played for the entertainment of Vietnamese children and their parents. Marines of the civil affairs team took along volley balls and nets and softball equipment. A medical officer and corpsman, equipped with stocks of medical supplies, went along to examine and treat village patients who needed their help. The activities were scheduled for simultaneous employment. Instrumental music, group singing, and athletic contests were conducted in widely separated areas of the village, while physicians and corpsmen concentrated in a single area to treat the ills of the people.

Such visits became a frequent occurrence for Marine and Navy personnel of the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines. During the late spring and early summer the program became even more extensive with a small combo upstaging the chaplains organ, and organized volunteer medical teams implementing a carefully planned approach to meeting the physical needs of people.

Marines of the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines on routine patrol near the battalion area noticed a pitifully harelipped child standing with her grandmother beside the road. They spoke to Chaplain Running about the child and requested that he find a way to have the defect surgically repaired. The chaplain made inquiries throughout the area and contacted a Roman Catholic hospital at Bien Hoa near Saigon whose senior surgeon agreed to perform the operation.

Chaplain Running accompanied the child and her grandmother to Saigon. It became clear upon arrival that the Bien Hoa Hospital was not equipped to accomplish cleft palate surgery. Inquiries were made to admit the child to the American facility for the operation. The surgery was successfully accomplished. Chaplain Vernon flew to Saigon to arrange return transportation for the child and her grandmother.

In one of his regular letters to Chaplain Jones during the period Chaplain Running wrote:

We got our little girl with the "cleft-lip" operation back from Saigon. The operation was 100 percent successful and we are all overjoyed. Dr. A. C. Hering (Capt, MC) was real-

ly wonderful about admitting her in Saigon Navy Hospital and they all did a wonderful job there. Our Colonel wrote him a personal letter of thanks.

We are grooming two more children for the same operation in the coming weeks. It is a lot of work getting them well enough and cleaned up enough to be operated on. Lice, sores, and anemia resulting from parasitic organisms are all working against you.⁸

Chaplain Running's pioneering efforts in the repair of harelip deformities among the children of his immediate area gave impetus to an I Corps-wide medical program to accomplish humanitarian surgery. As the program expanded more children were located. With the help of unit chapel funds and later, the Chaplain's Civic Action Fund, the facial features of the children were restored to normal. In the summer of 1965 a firm agreement was reached with Navy surgeons to accomplish one or more such operations each week. The humanitarian effort caught the interest of the international press and received wide and continuing press coverage in the United States.

Early humanitarian projects in Vietnam were pursued within policy guidelines which had been quite familiar to Navy and Marine Corps personnel since September 1956 when the "People to People Program" was formally implemented by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The basic objective was to promote better mutual understanding, respect, and good will through direct person-to-person communication between Americans and citizens of other lands.

Humanitarian efforts in Vietnam were initially identified as being a part of the civil affairs program, reverting to the use of a term commonly employed in occupied territories during and following World War II. Later in the summer of 1965 the term "Civic Action" supplanted "Civil Affairs." Chaplains' end-of-tour narrative reports throughout most of 1966 continued to use them interchangeably, but as official 3d Marine Division programs were implemented by written instructions, "Civic Action" gradually came into common and exclusive use.

Some problems of significance for chaplains occurred in early humanitarian contacts with the Vietnamese people. First, the relationship of the Navy chaplain to what was to become the Marine Corps Civic Action Program was established and identified in the early mercy missions of Chaplains Walker and Running and their contemporaries who arrived in I Corps during April and May 1965. It was the unit

chaplain who established the precedent and set the pattern for civic action. The chaplain's motive was one of Christian charity while that of the Marine was understandably largely military-political pacification. The chaplain was concerned to relieve distress and suffering whenever he found it. But the end result of his charitable activity was precisely the result considered militarily essential to the eventual pacification of the Vietnamese people and their homeland. Consequently, the pattern of the chaplain's activity was taken over and applied to the pacification formula in I Corps in the hope that a principle which traditionally worked well in isolated circumstances and on a small scale would produce equal results on a massive scale. Thus both the chaplain and his methods became a part of an I Corps-wide program of indigenous public relations.

Also of concern was the fact that the Marine intelligence S-2 scout accompanying the chaplain on his mercy mission into the surrounding countryside represented the wedding of intelligence gathering and religious activities among indigenous Vietnamese. Once again the need for crystal clear definitions of responsibility and motive were needed. Once his role and motives were identified by the Vietnamese, the chaplain enjoyed a ready access to the people. To permit his acts of charity to be employed as, or construed to be, a means of gathering counter intelligence information was to place his primary mission and his ultimate effectiveness, to say nothing of his peaceful conscience, in grave jeopardy. It was to the credit of the chaplains, enthusiastic as they were for the principles which underlay American military involvement in defense of South Vietnamese people, that they recognized the inherent dangers of hazy definitions and sensed the possible damage done to the church and her mission if they became identified with the role of intelligence scout.

Another problem became apparent as civic action became formalized and sophisticated. So successful were the chaplain's efforts and so strong was official Marine Corps support for his work that the chaplain soon discovered more and more of his time was being consumed in humanitarian activity. It became obvious that the growing program could prove to be detrimental to his primary mission to provide a formal religious ministry for American military personnel.

III MAF Chaplain Jones became aware of the pro-

blem and determined to assist his Vietnam chaplains to preserve an acceptable proportion of their workday for primary duties. He strongly supported the process by which Marine officer personnel were trained in the objectives and procedures of civic action, and, as they assumed official responsibility for the conduct of unit programs upon assignment as S-5 officers in I CTZ, chaplains were relieved of the mounting burden of activity.

Arrivals and Adjustments

On 27 June 1965, Mobile Construction Battalion 9, with Lieutenant George P. Murray (Reformed Church of America) attached, landed on the narrow peninsula strip of sandy lowland between the city of Da Nang and the South China Sea, referred to as Da Nang East. Construction of the MAG-16 cantonment near Marble Mountain on the southern end of the peninsula began immediately. Construction of Camp Adenir, MCB-9's home for the following seven months, was begun as well. Both cantonments were initially well fortified inasmuch as the Viet Cong controlled the countryside adjacent to and surrounding Marble Mountain.

This 700-man battalion, normally based at Davisville, Rhode Island, was the first Atlantic construction battalion to augment Pacific Seabee strength. It had moved from Davisville to Port Hueneme, California, and from there to Vietnam to engage in combat construction.

The missions assigned to MCB-9 also included construction of a 400-bed advanced base hospital, construction of warehouse and refrigerated storage buildings for the Naval Support Activity Headquarters which was soon to be established, and building a network of highways, access roads, and numerous small facilities.

In the MAG-16 compound MCB-9 erected 250 strongbacked tents, a 1,600-man galley, head and shower facilities, and maintenance and storage buildings. In the smaller cantonments of Da Nang East, 185 wooden-frame tents, four galleys and messhalls, and supporting facilities were placed in position. They did not remain in position long.

According to an unpublished Seabee document entitled "Advanced Base Construction, Vietnam 1963-1965":

The advanced base hospital, the major project of MCB-9, was well underway when on October 28, Viet

Cong mortars and infiltrators with satchel charges wreaked savage destruction in the hospital complex as well as in the battalion's camp. The assault killed two Seabees, and wounded over ninety. Eight quonset huts housing surgical, laboratory, X-ray, and other wards were wrecked.

Immediately, MCB-9 began rebuilding. By early 1966, the battalion had rebuilt the surgical and clinical wards and completed 16 living huts, galley and messhall, heads and showers and utilities systems. The hospital admitted its first patient January 10, 1966.⁹

The report also provided information on other construction problems at Da Nang East. Concerning those problems the report stated:

Chief among them was the climate. Heavy monsoon rains interrupted construction and required much time consuming surface stabilization and repair to roads and construction sites. The effect of fine mud particles on vehicle systems was considerable. Brake linings wore out rapidly. One battalion reported 50 percent of vehicles deadlined half the time. When dry, the area was plagued by dust and flying sand, which eroded tent foundations and excessively wore the canvas tents.

Supply initially was a problem but was essentially solved by August 1966, as Da Nang port facilities were rapidly made adequate to handle cement block, concrete pipe, and lumber. While materials were sufficient, the need for spare parts exceeded supply. Twenty-four hour operations wore out machines rapidly.¹⁰

Each of the problems noted had its effect upon the chaplain's work, either directly or through the men whose work was most directly affected by it. While Seabee chaplains were fortunate to be attached to units housed in centralized camp locations, they served adjacent Marine units as well and required transportation for their rounds. With a large percentage of the unit rolling stock deadlined for repairs occasioned by excessive wear, transportation was extremely difficult to acquire. While Chaplain Murray himself made no mention of transportation problems, other chaplains of the period invariably made some note of it in their reports. Almost without exception the chaplains reported that climatic extremes and ground conditions produced by alternating rain, heat, and wind added to the burden of their constant mobility. Many reported that they encountered some degree of difficulty safeguarding ecclesiastical equipment from the sand and dust and in preserving consumable supplies. As the Da Nang complex expanded, however, and as newly constructed facilities multiplied, conditions improved. Replacement supplies became easier to acquire, hard-surfaced roads reduced the wear on



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The chapel of the 1st Marine Division at Da Nang. Note its unusual triangular shape.

vehicles, and more sophisticated housing and working facilities made living conditions within the security perimeters of the enclave more comfortable.

Chaplain Murray was active in the civic action projects undertaken during the period. In a report to the Chaplain Corps Planning Group, written after conclusion of MCB-9's first deployment to Vietnam, he said:

I discovered that our men loved to work with orphans or any underprivileged child. Both our doctor and dentist repeatedly risked their lives by holding village sick calls in notorious VC strongholds. We were mortared three times with over 100 wounded. That made civic action-type work difficult. Yet, I still discovered Seabees were out helping the people, and working with children, often on the sly. Almost all sailors love little children and I have seen them literally take the clothes off their back and give them to the children. We had many touching incidents. I recall a whole gang of tough little boys who played in our dump. They each managed to scrounge an old pair of Marine combat boots which were thrown away, and they would lace these boots and then clump around proudly. But, at night, our men noticed that they always left the boots inside the dump. We asked them why they didn't take them home, and through the interpreter learned that they knew

their parents would take the boots from them and sell or trade them.

We distributed tons of Handclasp materials which consisted mainly of clothing and toys. Churches at home sent us many small packages, which we used at village sick calls. At Christmas nearly everyone received packages from family and friends around the camp. Most of our sailors were pretty suspicious of older people, but they were so soft-hearted when they saw the terrible suffering of the Vietnamese children, that we had to struggle to keep them from turning our Base Camp into a children's home. Our electricians and utilities men practically rebuilt the Catholic Orphanage. We gave them so much scrap lumber that they were able to build two dormitories, much to the astonishment of our builders.¹¹

The rapid acceleration in the buildup of Marine Corps personnel and units in Da Nang in the summer of 1965 increased the Navy's need for larger support facilities with which to maintain them. In addition, increasing numbers of ships were ordered to the area in anticipation of mounting coastal surveillance and gunfire support needs. The requirement for improved facilities at a naval base north of Saigon became more urgently apparent. Com-

mander Force Logistic Support Group, Da Nang was feverishly working to prepare the area for the arrival of U.S. Naval Support Activity, Da Nang when it was due for commissioning in October.

No chaplains were assigned to naval personnel attached to the developing base facilities. As the growing requirement for chaplains became evident Lieutenant John Q. Leshner (United Methodist), Landing Ship Flotilla 1 chaplain, was ordered to temporary additional duty with the staff unit ashore. Chaplain Leshner was there from July to October 1965 and was the only chaplain for Navy personnel attached to the Support Group until Lieutenant David Hunsicker (Southern Baptist) came to relieve him.

The "White Elephant" Building, a two-story, cement, U-shaped structure surrounding a brick courtyard, was the chaplain's office and headquarters. At first the group had one room for an office, but later the command embarked aboard the attack transport USS *Navarro* (APA 215), and later, USS *Okanagan* (APA 220), commuting by boat from ship to shore.

The chaplains reported that the sailors' work was around the clock, seven days a week. The large-ship cargo was unloaded into small cargo craft, and unloaded again at the commercial pier to Tien Sha ramp.

Until pier facilities were constructed and the harbor was dredged sufficiently to accommodate deep draft cargo vessels, the situation remained unchanged. Long and costly delays were encountered by cargo vessels waiting to unload. With the arrival of the Seabees and American commercial contractors who set about construction of a modern port facility, the situation changed dramatically. Mail from home, which Chaplain Leshner indicated was sometimes very poor, was speeded up as the flow of material into the Da Nang complex began to move at a more rapid rate.

Chaplain Leshner's arrival marked the beginning of the Navy Chaplain Corps ministry to shore-based naval personnel, other than deployed Seabee units, in Da Nang. The next year was to bring an important buildup of chaplains serving Navy personnel in the Da Nang area. From one chaplain assigned temporarily to the Support Group, chaplains were to expand to serve with Naval Support Activity, Da Nang, and assigned to provide religious coverage for all naval units and a new 450-bed naval hospital.

In addition to the arrivals of unit and naval component chaplains, individual chaplains arrived for

assignment with the III MAF and 3d Division staffs. Chaplain O'Connor was detached from his division chaplain duties on 10 August 1965, as he was under orders to report to Parris Island as senior chaplain with the recruit command. Chaplain O'Connor having departed without a contact relief, Chaplain Jones wore the division chaplain hat as well as that of the III MAF staff chaplain until the arrival of Chaplain O'Connor's replacement.

Upon his departure, Chaplain O'Connor voiced his gratification for the rich relationship he saw growing between chaplains and Marines. He wrote in a letter to the Chief of Chaplains:

I repeat that duty in the 3d Marine Division has been as fruitful as any I could ever have hoped for, and that the past four months in Vietnam have been the highlight of my years in the Navy. I pray sincerely that more and more senior chaplains will come to recognize the honor and privilege that it is to serve with the Third Marine Division. I can think of no better duty. . . .¹²

Arriving with the rapid influx of Marine units was Commander Connell Maguire (Roman Catholic), who was Chaplain O'Connor's replacement as Division Chaplain, 3d Marine Division, and Lieutenant Commander James E. Seim (Lutheran), who served as assistant division chaplain. Among Chaplain Maguire's immediate concerns as the new division chaplain was the necessity for geographical orientation. He noticed that one arrived with little concept of the geography and almost no knowledge of the deployment of troops. In a report to the III MAF chaplain he said:

Since a schedule of our services deploying the chaplains for the fullest coverage of the troops had to be prepared weekly and constantly revised, I realized that I must obtain a grasp of the geography and location of all troops immediately. Chaplain Gibson, who was on his second tour in Vietnam, drove me around the area the first day and brought me to the Bishop of Da Nang. But it takes a second time around at least to fix even the major units into a clear mind map. Fortunately, we had a vehicle and a driver at the time, a luxury I took for granted then.¹³

In keeping with the Chief of Chaplain's policy of assigning Eastern Orthodox and Jewish chaplains to large centers of Navy-Marine Corps population, two such chaplains were detailed to division headquarters to work with Chaplains Maguire and Seim. The first of these was Lieutenant Robert M. Radasky (Russian Orthodox), slated as the relief for Commander Nick S. Karras, who had been deployed to

Okinawa for a year as the Eastern Orthodox representative for the division. Chaplain Radasky arrived in the latter part of August and was assigned to Headquarters Battalion as an administrative assistant to the division chaplain. Later in the year he relieved Chaplain Seim as Administrative Assistant to the III MAF chaplain. In addition to his administrative duties he provided a ministry for all the Orthodox Navy and Marine Corps personnel he could contact.

Jewish chaplain Lieutenant Robert L. Reiner reported for duty with Headquarters Battalion, 3d Marine Division in early September. As with Chaplain Radasky, his duties were both administrative and ecclesiastical, being unofficially assigned during Chaplain Jones' tenure to III MAF and later as the logistics assistant to the division chaplain, and exercising religious oversight of all Jewish personnel then in I Corps.

Lieutenant Delbert J. Cory, the first Navy chaplain to represent the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, also arrived in late August. Division Chaplain Maguire had decided to assign Chaplain Cory to the field hospital temporarily. He discovered that his education in clinical pastoral training at Riverside Methodist Hospital, California, equipped him well for a hospital ministry. Chaplain Cory reported:

The two weeks at the hospital gave me a chance to get oriented to the situation and to adjust to the heat. It also allowed the Division Chaplain to decide where to assign me permanently; there was some initial hesitancy, as usual, because of the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints denominational affiliation. Being the first Navy Chaplain of that faith, it usually takes a while to reassure supervisory chaplains that my ministry is not unduly restricted.

On 13 September I was assigned to Force Logistics Support Group, Da Nang, where I relieved Chaplain Seeland and worked with Catholic Chaplain Gibson. I set up a program of troop visitation, moral guidance lectures and worship services.

Over fifty Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints personnel in the Phu Bai, Da Nang and Chu Lai enclaves were located and a ministry was offered to each one. This often included letters to their families indicating that the contact had been made. I also collected the addresses of all RLDS personnel in Vietnam and mailed out about 200 RLDS Vietnam Newsletters each quarter.¹⁴

The Arrival of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing

When 1st Marine Aircraft Wing Chaplain Commander Peter J. Bakker (American Baptist) arrived at

Da Nang in June with the wing command, the chaplain participation in the structure of III MAF was complete. Other ground battalions and aircraft groups continued to arrive during the following months to augment the forces already ashore in the combat area, adding flesh to the bones and capability to the body of Marine forces in country. In fact, in terms of chaplain arrivals, the acceleration had hardly begun. Nevertheless, essential command structures were at last complete, in country and operating, by the end of June 1965.

As a result of survey trips from Iwakuni, Japan, to Da Nang in April and May, Chaplain Bakker was fully acquainted with the work of his chaplains and with the terrain at Da Nang and Chu Lai. As was characteristic of his entire tour of duty in South Vietnam, when he landed he hit the ground running. Like the III MAF chaplain, his function was to provide the leadership and counsel necessary to keep the widely dispersed chaplains of the wing operating to the limits of their energies and abilities. It was apparent that an effective ministry to wing personnel required an optimum effort. A 24-hour operating schedule with the attendant hazards of constant combat missions was sufficient in itself to keep the chaplains operating 24 hours a day. Coupled with the impressive requirements for routine sorties were the requirements to construct bases and support facilities and to relate well to the Vietnamese people living in the vicinity of Marine air group facilities.

Chaplain Bakker's area of supervision encompassed chaplains serving with units in three countries. Wing Headquarters, Marine Wing Headquarters Group (MWHG) 1, and MAG-16 were in Da Nang; MAG-12 was at Chu Lai; MAG-13, having been restored to the wing when the 1st Marine Brigade deployed from Hawaii to the western Pacific, had arrived on Okinawa on 14 June and was slated for duty at Iwakuni, Japan in the near future; and MAG-11 was at Atsugi, Japan, preparing for imminent departure to Da Nang.

Lieutenant Thomas J. Dillon (Roman Catholic) with MAG-11 arrived in country during the first week in July to join other wing chaplains Bakker, Lecky, Toland, and Ward already there. Chaplain Dillon wrote that he had reported to the group at Atsugi on 26 April and found the group in a moun-tout situation. He recalled:

After several false alarms we finally got the call to mount out the last week of June. I packed everything that was not

nailed down, with exception of the Mass vestments. I preferred to work out of the Mass Kit until we had a permanent chapel. We boarded and arrived in Vietnam on 10 July. We debarked on the 11th and went to the permanent site of the liberators with the people waving and cheering along the route. Then we saw our future home, a sandy waste with three GP tents and supplies stacked all over. Charlie Med and their "C and C" facility was in process of moving from the area to its present location, the job being about seventy-five percent complete. About 1100 the following morning choppers started landing in our area bringing casualties to what remained of the hospital. I raced over and spent the rest of the day, until 0300, assisting Father Gibson in administering the last rites to the KIAs and WIAs. He appreciated my presence and assistance, especially in view of the fact that he himself was carrying a feeling of nausea.¹⁵

Wing chaplains undertook civic action as spontaneously as had chaplains with the infantry. Chaplain Bakker reflected that he encountered the same kinds of indigenous responses he had met on similar projects elsewhere in the world. He wrote:

Human nature is the same the world over. After the First Marine Aircraft Wing had started the Tin Lanh Evangelical Church in Da Nang's school project, one of the elders from the Hai Chu Evangelical Church started grumbling. His complaint was that we were helping the larger, richer church, and not helping him. After hearing of it, I had a talk with this fine Christian man and spoke to him of faith, hope, and love; faith, and hope that they too would be able to build, and love to appreciate what their sister church was getting done. Before leaving Vietnam I had the pleasure of seeing the downtown school complete and dedicated and see Hai Chu's pastor, Mr. Lee, smiling from ear to ear as he spoke with pride about his school building going up, and needing more funds for the secondary story. MAG-11 took on the project of the downtown church, and MWHG-1 sponsored the construction at Hai Chu.¹⁶

In a report to the Chaplain Corps Planning Group, Chaplain Bakker pointed out that of all the things that were being done, of all the money spent, of all the programs that were underway, the most important factor of all was very simple and very fundamental. The easiest items to contribute were the material, money, mortar, and mechanics. However, the item which was desperately needed in Vietnam was genuine love. To illustrate his point Chaplain Bakker referred to the true story of the kind of love his missionary friend, John Haywood, had for the people of Vietnam and the respect given it by the Marine Corps:

John Haywood was a citizen of the United States. Simone, his wife, was a citizen of Switzerland. They met in

the leprosy training hospital in Hong Kong. Here was a Christian couple who had dedicated their lives to serve the lepers of Vietnam. The government had given them some land south of Marble Mountain, but at this time the VC still controlled the area. A good number of the cured lepers lived there as they were still outcasts from the rest of Vietnamese society. About a month and a half before Simone was to deliver their first child, John had to go to the city of Hue, to complete plans for a chicken farm for the lepers. The VC, thanks to the Marine air-ground team, were well along the way to being secured from the area of the hospital. John went down to the Da Nang Air Field with Major Rushkowsky, USMC. There was room for only one in the plane so John agreed to drive a borrowed automobile in the company of a military convoy to Hue.

As the car was proceeding north through the mountain pass, John had to stop and allow a convoy of ARVN trucks to go by. Shortly after his stop, the lead truck hit a mine in the road. John jumped out of his automobile when the shooting started, only to startle a VC with a rifle in his hand. The VC fired four rounds through John's body and fled to the hills. During this time, Major Rushkowsky was waiting for John in Hue. When John failed to appear the major returned to Da Nang to the missionary compound, and asked about John. At that time, John's blue car was being driven into the yard. In it was John's body.

Through the kindness of Lieutenant General Lewis W. Walt, USMC, the Commanding General of III MAF, Mrs. Haywood was extended the condolence of the U.S. Marine Corps, and the opportunity of having Major Rushkowsky accompany her to her home in Brittran for the burial of her husband. She replied, "Thank you very much. Your kind offer is appreciated but I will bury my husband here in Vietnam. I will have my baby here in Vietnam, and with God's help, I will serve the lepers of Vietnam."

The funeral services were simple, yet stately. The little chapel of the World Evangelical Crusade in Da Nang was filled to capacity and overflowing with other missionaries and Vietnamese Christians. Local pastors preached. At the cemetery both missionaries and local pastors took part in the committal services. One of the large wreaths of flowers which surrounded the open grave had a large ribbon across the center of it. It said, "To Saint John Haywood."

This young man was loved by the Vietnamese because he loved them and was willing to lay down his life for them. His wife is also loved by these wonderful people. With a labor of love such as this, the love of God is communicated.¹⁷

On 1 August Lieutenant Commander Richard M. Tipton (Southern Baptist) came down from Iwakuni, and relieved Chaplain Lecky. Chaplain Lecky had worked intensely for six months and was in need of a rest. MAG-16, under the leadership of Colonel John King, had grown from a single squadron to a full-strength group, and was now being skippered by "Big Tom," Colonel Thomas J. O'Connor. A new camp was being built at Da Nang East, now to be called Marble Mountain.

In an article in the MCAS Iwakuni, Japan newspaper, *Tori Teller*, of 22 December 1965, a sketch-account is given of Chaplain Lecky's receiving the first combat wounds sustained by a Navy chaplain in Vietnam. The article quoted Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, as saying in Lecky's citation for his second Navy Commendation Medal:

On one occasion he was painfully wounded by the insurgent Communist forces while courageously assisting in organizing and comforting the Vietnamese villagers of Gia during the evacuation of their village. Fragments of mortar landed so close to him "I was covered from head to toe with the blood of two Vietnamese who were torn to bits by the explosion." Chaplain Lecky is the only chaplain so far to receive the Purple Heart Medal for Vietnam service.¹⁸

When Chaplain Tipton relieved Chaplain Lecky, MAG-16's new camp at Marble Mountain was nearly ready for occupancy. For a period of two weeks or so the group was divided, half of the men working to prepare the new camp while the others maintained their facilities at the Da Nang airstrip.

Marble Mountain, like the 9th Marines complex just to the west of it, was Viet Cong infested. After having been in the new camp only a month, a Marine security patrol from the Marble Mountain airfield spent hours in contact with infiltrators in the area. These infiltrators were eventually traced to a small Vietnamese village of Hoa Long district outside the compound. As the Marine patrol approached this village, it was fired upon and returned fire. At least one rifle grenade entered one of the homes. As a result three Vietnamese nationals were mortally wounded. The mother, father, and youngest child of a family were killed. As the body of the father was returned from the hospital, the ambulance attendants met with open animosity on the part of the villagers. They were struck about the head and shoulders by the women, and cigarette burns were inflicted upon their hands and arms. Feeling against Americans and the Marines of MAG-16 in particular was running high in the village.

Chaplain Tipton recalled:

It was evident that something must be done to effect a reconciliation and establish a better working relationship with this village located so close to our compound. Colonel O'Connor requested that the Chaplains pay a visit to the village in an attempt to express our sorrow and to offer help during this tragedy. Due to the fact that it had been reported that the family was in financial trouble and had

borrowed money to defray the cost of the funerals, it was suggested that a donation be made to them from our chapel funds.

On 30 September Chaplains Tipton and Toland accompanied by three nuns from the nearby Catholic Orphanage entered the village. Chaplain Tipton continued his report:

Due to the fact that Sister Alphonse was acquainted with the villagers and another Sister was the teacher of one of the family's surviving daughters at the Catholic School, we were received without too much animosity or open hatred. There was evidence of a great deal of distrust at the beginning of our visit but as the sisters explained our mission, all distrust seemed to disappear. We were able to express our sorrow over the unfortunate incident and assured the people that it had not been the intention of the Marines to take the lives of women and children, and extended to them our continuing good wishes and assistance in any way possible. A gift of 3,000 piasters was left with the paternal grandmother to help defray the expenses of the funerals.

As we left the village all the villagers crowded around us to assure us of their understanding of the situation, to shake our hands and invite us to return.¹⁹

Like others before and after him, Chaplain Tipton discovered that his duty with a Marine aircraft group in combat was often similar to Marine duty elsewhere. He encountered the same kinds of problems. "Disagreeable conditions and lurking hazards brought some of the problems to the surface a little earlier," he remarked. "I think the men here have a tendency to think about their religious responsibilities. The dangers that are faced from time to time make them realize their own limitations. It had been enjoyable to work with them under these conditions and help them draw closer to God."²⁰

On 22 September two additional chaplains arrived for service with the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. They were Lieutenant Gerald T. Richards (Southern Baptist), and Lieutenant John R. Daly (Roman Catholic). Chaplain Richards was assigned to Marine Wing Headquarters Group 1, and Daly moved south to the Qui Nhon enclave with HMM-363 as that squadron supported the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines security operation there.*

*The landing at Qui Nhon will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The Seabees Continue Their Buildup

During September 1965 two chaplains arrived in Da Nang with their mobile construction units. Commander Everett B. Nelson (American Baptist) was with MCB-5 when it reported to Naval Construction Regiment 31 for duty to relieve MCB-3. Between 23 and 28 September MCB-3 personnel embarked on shuttle aircraft for their home port at Port Hueneme, California, being replaced by incoming echelons of MCB-5. Five days later, MCB-8 also arrived and set up camp on the sandy peninsula called Da Nang East, with Commander William F. Hollis (American Baptist) attached.

Chaplain Nelson's battalion assumed and continued construction assignments at the 3d Marines, 12th Marines, and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing Headquarters cantonments. Chaplain Nelson continued the same type of program as his predecessor, Chaplain Jayne. In addition to his ministry at Camp Hoover, he provided religious coverage for the 3d Shore Party Battalion, located nearby on the beach of Da Nang East.

During the construction of Camp Hoover's galley, mess hall, shops, sheds, and tinroof strongbacks, Chaplain Nelson moved about the work sites visiting and counseling with his men. As civic action officer for the battalion, in coordination with the 3d Shore Party Battalion, he worked through the World Evangelization Crusade Mission, to assist orphanages, schools, hospitals, and refugee camps in the Da Nang area.

Chaplain Nelson's civic action efforts as a MCB chaplain were typical of the numerous Seabee Battalion chaplains' preparations and programs. He sketched his program in an early report:

The Seabees had collected several tons of clothes, food, soap and toys prior to our deployment overseas. Private persons, churches and veterans' organizations shipped at least 200 additional parcels of medicine, food and clothing to the Seabees for distribution while we were overseas. They sent \$500.00 in addition to another \$2000 which the Seabees raised themselves for assistance in Civic Action projects. The Civic Action Program was one of the most spontaneous and talked about programs in the Seabees and Marine Camps. They saw the need of the people and they responded to those needs through this program. Men were constantly offering new ideas and suggesting ways in which we could assist them. Even though Seabees and Marines worked six and one-half days a week, they still volunteered to work on schools and orphanages in their spare hours. The Seabees contributed their labor to special

projects as overhauling plumbing in buildings, remodeling buildings, grading playgrounds, and improving roads.²¹

MCB-5 was responsible for building the hill road overlooking the western perimeter of the Da Nang complex and maintaining several miles of camp roads. It installed two water supply systems involving a three-mile, eight-inch water line connecting the 3d Marine Division cantonment with the Cao Do River.

Numerous cantonments were then being constructed by the Seabees for Marines in the area, and when 28 Seabees donated blood to the 3d Medical Battalion late in the year, the Seabees jokingly said, "with so much Seabee blood in their veins, they'll (the Marines) soon be able to build their own cantonments."²² The major project assigned MCB-8, however, was construction of massive pier facilities for the developing seaport complex. The battalion built two gravelled unloading areas, four landing-boat ramps, three docks, a 314-foot timber pier, and a 1,700-foot quay wall in addition to countless storage buildings for the Naval Support Activity, and completed Camps Adenir and Faulkner as well as the MAG-16 and shore party cantonments, all of which had been begun by MCB-9.

Chaplain Hollis had been assigned temporarily to MCB-8 on 11 September 1965 when that unit, then at Construction Battalion, Atlantic Fleet Headquarters at Davisville, Rhode Island, was ordered to deploy to Port Hueneme, California, and had no chaplain permanently attached. MCB-8 was the second of the succession of Atlantic construction battalions to join Pacific-based battalions in the construction effort in South Vietnam, and moved on short notice. After a period of training and preparation in California, Chaplain Hollis enplaned for Da Nang on 26 September. He remained with MCB-8 until 17 December when Lieutenant George F. Tillet (United Church of Christ) arrived at Da Nang East for permanent assignment to the battalion. Chaplain Hollis then returned to Davisville, where he was staff chaplain.

Chaplain Hollis undertook an active program including acting as a civic action officer. Civic action involved him in a variety of contacts and projects and occasioned this important observation:

The Oriental philosophy of life and the acceptance of different-system values are the hardest things for our men to understand about the Vietnamese. They cannot understand the slow pace and seeming lack of concern for time,

life and progress, and the unimportance of the central government since their loyalty may not go past their father or the village chief.

The courage of one village chief who took office after his predecessor was kidnapped and probably executed by the VC, and the village chief who insisted upon returning to live in his village as soon as he was partially recovered from wounds inflicted by a VC squad which invaded his village and left after attempting to murder him, greatly influenced many of our men's attitudes about the worth of our being there.²³

The United States was not only there with the presence of Marines and Seabees, but that presence was rapidly growing. The future was uncertain and a bit frightening to the chaplains serving with the burgeoning units. Still, their commitment to their military ministry would not only insure that they would grow along with the increased buildup, but they would respond to the increased needs with stepped-up ingenuity and dedication.

CHAPTER 4

Listening and Learning (September-December 1965)

Activity in the Southern ICTZ—Landing at Qui Nhon—New Chaplain Leadership—Ceremonial Events and Administrative Concerns—Chaplains for NSA and MCB-8—Christmas Highlights

The Chaplains Corps paid close attention to denominational representation in the Marine Corps and in the III Marine Amphibious Force to insure that the ideal of religious pluralism was thoroughly met. Since the Corps required increasing numbers of chaplains, the call had gone out to the nation's church bodies, and pastors, priests, and rabbis were responding in gratifying numbers. With few exceptions, these men were ordered for a short tour to shore stations to familiarize themselves with military life and the chaplaincy, and were subsequently sent to Vietnam. During this period the procurement of chaplains from the civilian clergy was a major priority at the Chaplain's Division of the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington. Under the guidance of Lieutenant Commander Carl A. Auel (Lutheran) at the procurement desk, the Chaplain Corps grew from 929 active duty officers in June 1965, to 1013 in June of 1966, and would reach a high of 1102 in June of 1969. As the momentum of the buildup increased these chaplains who were young in the Corps began to predominate. By the end of 1965 there were 50 chaplains in Vietnam of whom 70 percent were in the grade of lieutenant and lieutenant (junior grade). There were 31 Protestants, 16 Roman Catholics, and one each from Jewish, Orthodox, and Reorganized Latter Day Saints clergy. These men made up what some called the "new" Corps.

Paramount in the development of this "new" Corps was the chaplains' ability to understand and adjust to the military, the Marines in particular, and the Vietnamese environment generally. For the most part they adapted excellently. What it took was a lot of listening and learning. Listening is rarely hard for a clergyman, being so necessary a part of his craft. Learning, however, was harder.

The "new Corps" chaplains seemed to recognize how much they could be taught by the Marines of all ranks. They watched, practiced, followed, and quickly learned what it took to minister in that con-

text, and enjoyed remarkable support from the Marines in return. In a report presented to the January 1966 Supervisory Chaplain's Conference, Captain Francis L. Garrett (United Methodist), Force Chaplain III MAF, was able to state:

The Chaplains are accepted, respected, supported and encouraged as none of us have ever been before, and this is reported to you as a spiritual factor because of the spiritual effect it has upon the chaplains themselves. They feel needed and wanted and I am certain that the intensive effort they are exerting every day is due to, in some good measure, the encouragement they are receiving. Perhaps the most unique a part in this regard is that it is universally true. I do not know of a single command in all of III MAF in which the attitude toward the chaplain and his ministry is even indifferent, let alone hostile.¹

Undoubtedly grateful for the strong support they received, the chaplains in the latter days of 1965 listened hard and learned much. The complexion of the Vietnam conflict was changing for the worse. It became increasingly clear that offensive operations would have to be initiated. The VC pressure was increasing in the Chu Lai area and south of Da Nang. As the U.S. effort tightened, the chaplains prepared for the first combat most of them had experienced, and the first even the very senior chaplains had known since Korea.

Activity in the Southern ICTZ

From June through September 1965 11 chaplains arrived for duty in Chu Lai. On 7 June Lieutenant John J. Glynn (Roman Catholic) reported to relieve Chaplain Byrnes with the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, and on 9 June Lieutenant Gordon S. Cook (Reformed Church in America) relieved Chaplain Thilking with the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines. On 13 July Lieutenant Patrick A. Dowd (Roman Catholic) and Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Philip F. Kahal (United Church of Christ) reported to Company B, 3d Medical Battalion which had only recently establish-

ed the B Medical Field Hospital at Chu Lai, and, on 14 August Lieutenant Commander John T. Goad (Southern Baptist), Lieutenant John R. McNamara (Roman Catholic), and Lieutenant Ralph C. Betters (United Presbyterian) arrived with units of the reinforced 7th Marines which was configured as a highly mobile strike force and designated Regimental Landing Team 7.

Chaplain John Glynn's description of Chu Lai, on his arrival in early June, provides an interesting and comprehensive picture of the area which was to become one of the more significant combat areas in Vietnam from mid-1965 through mid-1966:

Chu Lai was a six mile stretch of desert coastal plain bordered by the foothills of a green mountain range and a fringe of rice paddies about three miles inland. It was a desert of sand dunes with scattered clusters of tents near an airstrip which was under construction near the beach. A narrow, once-paved north-south road, Highway One, paralleled an abandoned railroad track along the inland edge of the desert.

The chopper dropped me and my gear near a sand dune which was blowing through a battered tent marked "Air Freight." Inside a Marine was huddled by a radio. He called a local helicopter which lifted me a couple of miles inland to another Africa-Corps-type location on the sand which was the original CP site for the Fourth Regiment. There Father Byrnes found me. A short time later we moved by Mite a bit further inland, across Highway One, to the rolling foothills, and thus began six unforgettable months at Chu Lai.²

It was at Chu Lai, during the last months of 1965, that the first succession of multi-battalion operations against the Viet Cong took place. Like other infantry units at Da Nang and Phu Bai, the Chu Lai battalions routinely mounted out local patrols to acquire intelligence and locate Viet Cong positions, but here the Viet Cong seemed to be preparing for heavy guerrilla attacks upon American forces. The villages that dotted the countryside offered cover and camouflage for local guerrillas. Larger patrol operations in the form of company-sized sweeps soon supplanted squad and platoon patrols. Early indication of a shift from a purely defensive military posture to extensive operations came with the first search and destroy missions at the battalion level.

While the level of tension was increasing the chaplains in the enclave supported their concern for the spiritual welfare of Marines of all faiths. In August, before the III MAF Jewish Chaplain's arrival, Chaplain Cook arranged for Chaplain Glynn of the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines and U.S. Army

Jewish Chaplain Richard Dryer of MACV to accompany him to Hill 69 for trifaith ministrations to the Marines of a Company C platoon then holding the isolated position. The final report of Chaplain Cook of the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines submitted at the end of September, showed that during the month he arranged for Chaplain Dowd of the field hospital to accompany him by helicopter to visit an isolated Company A platoon on Hill 69 to provide a Mass while Protestant worship was being held. To reciprocate for the cooperation of his Roman Catholic and Jewish counterparts, and further to support the objective of the broadest possible Chu Lai ministry, Chaplain Cook also served as Protestant Chaplain of the 4th Marines.

When Chaplains Dowd and Kahal arrived at division headquarters in Da Nang in early July the chaplain situation at the field hospital in Chu Lai was critical. The ever-increasing pace of operations against the enemy was producing a growing number of casualties. The Chu Lai chaplains gave first priority of their ministry to casualties arriving at B Med. Chaplain Dowd had reported to Da Nang from Okinawa with units of the 12th Marines. Within a few days Chaplain O'Connor had arranged to have him detached from the Da Nang-based artillery regiment and ordered to duty at the hospital at Chu Lai.

Chaplain Dowd reported:

Chaplain Phil Kahal and I boarded a C-130 on July 13 in search of Chu Lai, and we found it. "B" Med had more to offer than any other unit in Chu Lai. The second day we were assigned a general purpose tent for home base and the open sand flats for a chapel. Food was trucked in a 6-by. For breakfast and dinner we had C-Rations. The mess table was our lap, our chair a sand mound.

The Commanding Officer of "B" Med, Lieutenant Commander Scott Husby, MC, USN, his team of physicians, surgeons, dentists, corpsmen, and Marines attached commanded our respect immediately. They had a smooth running team in operation and accomplished, miraculously, a Herculean mission, the first eye-opener of my tour as we arrived. Passing by a screened-in GP tent, I noticed a corpsmen clad in cap, gown, gloves, shorts and tennis shoes, standing beside someone lying on a table. I'd seen surgical procedures performed before, but never like this. No tile deck, just blood stained three quarter inch plywood. I still marvel at how little these men had to work with in the early months of field combat and at the lives they saved and the comfort they brought the sick and wounded.³

In a paper entitled "Comforting the Afflicted," which he wrote during his tenure of duty with the

field hospital, Chaplain Kahal touched on some extremely important issues for field medical chaplains:

With the advent of the helicopter the transport of casualties from the battle scene to the field hospital has been revolutionized. What once required many hours and sometimes days to accomplish has now been reduced to minutes or at the maximum a couple of hours. The helicopter is to be credited with the saving of many lives. The seriousness with which the helicopter pilot approaches his work is humorously inscribed on the side of one plane: "God saves, but we Help."⁴

Chaplain Kahal reported that as casualties came in their religious preference was obtained immediately. This enabled the chaplain to introduce himself in an objective context, providing the patient was conscious, and also served to take the Marine's mind off his injuries. Chaplain Kahal had a pointed caution, however. He stated:

There is one complication of which the chaplain needs to be aware. Because the wounded Marine is sometimes fearful for his life, the offering of prayer on his behalf carries for him the connotation of death. It then becomes necessary to assure the patient that you are sharing with him a prayer of thanksgiving for his having been spared and for full restoration to health. In every case when he understands that prayer is not being offered because he is dying, prayer is requested and welcomed. The whole process needs to be accomplished quite rapidly and, more often than not, intuitively.

Another practice which has proven helpful is the carrying of a Jewish Prayer Book when receiving casualties. Jewish boys welcome assistance with prayer by the chaplain even though the latter is a Christian. The book contains a prayer for those who are ill. If the lad is not in pain, he might be invited to read the prayer for himself.

The Episcopal Church publishes a small, compact Armed Forces edition of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Those casualties who are Episcopalians may have the benefit of the short prayer for the ill together with the laying on of hands.⁵

Chaplain Kahal felt that it was imperative that the chaplains realize that the speedy medical and surgical treatment of the patient was always of primary importance, and he advised chaplains not to impede this process with their ministries. He reported that doctors are generally very cooperative with respect to chaplains' wishes. But he cautioned:

Cooperation is a two-way enterprise. The most advantageous position for the chaplain seems to be at the head of the patient. The patient may sometimes be required to raise his eyes to see the chaplain, but in this way much needed space is allotted to the medical personnel. At this

point in the treatment of the patient the chaplain can render assistance in another way in addition to prayer. He can engage the patient in conversation in order that the doctors can make initial explorations which sometimes cause considerable pain. Conversation helps the patient take his mind off the pain. Of course, each situation is unique, and what the chaplain needs to do is determined by the needs of the patient at a given moment.

As the Protestant chaplain it would amount to a travesty to ignore the marvelous cooperation rendered by the Catholic chaplain. Field hospital work requires team work between the respective faiths. A common understanding of our roles has served to cement our relationship. There is mutual assistance in times of service.

It may be appropriate to mention that to see young lads with torn, broken and bleeding bodies is not an experience from which one can derive any satisfaction; yet it is an experience and duty which cannot be shirked, for there is a vital and necessary work to be performed at the Marine Field Hospital. Not only does the chaplain serve God in the service of men, but his own life is enriched by the experience, for he too is forced to search for the strength and courage of God deep within the recesses of his own life.⁶

The Chu Lai arrival of Lieutenant Commander Marvin W. Howard (Southern Baptist) and Lieutenant Commander Gerard W. Taylor (Roman Catholic) in the company of the helicopter group to which they were attached marked the first significant augmentation of Far Eastern aircraft combat capability by West Coast units. As the buildup of forces in Vietnam continued to accelerate, both air and ground augmentation was needed. MAG-36 deployed from its parent 3d Marine Aircraft Wing at MCAS El Toro, Santa Ana, California and was placed under the operational control of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing in I Corps.

Chaplain Howard was the first of the two to arrive, landing on 27 August with the forward echelon consisting of the headquarters staff and Marine Air Base Squadron 36. He had made the voyage on board the Dock Landing Ship USS *Comstock* (LSD 19) leaving Long Beach, California on the morning of 3 August. On 2 September, Chaplain Taylor with the operational squadrons debarked from the USS *Princeton* and moved ashore to join their counterparts in the newly defined group compound.

On 20 September, Wing Chaplain Bakker produced an exchange of MAG-36 and MAG-12 chaplains. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing had now grown in size and strength, with the addition of MAG-13 from Hawaii, but more was to come. A small problem was evident in MAG-36 from the viewpoint of chaplain assignments. Both the Protes-

tant Chaplain Marvin W. Howard, and Jerry W. Taylor, the Catholic Chaplain, were senior lieutenant commanders. Over in MAG-12 Rieter and Long were recently promoted Lieutenants. The wing chaplain transferred Chaplain Taylor to MAG-12, and Chaplain Long to MAG-36. Chaplain Bakker wrote:

MAG-12 gave the Wing Chaplain a little static, because of their identification with and loyalty to Dick Long, but the change proved to be sound and logical. Of course it meant that Chaplain Long would have the added burden of starting from the sand again, and building up two times in succession. It was the Wing Chaplain's considered opinion that his stamina of body and soul was equal to the task. From MAG-36's side of the question Chaplain Howard had been with the group longer. Chaplain Taylor had been in the 3d MAW office with Wing Chaplain L. C. M. Vosseler at El Toro, until shortly before the deployment. He had had little opportunity to get acquainted with MAG-36.⁷

Landing at Qui Nhon

The only Marine Corps enclave established in the II Corps Tactical Zone of South Vietnam during the war was in the northeastern corner of Binh Dinh Province, south of the city of Qui Nhon. Qui Nhon was the seaport terminus of Highway 19, the most direct route from the coast to the strategically important military base in Pleiku. Travel over Highway 19 was being disrupted almost at will by Viet Cong of the central highlands. Much of the time logistic support for the military garrison at Pleiku was limited to resupply by aircraft. The plateau offered a convenient mountain-pass infiltration and supply route for North Vietnamese troops entering South Vietnam from Cambodian trails. Qui Nhon represented the key to overland supply. U.S. Army engineers were ordered to the area to build an airfield and a garrison for a swift-striking airmobile division. To secure the area from local Viet Cong, the Navy-Marine Corps Special Landing Force comprised of the helicopter carrier USS *Iwo Jima* (LPH 2) with HMM-363 aboard, attack transport USS *Tallegaga* (APA 205), and attack cargo ship USS *Muliphen* (AKA 61) and the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines was assigned the mission of searching and clearing the area.

On 1 July Lieutenant Ralph C. Betters (United Presbyterian) landed with the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines. The Marines landed unopposed and

established a defensive perimeter skirting the building sites for the airstrip and garrison adjacent to the city of Qui Nhon.

Chaplain Betters' battalion was the first unit of RLT 7 to land in Vietnam. He recalled:

I received dispatch orders in May 1965 while stationed at the Naval Air Station, North Island, San Diego. I joined Chaplains Goad, Hiskett and McNamara at the 7th Regimental CP at Camp Pendleton. Chaplain Goad was assigned as Regimental Chaplain, John McNamara to the First Battalion, Wally Hiskett to the Second Battalion, and I was given the Third.

In Qui Nhon we suffered our first casualties and learned VC tactics, first-hand. Though I am a veteran of World War II and Korea, and have seen and lived with destruction, dread, deprivation, disease and death, the initial shock of ministering to mutilated bodies caused a trauma that I did not anticipate. Indeed I thought myself hardened to the horrors of warfare and death.⁸

The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines was ashore only a week when the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines with Lieutenant Walter A. Hiskett (Lutheran) attached arrived to relieve it. The 3d Battalion returned to duty as the ready SLF, cruising the coast of I Corps in reserve. Chaplain Hiskett's battalion was to remain in the countryside near Qui Nhon until 4 November when it was replaced by the newly arriving Tiger Division of the Republic of Korea.

Chaplain Hiskett reported that the battalion's rifle companies took up positions a mile or so beyond existing perimeters. Three days after their arrival they established a forward command post approximately 10 miles inland, adjacent to the 84th U.S. Army Engineers compound, leaving logistics units and the battalion aid station in the secure area at the rear CP. Upon the recommendation of battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Leon Utter, Chaplain Hiskett remained temporarily at the aid station to minister to a rising number of heat casualties. Later in the week he moved to the forward CP in order to be closer to his troops in the field, being followed a few days later by the aid station itself.

Two Army chaplains assisted Chaplain Hiskett in providing a ministry for the men of his battalion. The chaplains were stationed at Pleiku, and gave religious coverage to the 84th Engineers. They invited men of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines who remained in the CP over Sunday, to join them for worship. This released Chaplain Hiskett to move about the area conducting ministry to the deployed rifle companies. The tactical area of responsibility for the

2d Battalion, 7th Marines was large and in time covered an area of over 50 square miles. Chaplain Hiskett noted:

Most of the positions were located on isolated hilltops. All transportation was by helicopter and was arranged by the Battalion Air Liaison Officer. The Logistics Support Unit remained on the beach during our entire stay at Qui Nhon and I made arrangements for their Protestant men to attend services at the Army Signal Battalion area close by. Some of the isolated companies split up to cover two or three forward outpost positions. This made it impossible to cover all of the positions on Sunday. Therefore, religious services were conducted usually on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, and as many as thirteen services in one week.

Most of the combat operations of Qui Nhon consisted of platoon or squad sized patrols. Occasionally we would conduct company-sized search and clear operations and there were two or three operations involving two companies but, strictly speaking there were no large scale combat operations. I accompanied the battalion commander as he visited the troops in the field on the larger operations. This gave me an opportunity to be with the men as they were engaged in operations, at least for short periods of time.⁹

Chaplain Hiskett reported an incident that points up that the chaplain's ministry is not only to the wounded and dying, but in the sensitivity of religious pluralism, also to the dead. Two Marines on the forward perimeter were killed by rifle fire from another Marine position. Chaplain Hiskett accompanied the men by helicopter to the aid station. He later recorded:

One of the men was Catholic so I tried to contact a Catholic Chaplain to administer Last Rites. There was no Catholic Chaplain in the area. I escorted the body to the Christian Brothers School where I knew a priest resided. At 0300 no one could be aroused. We returned to the school. Mass was in progress. When it was over I asked the priest to administer Last Rites. In spite of the language problem the priest understood and Extreme Unction was administered. A Requiem Mass was also said for the Marine.¹⁰

On 28 September Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 363 of the Chu Lai-based MAG-36 was deployed to Qui Nhon to support the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines in its mission. Lieutenant John R. Daly (Roman Catholic), then less than a week in Vietnam, was assigned to the squadron. Upon arrival, the squadron moved into a former Army compound, Camp Goldberg, on the outskirts of Qui Nhon. He soon discovered that much of his activity would be

directed toward Catholic coverage of nearby Army personnel. He observed that the squadron was of such size that he knew all of the officers and men personally and could keep his finger on the pulse of the unit. His Army flock was composed of detachments of the 498th Aviation Company, the 197th Aviation Company, the 78th Transportation Company, and the 540th Transportation Company. For the five weeks that HMM 363's Qui Nhon duty coincided with that of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, he said a 1500 Sunday Mass at the Battalion CP and during the week made use of his squadron's resupply flights to say Mass, three times a week, to the outlying companies of the battalion.

On 5 January 1966 HMM-363, which had relieved HMM-163, followed the assignment pattern of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines and was ordered to duty at Chu Lai, 120 miles to the north. Chaplain Daly then rejoined his parent organization, MAG-36, as a relief for Lieutenant Commander R. A. Long (Roman Catholic) who was among the first of the group's chaplains to arrive, and who had been ordered to new duty in the United States.

New Chaplain Leadership

In early October Captain Francis L. Garrett (United Methodist) reported to the Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force for duty as force chaplain. Chaplain Garrett and Lieutenant General Lewis W. Walt had served together at Marine Corps Schools, Quantico and were well acquainted. On his way through Iwakuni, Japan, enroute to assume command of the 3d Marine Division, General Walt had informed the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing Chaplain Bakker that "Frank" Garrett was coming to the Far East to be his staff chaplain and that he was delighted with the Chief of Chaplains decision to send him. Bakker noted that the general and chaplain "made an ideal team."¹¹

Chaplain Garrett relieved Chaplain Jones upon his arrival in the country. After completing the necessary check-in procedure, and visits to General Walt and members of his staff, Chaplain Garrett was briefed by Chaplains Jones, Maguire, and Seim. The briefing included duties of the new force chaplain, the current status of the commands and chaplains encompassed by III MAF's organizational structure,



Photo III MAF

LtGen Lewis W. Walt, Commanding General, III MAF, presents a check for \$4,000 to Force Chaplain Francis L. Garrett for the Chaplains Civic Action Fund. The contribution is from the Protestant Chapel Fund of the Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina.

the ministry of I Corps chaplains and the complications of religious coverage, the status and problems inherent in the developing Civil Affairs program, and the geographical location of chaplains attached to III MAF commands.

The duties of the force chaplain had been set forth in III MAF Force order 1730.1, just three days after the establishment of the billet. The force chaplain was directly responsible to the commanding general in the performance of his duties. He served (1) to advise the commanding general on matters pertaining to the moral, spiritual, and religious welfare of the force; (2) to coordinate broad policy, with regard to division, wing and force chaplains, and integrating their efforts into a single program; (3) to conduct periodic inspections of the religious programs of force organizations and of command efforts relating

to the moral, spiritual, and religious welfare of personnel; and (4) to assist the commanding general in carrying out his responsibility as related to religious activities of Army and Air Force units in the III MAF area and as special area coordinator for the Da Nang complex and also to establish and maintain liaison with COMUSMACV and other services commands, and local civilian organizations, with respect to religious affairs.¹²

Chaplain Garrett was peculiarly sensitive to the need for a deep and meaningful quality of ministry in I Corps. He came with an awareness of the need for delicate balance in the amount of time chaplains devoted to primary and collateral duties. One of his first acts as force chaplain was to conduct a detailed study of chaplain involvement in Civil Affairs. He anticipated that the humanitarian assistance pro-

gram, already developing to massive proportions, would inevitably require an increasing amount of the chaplains' time. III MAF had moved into Civil Affairs with great energy, fully aware of the importance of winning the trust and confidence of an indigenous people involved in a guerrilla war. In view of the size of the effort and official Marine Corps sponsorship of it, Chaplain Garrett set about to do three things: draw chaplain civic action activities into a coordinated III MAF program with carefully defined perimeters; refine the objectives and improve the thrust of the chaplains' effort; and prescribe the limits of individual chaplain involvement in essentially secular, command-sponsored projects.

Conclusions and recommendations resulting from his study were forwarded, by memorandum, to General Walt on 21 October 1965. In the memorandum Chaplain Garrett noted that: (1) chaplain participation had been largely the result of individual initiative; (2) activities had been directed toward "targets of opportunity," as opposed to an aggressive program of systematically searching out opportunities; and (3) financial support had been limited to local unit resources. He stated:

These conclusions clearly point the way to the next steps to be taken. First we must organize our effort so as to bring to bear the experience and work of all our Chaplains, and second, we must mobilize massive financial and material support from sources available to us in CONUS. Only thus can we mount and sustain a significant and viable program over a long period of time.

With your concurrence, I propose to undertake the development of a long range program which is intended to encompass those areas in which the churches have been traditionally involved, i.e., orphanages, schools, homes for the aged, hospitals, etc.¹³

The III MAF Force Chaplain proposed specifically that a four-phase effort be undertaken to accomplish his stated objectives. Phase I provided for the location of every private institution of human welfare within previously defined geographical areas. Phase II included the determination of real needs within the institutions, with a view toward concentrating assistance in those areas which would improve institutional effectiveness and tend to make the institutions permanently self-sustaining. Phase III set in motion machinery for mobilizing financial support in Vietnam, and from Navy and Marine Corps chapels and other religious bodies in the United States. Phase IV represented the action phase, the

actual execution of individual projects, on a fully implemented and sustained basis.

The most significant result of the memorandum and its subsequent approval by General Walt, was the official formulation of a clear-cut definition of the chaplain's role in Marine Corps Civic Action. The memorandum identified special areas of activity, and in effect prescribed limits to those areas within which chaplains would thereafter direct their efforts. The chaplain's role in the Civic Action program was sanctioned by the commanding general as a separate and distinct program within the formal structure of Marine Corps civic action was to focus upon urgent needs within the religious community of South Vietnam, and was to be directed toward development of Vietnamese self-reliance and self-support.

While humanitarian activities continued to require great expenditure of the chaplain's time and effort, the new definitions in effect created a structure within which the force chaplain could coordinate the thrust of the effort to eliminate duplication, improve effectiveness, and insure that the unit chaplain's time for essential priorities of his ministry was not diminished.

If the quality of Chaplain Corps leadership was demonstrated by Chaplain Garrett's approach to Civic Action in the first weeks of his tenure of duty as force chaplain, it was amplified during the month of October by personnel management policies the newly reporting division chaplain, Captain Frank R. Morton (Lutheran), formulated with regard to areas of supervisory chaplain responsibilities. Chaplain Morton arrived in Da Nang within two weeks of Chaplain Garrett. Upon arrival he relieved Chaplain Maguire who had been interim 3d Marine Division Chaplain since late August. In a briefing for the Chief of Chaplains, Rear Admiral James W. Kelly (Southern Baptist), the following year, Chaplain Garrett said:

Chaplain Morton was cordially welcomed. He among all the senior chaplains in Vietnam at the time had a background of Marine experience that was invaluable. Frank, more than any of us, had the know-how when it came to living in the field with Marines. This was one of the reasons his presence was so valuable to us. He was extremely active throughout the year, always on the move, and always present wherever things were breaking. Certainly his contribution to the organization of the Chaplains' work in the Third Division was superior to anything I have ever seen, in terms of internal organization.¹⁴

Immediately after his initial briefing, and a cursory survey of the geographical location of the chaplains, Chaplain Morton set to work with Chaplain Garrett on what the former called "a divorce." Since the spring of 1965, before the staff billet of III MAF Force Chaplain had been established, there had been a natural state of ambivalence with regard to lines of authority and responsibility at the division's highest echelon. Chaplain Jones had been 3d Marine Division chaplain in Okinawa. In that position he had exercised overall supervision of 9th MEB, whose chaplains were, however, under an independent command several hundred miles to the south. When III MAF was established in Vietnam the division chaplain occupied the same office-tent with the MAF chaplain and they were participants in the decision-making process for both MAF and division. Upon Chaplain O'Connor's departure, and before Chaplain Maguire's arrival, Chaplain Jones was doubled-hatted for two weeks, and for six weeks immediately prior to his departure, again occupied office space with the division chaplain, employing the services of Chaplain Seim, who was officially attached to the division, as his administrative assistant. In all of this at both MAF and Division Headquarters he was working with a double-hatted commanding general and among the same staff officers with whom he had been associated from the beginning.

A change of chaplain leadership provided the opportunity for well-defined lines of responsibility and clear-cut organizational interrelationship to be firmly drawn. From late October through mid-November, Chaplain Morton conferred with Chaplain Garrett on the interrelationships of their respective billets. They concurred in the decision that Chaplain Morton would exercise full, supervisory control with regard to division chaplains, keeping the force chaplain fully informed, and would turn to him for coordination of joint efforts, broad policy decisions, and would seek counsel in all chaplain-related activities transcending command lines. Chaplain Bakker, the wing chaplain, had succeeded in operating on this organizational principle since the wing had arrived in country.

Tending to support the provisions of "the divorce" was the 3d Marine Division Headquarters physical relocation which came in mid-November. For some time the new headquarters had been under construction. A massive concrete bunker referred to as "Walt's Vault" by the troops, was built to accom-

modate the general's office and several of his staff advisors. Located at the base of a hill line, on what earlier had been the outer perimeter road, several miles west of the airstrip and MAF-Wing compound, the surrounding acreage supported a tent complex for housing the various staff sections of the headquarters. Chaplains Morton, Maguire, Seim, Reiner, and their Marine clerks, moved from one-third of a strongbacked tent to two covered, wooden frame structures.

The division chaplain, assistant division chaplain, administrative assistant, and three clerks occupied one of the more spacious office-tents while the other was used for equipment and supply storage and for temporary offices of the Jewish and Episcopal chaplains. Chaplain Morton's tent was located on the side of a hill, affording what he called a "meditation porch." Down a ladder and under the back of the tent was a comfortable, spacious area for use by any of the chaplains who wished to counsel privately with visitors or to confer with small groups and not disturb the routine functions of the office.

Occupied with organizational concerns, relocation of office spaces, and the administrative orientation of the division, Chaplain Morton could initially do little more than observe the process of chaplain coverage. This was the broad concern to which he turned his attention the remainder of November and early December. The issues awaiting his resolution were: how to provide the 3d Marine Division with religious coverage on a seven-day-week basis; and how to provide equitable and appropriate, denominational coverage. His objectives were simple. Every Marine in the 3d Marine Division must have opportunities to worship a minimum of once a week in a worship service of his denominational preference. He had already observed that he was working in a widely scattered Marine division with chaplains in four separate enclaves. Units were interspersed among wing units and with the Seabees. Chaplains were extending their ministries to men of many smaller units who otherwise would have had no opportunity to receive the ministry of the church. Units were highly mobile and enclave perimeters were expanding throughout each week. Small unit operations were scheduled on short notice. Transportation was a continuing problem which further complicated the overall task of providing comprehensive religious coverage.

Factors effecting religious coverage by chaplains

had been undergoing subtle and continuing changes since the buildup of forces began in March. In the June to October period individual chaplain cooperation continued to be the key to a successful effort. Beginning in November, unit chaplains were informed in weekly meetings of their responsibilities and were given a detailed overview of the entire enclave. Chaplains highly motivated toward energetic cooperation still remained the key to success, but it soon became apparent that the system was refined to such a degree that the personalities of Chaplain Corps leaders, the force chaplain, division chaplain, wing chaplain, and the Chief of Chaplains, could be seen in the Corps ministry in South Vietnam.

Chaplain Morton, in conference with the division chief of staff, confirmed his own staff authority to move chaplains in accordance with his own judgment. The freedom of personnel management Chaplain O'Connor had requested, and Chaplain Jones had established as standing operating procedure, Chaplain Morton confirmed. It became necessary only to supply a nomination for orders to the division G-1, and official, in-country changes of duty were effected in a matter of hours.

Describing concepts governing his assignments, Chaplain Morton said:

All chaplains reporting aboard for duty directly from Chaplains School are assigned to separate battalions. The Assistant Division Chaplain is their immediate senior chaplain. They are observed, counselled and advised during a six-month assignment. After the six-month period they are available for assignment to line battalions. All chaplains reporting as recalls from the Naval Reserve where they held civilian pastorates are assigned either to separate battalions or to line battalions under the direction of a regimental chaplain. Lieutenant Commander chaplains are first assigned to a medical battalion or to a regiment, depending upon previous Marine Corps experience.

Young chaplains should have a varied experience during this tour of duty. They are the regimental or division chaplains in tomorrow's Marine Corps. However, no chaplain is moved about for experience alone. During the twelve-month period many factors appear which necessitate objective moves. The subjective moves are effected only when the Division Chaplain or advising Regimental Chaplain recommends a move for the individual chaplain's sake.¹⁵

In addition, Chaplain Morton felt that no chaplain should remain attached to a field hospital in excess of six months. The drain upon the spiritual, physical, and emotional resources of a chaplain pro-

viding a crisis ministry for mass casualties created the need for such a change. As combat operations became more frequent and intense during late 1965 and 1966, it became a matter of policy to reassign line battalion chaplains in a similar manner. The opportunity to listen and learn was being supplied chaplains in the broadest possible way.

Lieutenant Max E. Dunks (Southern Baptist), who reported in early October to relieve Lieutenant Commander Charles C. Kary (American Baptist) for reassignment as Regimental Chaplain, 3d Marines, was one of the chaplains reporting to Da Nang direct from Chaplains School and the Field Medical Service School. Three and one half months prior to his arrival he had been serving a civilian congregation and had had no previous military experience. For the first six months of his duty in Vietnam he was assigned to the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion with additional responsibility for 3d Motor Transport Battalion, 3d Anti-Tank Battalion, and 3d Tank Battalion, succeeding Chaplains Kary and Goodwin. In his "end of tour report" he spoke directly to the issues which Chaplain Morton was attempting to resolve:

My greatest difficulty during my tour in South Vietnam, was learning how to get things done in the military framework, and particularly in the Marine framework. I had to learn the importance of requesting needed services and materials in writing, using appropriate military forms. I had to learn that even though it is widely understood that certain sections in a battalion organization perform certain functions, every commanding officer had his distinctive preference as to how the various functions within the sections are carried out

I also had to learn patience and the art of flexibility in Vietnam more than ever before in my life. The plans and policies of my parent unit were often changed, and I had to adjust, as everyone else did. Frustration was always just around the corner, and I often came face to face with it. I expected, and adjusted to it. I feel that any chaplain who does not assume this attitude may find himself with an abnormal emotional disturbance or an ulcerated stomach. Last of all I learned that one needs to have a positive, aggressive attitude toward his goals in South Vietnam. The 'can do' attitude prevails among the Marines, and Navy Chaplains serving with the Marines are out of place if they do not have this attitude.¹⁶

As an important part of his philosophy of leadership Chaplain Morton considered the position of regimental chaplain to be an indispensable link between the battalion chaplain and the supervisory chaplains on the division level. He himself had been a regimental chaplain with the 4th Marines in Japan and Hawaii in 1954-1955, and had learned the

significance of the position in a regiment geographically isolated from division headquarters.

Chaplain Kary's reassignment to the 3d Marines as regimental chaplain was accomplished by Chaplain Maguire before Morton's arrival. The 3d Marines had previously had no regimental chaplain in Vietnam. Assignment of Chaplain Kary gave evidence of two factors coming to the fore in this period which influenced assignment of chaplains. The need for more comprehensive coverage was pressingly apparent to Chaplain Maguire and subsequently to Chaplain Morton. When an experienced chaplain became available the effort was made to assign a fourth chaplain to augment the ministry of the three line battalion chaplains assigned a regiment. This evolved into a policy of assigning two Protestant and two Roman Catholics to line regiments, the greater proportion of separate battalions such as engineers, tanks, amphibian tractors and the like, having Protestant chaplains assigned to them for duty. Previously scattered battalions were becoming consolidated with their regimental headquarters within a single tactical area of organizational responsibility. Operational conditions had not always permitted the regiment to operate as a unit. Nevertheless, consolidation of the regiments, and assignment of chaplains as regimental chaplains gave evidence that the regiment remained very much an integral part of Marine Corps organization.

In view of the fact that neither the division chaplain nor the assistant division chaplain could possibly exercise direct supervision of religious activities and the work of chaplains in enclaves 50 or more miles away, Chaplain Morton made good use of his regimental chaplains. In time an assignment policy evolved in which Chaplain Morton delegated both unit and geographical responsibility to each enclave's senior chaplain. This also carried over to code-named combat operations which lasted from a few days to several weeks. In these instances the senior chaplain attached reported to the division chaplain for direct supervision of unit chaplains and their work.

Ceremonial Events and Administrative Concerns

Three ceremonial events occurred during November 1965. The first was the Marine Corps Birthday on the 10th. In slack moments of the day, ceremonies appropriate to the occasion were held.

This was the first Marine Corps birthday to be celebrated by Marines in combat since the Korean War. The occasion was as festive as conditions would permit, with cake cutting ceremonies and speeches. In deference to "The Night War," by which name the conflict in Vietnam was being characterized, ceremonies were held during daylight hours. Chaplain Scanlon, with the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines near Hill 327, wrote:

Monsoon season had arrived in earnest now, to the tune of 27 inches of rain a month, and mud was everywhere. Third Battalion, Third Marine Division with A.D. Seeland had come up from Chu Lai and had taken up a position on our left flank. For the Marine Corps Birthday, our cooks had made a huge cake. They were up all night making it. The weather was so damp that the icing wouldn't stick to the cake; it kept falling off. But to us it looked magnificent. We had a ceremony befitting the occasion, in which the Chaplain took part. Village Chiefs and the District Chief were invited.¹⁷

Lieutenant Allen B. Craven (Southern Baptist) reported that the 12th Marines' regimental services on 7 November, commemorating the Marine Corps' 190th Anniversary, was the highlight of his worship services in Vietnam. He reported:

The command asked that all batteries in the Regimental CP form up and bring their guidons. It was a beautiful sight to see the guidons, battalions, regimental and national colors as they marched in during the processional hymn. An inspiring message was given by Chaplain Garrett, the Third Marine Amphibious Force Chaplain. It was inspiration to see over a hundred Marines worshipping God and honoring the Corps; knowing that they would leave after the service to continue their duties in the service of their nation.¹⁸

The next ceremonial occasion was Thanksgiving Day. It was followed by the Navy Chaplain Corps Birthday Celebration on 2 December. Thanksgiving was appropriately observed with services of worship and with hot meals of turkey and trimmings for all hands. Even the line companies on the enclave perimeter had hot meals taken out by the choppers. The day was similarly observed, from CP to farthest outpost and from the smallest to the largest ship off-shore.

The Chaplain Corps Birthday was observed at luncheon in the Da Nang enclave. Attending guests of honor included General Walt; Brigadier General Keith B. McCutcheon, 1st Wing Commander; other senior staff officers; and, with one exception, every battalion commander in the enclave. Chaplain Seim

addressed the gathering and reflected on the chaplain's ministry. He concluded:

As desired by the churches of the land and by Navy Regulations, chaplains have taught men both secular and sacred subjects. Always they teach the larger lessons of life, the lessons of God's Word, His way for man. Chaplains have administered the sacraments. They have confronted men with the sacred acts most holy precious to their churches, baptizing the new believers from helmets and in oceans, offering the Holy Supper, confirming, hearing confessions, blessing marriages, going with them to the final moment of life and bridging the gap with the last rites. They have brought the assurance of God's care to sailors and Marines on wooden ships, in polar ice, on violent seas, in roaring helicopters and in silent depths, in rotting jungles, on comfortable stations, in foxholes, bunkers and bamboo chapels.

Chaplains have shown the nation the meaning of religious cooperation by working together, and have led the way, honoring one another. . . .

We are proud of our Corps today. How frequently have you heard it said, "he's the best blankety-blank chaplain in the Navy?" So many times. Chaplains have received a wide variety of medals and given many to young men—a St. Christopher medal here and an "I am an Episcopalian" there.

All this because we are here to serve God and the military man. It is our unique profession.¹⁹

During one of the chaplain meetings in November, a conversation between Chaplain Bohula, 2d Battalion, 3d Marines and Force Chaplain Garrett, an idea concerning the maintenance of a historical record of the ministry of the Chaplain Corps in Vietnam impressed itself on Chaplain Garrett's mind. As he sat listening to the experiences of the younger chaplain, he was moved by the depth and power of the chaplain's ministry and by the spiritual impact the chaplain had obviously had upon the lives of Marines. He was stirred by the effectiveness of the Corps' efforts to fulfill its mission by "bringing God to man and man to God." Chaplain Garrett conceived the idea that an end of tour narrative report of the chaplain's duties in Vietnam, preserving a record of his services and experiences and anecdotes pertaining to his ministry, should be required of each chaplain prior to detachment. In keeping with his responsibility to formulate policies on matters transcending division and wing command prerogatives, he issued a force order initiating the requirement. Chaplains being detached from duty in Vietnam from that time forward, spent a few hours of their last days in Vietnam composing a narrative account of their duties in Vietnam for submission to the Force Chaplain who then, in

turn, forwarded copies through official channels to the Chief of Chaplains.

On an inspection trip to Vietnam in September, Chaplain John H. Craven, Force Chaplain, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, in Hawaii, who had participated in the preparation of the history of the chaplains in the Korean War, solicited historical information which he planned to publish in summary form in his FMFPac Bulletin, and for fuller treatment later. In addition he requested that supervisory chaplains provide a steady flow of materials of historical interest for use in future articles at his level and at the level of the Chief of Chaplains. Chaplain Craven's brief historical summaries were great benefit to chaplains being oriented for duty in Vietnam, and to the corps historian in reconstructing the events of early 1965. Chaplain Garrett's sense of history, foresight, and initiative resulted in a flow of valuable historical data to the office of the Chief of Chaplains.

As early as mid-November, the III MAF Chaplain began preparations for distribution of tons of Christmas cards, letters, and packages already beginning to arrive from the United States. Chaplain Garrett and his colleagues anticipated the impending mountains of mail, including thousands of packages and letters addressed to "Any Marine in Vietnam," with dread. Nevertheless they accepted the assignment reluctantly, simply because, this first Christmas in Vietnam, there was no one else to whom such activity with its great morale enhancement potential and public relations value, could be entrusted. Most chaplains, in their end of tour reports, commented favorably on the value of the effort and the sheer pleasure the packages gave the troops.

Some believed the gifts represented a spontaneous response on the part of a segment of the American people to the demonstrations against the war then beginning to be seen in the United States. Assistant Division Chaplain Maguire wrote:

There had been a series of demonstrations against the Vietnam War back home and now many people, evidently representing a large majority, started sending Christmas greetings and gifts to servicemen. The plight of many poor and sick Vietnamese had also been publicized back home. The result was that from late November on into January packages arrived daily for servicemen and for the Vietnamese people. The MAF Chaplain's Office became the distribution point. Chaplains established Christmas displays in the units, usually a large bulletin board for

cards and tables for packages. The enthusiastic response of the troops was pleasantly surprising. In early autumn, Martha Raye had sent many packages, mostly books. The distribution of those and the establishment of book shelves for the troops was in a small way a rehearsal for the Christmas avalanche.²⁰

Preparations were underway in late November for the festive season. With regard to these Chaplain Maguire reported:

Chaplain Morton was away at the time performing a Christmas miracle. He procured and somehow carted two tons of Christmas equipment from Japan. The gear filled a 16' x 16' area to the roof. The result was that every Marine and Navy man in I Corps saw a strategically located Nativity scene and heard Christmas music broadcast.²¹

One of Chaplain Morton's administrative concerns during December was the welcome, orientation, and assignment of five chaplains reporting for duty with the division. He kept each new chaplain at division headquarters for a few days prior to assigning them to a unit. During the period they were briefed on the operational situation, given time to "get their gear in order," and generally oriented by trips into the field, by artillery fire demonstrations, and at a series of personal interviews.

It had become apparent to Chaplain Morton during his first weeks in country that denominational coverage of troops in each enclave promised to present difficult problems. In a combat zone the availability of Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish chaplains to minister to men of their respective faiths represented the absolute minimum denominational coverage. The entire chain of supervisory chaplain responsibility, from division through MAF, and FMF to the Chaplain Assignment Officer in the Chief of Chaplains' office, to the Chief of Chaplains himself, were intimately involved in establishing in Vietnam the broadest religious coverage in the history of naval warfare. All of the major American religious bodies were represented in I Corps in December and a number of smaller churches. The problem became for Chaplain Morton one of refinement and balance. Additional Catholic chaplains were needed to man his projected plan of two Protestants and two Catholics for each regiment in country. In conference with Chaplain Garrett the decision was made to request that the 1st Marine Division, by this time settled on Okinawa, furnish the required Catholic coverage. Captain John L. Wissing (Roman Catholic), Division Chaplain of the

1st Marine Division agreed to send Lieutenant Raymond A. Roy (Roman Catholic) to Da Nang for a 60-day period of temporary additional duty. Reporting in mid-December Chaplain Roy was assigned to the 9th Marines, now consolidated south of Da Nang on perimeter defense.

In a "Newsletter" he wrote to friends on 2 January 1966, Chaplain Roy pointed up the developing problem of Catholic coverage. He said:

My duties with the Marines send me wandering around the perimeter, my Mass kit on my back. Some of the Catholic boys in the outlying Companies had not seen a priest in six weeks. It isn't true that there are no atheists in foxholes. Yet it is true that, for a great number of young men, foxhole faith is a reality they cannot and have no desire to escape. When a boy in muddy and torn utilities comes to Mass there is a rapport established between us that I have never experienced anywhere else in the ministry. That boy, who might normally shy away from a priest, often hears himself revealing thoughts he has never expressed to anyone else. And I have no doubt that, just as often, the grace of God made its entry through such conversations. Those who have never had the faith? Well, I have been here only a short while, and already, six Marines have asked me for instruction in the intention of receiving Baptism. God sure spoils a priest out here.²²

Changing circumstances in Vietnam prevented Chaplain Roy's permanent return to Okinawa at the end of his 60-day tour. Soon after the first of the year the decision was made to commit the 1st Marine Division to combat in Vietnam. Many of its regiments and separate battalions, and most of its chaplains, were already in country under operational control of the 3d Marine Division. The remainder of the division was to be committed to duty in Vietnam in the early spring of 1966 and Chaplain Roy was to return to Vietnam with the 5th Marines after a brief interlude on Okinawa.

Chaplains for NSA and MCB-8

During the final quarter of 1965, three chaplains assigned to naval units under the Commanding General, III MAF's cognizance as Naval Component Commander, reported to duty in Da Nang. The first chaplains permanently assigned to the newly established command, Naval Support Activity, Da Nang, were Commander Martin F. Gibbons (Roman Catholic) and Lieutenant David S. Hunsicker (Southern Baptist).

Chaplain Gibbons remained on duty in Da Nang for a full year tour of duty and witnessed the buildup

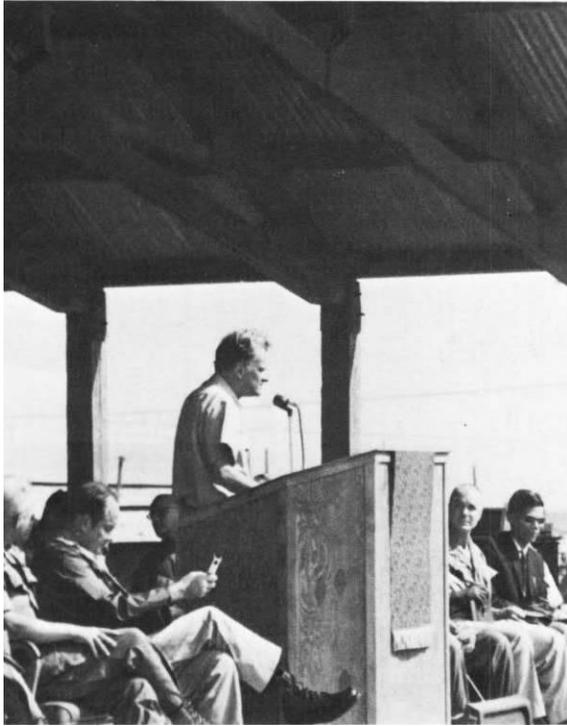


Photo courtesy of Chaplain John E. Zoller
Evangelist Billy Graham preaches at an open air meeting for several thousand Marine and Army personnel at Phu Bai, during the Easter season 1969.

of Naval Support Activity Chaplains from two to six and an almost overwhelming increase in numbers of naval personnel for whose benefit a comprehensive ministry had to be carefully organized. Since July, Lieutenant John Q. Leshar (Methodist) had been attached to the Force Logistic Support Group, until Naval Support Activity could be officially commissioned in October. He was relieved by Chaplain Hunsicker, who with Chaplain Leshar, participated in the activating ceremonies.

When Gibbons reported for duty as senior chaplain he found physical accommodations to be essentially as they had been during the days when the entire command was housed in a single room in the administration building, dubbed the White Elephant. In a letter to Captain Edward A. Slattery (Roman Catholic), Assignment Officer for the Chaplains' Division, Bureau of Naval Personnel, Chaplain Gibbons wrote:

When you said this job was a challenge, you didn't know how true the expression was/ We had nothing and could have been here a year without ever getting anything. Tremendous numbers of men had been ordered in, confusion reigned (and still reigns) everywhere. Kingdoms were

already established, and since we chaplains came last, we had no space, no gear, no transportation, no yeoman—nothing. Morale was rock bottom, that's why we were wanted, and our role was to be ecclesiastical morale builders, riding the boats, tossing off witty sayings and cheering up the boys. That's not meant to be a joke, Ed, it is what Chaplain Leshar and Dave Hunsicker had to do before I arrived. Their office was an attache case.²³

Five days after Chaplain Gibbon's letter to the Chaplains Division was written Lieutenant Commander Paul H. Lionberger (Lutheran) who had recently relieved Chaplain Seim as assistant to the division chaplain volunteered to help the NSA chaplains fulfill their schedule of Christmas Day services. Having reported aboard only a week before and having completed his unit's schedule of services by 1400 on Christmas Eve, Chaplain Lionberger offered to assist in the following day's schedule. He remembered:

0900 Christmas found me hitchhiking to the White Elephant Landing in Da Nang where I met Chaplain Marty Gibbons, NSA Chaplain, who was surprised to see me ready to conduct services. He helpfully steered me to the right "mike" boat to transport me to the assigned ships in the harbor. Rounding the sea wall we were hit by hard rain squalls and high swells so that to board the APAs for services I had to climb cargo nets rather than using the accommodation ladders. Fond memories of cooperative sailors rigging for church, warm and dry compartments, as well as a rich variety of Navy chow, linger on for Christmas Day, 1965.²⁴

The Da Nang area was not without its action late in 1965. The attack which destroyed or damaged a large proportion of the NSA Hospital, then under construction, occurred on 28 October. Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Robert S. Collins (Lutheran) had just relieved Chaplain Murray. He said:

On the third evening after I reported aboard MCB-NINE located then at Da Nang East, our campsite was hit quite severely by thirty-one rounds of Viet Cong 81mm mortars. Within moments I was in the underground sickbay, ministering to the wounded. Before the night was over, I had held open the chest of a young Marine so our Battalion Surgeon could massage his heart, and helped to carry the lad to a medical evacuation helicopter.²⁵

Commander William F. Hollis (American Baptist) with MCB-8, at Da Nang reported that his unit sustained neither the damage nor the personal injuries that the sister unit received. MCB-8, working on facilities at Camp Faulkner and the 5th Communications Battalion compound, escaped the devastating mortars. Lieutenant George F. Tillett (United



Photo courtesy of Chaplain Henry T. Lavin

Francis Cardinal Spellman (center) conducts Mass in Da Nang on Christmas Day, 1966. Other priests (left to right): David J. Casazza, 1st Division Chaplain; an unidentified Army chaplain; Bishop Patrick Ahearn; and Henry T. Lavin, 3d Division Chaplain.

Church of Christ), Hollis's relief, arrived in November to serve with Chaplain Hollis for approximately two weeks before the latter was detached. Chaplain Tillett remained with MCB-8 for the following six months, until completion of the battalion's first deployment to Vietnam in May 1966. He served Camp Faulkner; Company B, 3d Tank Battalion; and the 5th Communications Battalion, the latter units being located near the compound of his parent command. "We worshipped," he said, "in a tent replete with pews and altar at MCB-8, in the EM Club at 'B' Tanks, and on the patio of the Officers' Club overlooking the South China Sea at Fifth Communications Battalion. MCB-8 had the only Navy choir in Vietnam. Its director was a Chief Electrician with a Bachelor of Music Degree from the University of Texas."²⁶

Chaplain Tillett's experience was very similar to that of many other chaplains in Vietnam in that he found the men of MCB-8 very appreciative of informal discussion groups. "These were conducted," he said, "three or four times a week and it was not uncommon to find five or six of us sitting on the sand at 10:00-11:00 o'clock at night. The letters I still receive from former Seabees and Marines attest to their worth."²⁷

Christmas Highlights

For Chaplains in the five northernmost provinces of South Vietnam, three-fold highlights of the Christmas Season 1965, consisted in the services of worship they each conducted on Christmas Eve and Day, the avalanche of Christmas mail, and the visits of Cardinal Spellman and the Chief of Chaplains.



Department of the Defense (USN) Photo K-45300
Navy Chief of Chaplains James W. Kelly shakes hands with a Marine lance corporal on board a fast coastal patrol craft during his third Christmas visit to Vietnam in 1967.

A total of 214 services of worship were conducted by chaplains of the 3d Marine Division units. This was without question on the busiest single weekend to that time for chaplains in Vietnam. It should also be noted that Chief of Chaplains Kelly dedicated seven new chapels and preached at a dozen or more services of worship in a four-day period while Captain Leon Darkowski (Roman Catholic), accompanying the Chief of Chaplains on his Christmas trip to Vietnam, said several Masses.

Referring to some of his memories of late 1965, Chaplain Roy said:

There would be so much to describe—the joy of celebrating Midnight Mass outdoors by candlelight, with Marines singing Christmas Carols; the heartwarming experience of distributing the tons of Christmas cards and packages sent by the Americans who cared enough; the almost comic feeling of hearing confessions in the belly of

an AmTrac; the pride in the eyes of the men who helped me put up a tent chapel and a 14 foot white cross; the grandiose Mass of Cardinal Spellman on Christmas Day, and the frolicking Bob Hope show a couple of days later on the same stage; the rain and the mud which was soon to give way to the heat and dust; and when the sun did shine, the beautiful green mountains and valleys or rice paddies on the shores of the South China Sea. . . .²⁸

Chaplain Lionberger wrote:

Slogging through the mud, I visited the shops and men of the 3d Engineer Battalion on Christmas Eve. At dinner with the officers, the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Nick Dennis, asked me to lead the group in a Christmas Service. Impromptu singing of Christmas carols, a short devotional message, the Commanding Officer reading the Christmas Gospel-Luke, opened our hearts to the meaning of Christmas, even when separated from loved ones. At midnight, a Candlelight Christmas service was held for Protestants in the Battalion messhall.²⁹

Chaplain Scanlon of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines near Hill 327 said:

Christmas Eve 1965, I shall never forget. I had been talking to the Colonel and we weren't sure whether we should make a big fuss or just be ordinary because we didn't want the men to feel more homesick. It was the men who made the fuss. I returned to the chapel on Christmas Eve to find a Christmas tree there set up by the H&S Co. Captain. Two Marines dressed it and the rest of the chapel. We put up a Creche outside. Along about 11:00 PM, I was sitting in my tent alone, thinking about the Midnight Masses of other years and the hushed expectancy of that hour. I was reconsidering our decision not to have a Midnight Mass because of required light and the danger of attack and mortar possibilities. Then I heard carols being sung. I waited a minute to be sure and then went to the flap of the tent. There, outside, to serenade me with Christmas carols were 12 Marines . . . and with candles and small hymnals, they managed to get through five or six carols and I sang with them with tears in my eyes. So who was making a fuss about Christmas? You just can't take that out of a man's heart.³⁰

Chaplain Cory of the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, at Marble Mountain recalled:

Numerous boxes and letters were received in "Operational Mail Call: Viet Nam 'for Any Marine'" and the troops were really enthused about it. One of them was seriously wounded two hours after I gave him one of the letters. The corpsmen cut away his shirt, but he insisted that we give it back because it had the letter in it which he wanted to answer. We got it for him and he was content.³¹

In his turnover narrative Wing Chaplain Bakker said:

From a spiritual point of view, the highlight of tour here in Vietnam was the visit of the Chief of Chaplains during the Christmas season. The 'Chief,' Chaplain James W. Kelly, Rear Admiral, USN, gave us a truly spiritual ministry. His visit was not a routine VIP mission, but a hard working, evangelistic inspiration. His message of the "Marine With His Rifle and a Loaf of Bread" will long be remembered. His different dedicatory messages at the dedication of our chapels were both inspirational and appropriate to the occasion. His letters to the Commanding General, the Commanding Officers and the Chaplains of the Wing were pleasant surprises, and treasured communications.³²

Division Chaplain Morton remarked later that the Chief of Chaplains' Christmas visit, 23-27 December 1965, provided the spiritual impetus needed to sustain the respective chaplains for the remainder of their tours of duty. Chaplains were inspired by the Chief of Chaplains' punishing schedule of command visit and worship services. Chaplain Morton said, "None of us had ever seen a chaplain function on a

twenty-four hour basis as did the Chief of Chaplains. He hardly took time for a breath. From that moment forth Chaplain Kelly served as an example for the younger chaplains."³³

Chaplains Maguire, Glynn, and Scanlon spoke at length about Cardinal Spellman's Mass for I Corps personnel at Da Nang. Chaplain Scanlon reported:

Christmas 1965 was memorable for another reason. On Christmas afternoon, Francis Cardinal Spellman, who had the responsibility for all the Catholic members of the Armed Forces of the United States, arrived in Da Nang to offer a Christmas Mass for and with the troops. At the foot of Hill 327, his Eminence alighted from a Huey and came to an altar placed on stage for the event. Chaplain Garrett of the MAF and Chaplain Morton of the 3d Mar Div were on hand to see that all arrangements were made properly and also Chaplain Maguire and many others. I heard confessions for a while and after Mass, when the Cardinal addressed the troops, we all had the opportunity to meet him once again. It was thrilling for me because he has been such an example of devotion to the troops and also because he ordained me back in St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, in 1953 on Memorial Day. I was wearing a poncho because it started to rain and the Cardinal quipped, "You're in disguise."³⁴

Chaplain Maguire was intimately involved in the details of arranging the Mass and reception for Cardinal Spellman. He recalled that he had met the Catholic dignitary only once before:

His coming presented me, as senior Catholic Chaplain, with many problems to be solved, many details to be worked out with limited equipment and transportation, and lots of water (rain). Due to bad weather and bad memory I came within a whisker of disaster on a few counts. It was not until the Mass was started that I could appreciate and enjoy his visit. His clear, happy countenance so belied his age and feeble physique. His devotion to the troops and their welfare came through without a word to everyone present.

Chaplain Garrett and Chaplain Morton had a part in the Mass, a non-speaking, walk-on part, but one of tremendous support. The loud speaker system went dead. Chaplain Garrett drove to his office with Chaplain Morton. They picked up a portable amplivoice. Chaplain Morton adjusted and tested it on the back of the bouncing jeep on the way back. They carried it on just before the Cardinal spoke.³⁵

Chaplain Glynn of the Field Hospital at Da Nang added the capstone to the reports of Cardinal Spellman's visit. He remarked about the more than 1,000 Marines praying in the rain and Cardinal Spellman standing at the altar. "The aged visitor, who did not move around easily" he wrote, "said with a triumphant twinkle eye just before his jeep moved away, 'I did it.'"³⁶

CHAPTER 5

Slogging and Sharing (July 1965-March 1966)

With the Wounded or on the Line?—Combat Activity at Chu Lai—Chaplain Participation in Major Operations—Adaptability and Patience

War is a massive and complicated undertaking. It demands extensive administration and supervision, planning and coordinating, and influences more lives at approximately the same time in an unforgettable way than perhaps any other single event men have yet evolved. Although volumes have been and are being written about the supporting activities that attach themselves to war, the final focus for those intimately involved will always be the same: combat operations.

It was in combat with his men that the chaplain in Vietnam often found his greatest worth. Lieutenant Commander Frederick E. Whitaker (American Baptist) when asked to submit his end of tour report, expressed a representative attitude most clearly:

There will never be an end of tour for the chaplain who has served in Vietnam as long as Vietnam appears on the map of the world. One cannot end that to which he has given so much of himself. One may leave the country as a person, but he will always be here in thought, spirit and emotion. . . .

At one time I thought I would entitle my report, "The Beloved Grunts," but that would exclude a great number of heroic people who served in an important but different way than the infantry. My ministry here was primarily with the infantry Marines. It would be easy and expedient to use this means to pay tribute to the Marines of the Third Division. I am convinced that the American people have but small knowledge of what they have done here and what their contribution has been in this American effort on behalf of this needy people.

As I arrived in country I expected the worst and hoped for the best. Both my expectations and hopes were fulfilled. I shall always remember with pride and admiration my eight months with the Third Battalion, Fourth Marines. What a ministry! Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, great days for the Christian. Never have I felt closer to Almighty God or felt a greater spiritual communication with a group assembled than at those times. I can never be sure how the men I served felt, but I cannot remember a single divine service I conducted here that was not meaningful. I can only pray that the men derived even a small part of the great good that came to me. It was my ministry but God knows these men did much more for me than I did for them. The greatest reward I have ever received, the

best satisfaction derived, and the finest hour of inspiration was the greeting, "Hey Chaplain, are we glad to see you"; or, "Come back soon, Chaplain, we like having you with us." What more could anyone ask than that!

It was not only that chaplains appreciated serving with Marines; the reverse was often true also. The Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, penned this note on a memorandum of Force Chaplain John H. Craven to all chaplains in the Fleet Marine Force: "May I add a word. . . . The burdens and frustrations of the counterinsurgency war, and the consequent effect on our fighting men, are underscoring the critical importance of spiritual leadership. It is a big task that faces you, and you certainly have my full support."²

General Krulak was anticipating by two years a paragraph in a letter from the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., to the Chief of Chaplains, Rear Admiral James W. Kelly:

It is significant that in the spirit of mutual cooperation between the Marine Corps and the Navy Chaplain Corps, the Chaplains have endeavored to identify with the individual Marine. Although technically considered non-combatants, they have shared dangers, deprivations and adversities. By doing so, they have contributed immeasurably to any glories which may have accrued to our Corps and have been an exemplification of the personal readiness required of every Marine. While the Marine Corps is instrumental in the development of a man's esprit and physical readiness, the Chaplain must be the cultivator and guardian of that man's spiritual and mental readiness. As demonstrated daily in Southeast Asia, this is a difficult task but one the Chaplains have achieved and are achieving in an extraordinary manner.³

This level of Chaplain-Marine rapport was largely hammered out in the combat environment. Until the middle of August 1965, the Marine effort in Vietnam did not know a major operation in the field. There had been plenty of danger and certainly enough contact with the enemy but no regiment-size

operation. It was then, however, that the war began to accelerate and the slogging and sharing so often spoken about by chaplains in their reports began in earnest. The life of an infantryman, his platoon, company, and battalion was noteworthy for the wide variety of its experience. There was the heat, thirst, humping (walking) with a 35- to 40-pound pack on his back; the boredom, fear, blood, and death; and positions gained and abandoned as the shifting strategy of the strange conflict demanded. Only rarely was this pattern broken by what seemed truly pleasant things, such as letters from home or warm beer.

In the year from August 1965 to July 1966 the operations sped by one after the other as the war grew hotter in the southern I Corps Tactical Zone. By 15 August there was indication that the *1st Viet Cong Regiment*, about 2,000 strong, was concentrated south of Chu Lai, on the Van Tuong Peninsula, and the airfield was undoubtedly its target. To frustrate those plans an operation called Starlite was outlined. This, the first regiment-size operation since Korea, involved the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines; 3d Battalion, 3d Marines; and 3d Battalion, 7th Marines; led by the 7th Marines headquarters, all accompanied by their chaplains. The operation was a study in coordination. One company of one battalion made a river crossing from the north in amphibian tractors (LVTs), another battalion landed to the west from helicopters, and the third came in from the sea in an amphibious landing. By the 24th of August almost 1,000 Viet Cong casualties were counted.

After Starlite came a host of operations whose code names sped by with the fighting Marine hardly knowing the name of the operation he was currently on. Chaplains in the field shared the same response. One chaplain, when asked if he participated in a certain operation said, "Maybe I did. If my unit did then I did. All I know is that it seemed that once we went to the field we stayed there until I was medevaced."⁴ The operations were more successful at some times than others, but the success of the operation was almost incidental to the chaplain and his ministry. Somehow, cold statistics did not tell the whole story of the realities of field operations. The story, for instance, of Marines half-submerged behind a dike in a foul-smelling rice paddy while machine gun bullets cracked overhead. The story of chopper pilots coming to a landing zone at night

without lights to pick up a wounded Marine who had cheated death for 10 hours, and beside whom his chaplain had remained, cramped and cold, the entire time; the story of a Navy corpsman moving across the fire-swept battlefield to save an injured Marine rifleman only to become a casualty himself. These, along with the punji pits, boobytraps, mines, stifling humidity, and biting packstraps, were a few of the pictures of operational reality that statistical success or lack of it does not measure.

With the Wounded or on the Line?

A clear and constant question that persisted with the chaplain in combat with the infantry was: How do I serve both the wounded and the men on the line? Every operation is unique and different from any other. It is probably impossible to lay down a well-defined set of operational procedures for a chaplain in combat; he must be ready to serve whenever and however he can. It is in this crucible that the chaplain with Marines must display his particular genius. As the conflict began to speed up in the latter months of 1965, Lieutenant Commander Eugene M. Smith (Presbyterian Church in the U.S.) with the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, faced this ever-present dilemma when his battalion was engaged in Operation Rice Straw. He reported his solution:

The 3d Battalion, 3d Marines had been flown from Chu Lai to Da Nang to set up a blocking force for units already engaged in Operation Rice Straw. We were helo-lifted into our zone of operation, and the men quickly set a perimeter defense. I went in with the BAS (Battalion Aid Station) and our two battalion doctors. Shortly after our arrival in the area, and about dusk, one of our troopers was blown apart by a land mine. At first light the following morning our battalion commander, Colonel Muir, stepped on a land mine and was instantly killed. By this time we all realized we were in a mine field, and that the less movement we made the better-off we would be. I was very concerned for my men, I wanted to minister to their needs in some way, but it was obvious that I could not bring them together in any kind of group. So I slung my field combat kit over my shoulder, rosaries hanging from my belt and missals in my pack as I trooped the foxholes, giving communion where it was desired, praying with all, Catholic and Protestant alike, giving rosaries and missals. All Saturday morning I served the men on the perimeter. Saturday afternoon I climbed on a helicopter and flew to Charlie Med., which was to be the receiving area for our wounded. I remained there on duty all that afternoon and all that night to minister to any men of 3/3 who were brought in. Late in the evening an incident took place which pleased me very much, and seemed to indicate the wisdom of my

dual ministry. A Marine from 3/3 was brought in on a stretcher. After he was placed in the surgery and was awaiting attention, I leaned over him and started to talk. He began to smile and said, "Oh, you served me communion this morning." He was very pleased to see me, and seemed equally pleased that I had been ministering to him that morning. Needless to say, I felt very good about it also. The following morning I returned to the operations area and once again went out to a different company and served communion and ministered where and how I was able. I truly believe that my ministry on that particular operation was more effective than on any other operation I had been on.⁵

It was each combat chaplain's ideal to be with his men in the combat situation and also in their pain in injury and potential death, but that ideal was most difficult to maintain. If he had to choose, the chaplain's highest priority was his religious ministry to the wounded and dying. In World War II and in Korea during combat operations, the battalion chaplain was invariably to be found at the battalion aid station (BAS), receiving casualties as they arrived for treatment.⁶ In Vietnam, with extensive use of the medical-evacuation helicopter, personnel wounded in action were flown directly to medical aid centers: A Med, at Hue-Phu Bai; B Med at Chu Lai; C Med, the Naval Hospital at Da Nang; or offshore to the hospital ship *USS Repose* (AH 16). As a consequence, unit chaplains seldom saw their own wounded. Other Navy chaplains were necessary at these medical treatment points to insure that the religious dimensions of the Marines' lives would be fully served at this crucial time. On the occasion of a visit to C Med at Da Nang, the Commanding General, III MAF, Lieutenant General Lewis W. Walt, remarked to his staff chaplain, "It is a wonder to me and a source of deep pride in your Corps, to have wounded Marines tell me over and over again the first thing they remember on arrival or after surgery is talking to the chaplain."⁷

Early in the mid-year 1965 buildup, Chaplain O'Connor had addressed himself to the imperative need for a chaplain other than the unit chaplain to be available at all times at the medical collecting points which, in the age of the helicopter, meant the nearest field hospital. Lieutenant Commander C. Albert Vernon (Disciples of Christ), a volunteer for Vietnam duty, was one of the first chaplains assigned to the field hospital at Da Nang, where he and Chaplain O'Connor shared the duty, one or another of them remaining at the hospital 24 hours a day.

Chaplain Vernon wrote:

The casualties who were evacuated to Da Nang were either returned to their unit after treatment and released from the hospital or were medically evacuated via the Nha Trang, Saigon, Clark Air Force Base (Philippines), route to the United States. Chaplain O'Connor and I met each helicopter at the landing pad, day and night. In the early months many of the casualties were from heat exhaustion. The heat was unbearable. Salt tablets, ice water baths and rest would see most of these returned to their units in a few hours. Salt and malaria tablets were essential. The Marines who felt they did not need them were happy to follow the routine after one bout with exhaustion.

There were many heartbreaking incidents in these early weeks of the conflict. I learned during these weeks that a man who has mistakenly and accidentally killed his best friend needs a chaplain on the spot quickly, perhaps even more than when his friend has been killed by enemy action.⁸

Lieutenant Allen B. Craven (Southern Baptist), sent to Vietnam as an emergency replacement for Chaplain John Walker who had suffered an apparent heart attack, initially served Chaplain Walker's 3d Battalion, 9th Marines. When Chaplain Walker's trouble had been diagnosed as heat exhaustion and he was speedily returned to his battalion, Chaplain Craven was transferred to the field hospital to ease the burden upon Chaplains O'Connor and Vernon. Chaplain Craven's reflections on that duty indicate its pivotal importance to ministry in the combat environment:

At first...I found myself growing tense at the sound of a helicopter, afraid that more young Marines would be brought in with their bodies torn. But I soon sensed the great contribution a chaplain could make to these young men. The cross on the cap alone calmed and comforted. I will never forget the night one Marine was brought in. His abdomen was torn, his left lung collapsed, and his legs were shattered by shrapnel. I cannot praise the team of doctors and corpsmen highly enough. They brought the boy back from death's door. The boy was going in and out of coma and thrashing about wildly. I asked the doctor if I could talk to him and he asked me to please try. I took his hand and talking into his ear told him I was the chaplain. His eyes flickered open and he saw the cross on my cap. He immediately calmed down but my hand was in his the rest of the night. Each time I tried to remove it he would start to move around and grip my hand even tighter. I went with him to X-ray, was gowned and then accompanied him into the operating room. He was evacuated before he could recognize the things around him and he will never remember my hand in his that night, but the look in his eyes when he saw my cross, and the grip of his hand, can never be erased from my mind.⁹

The constant ministry available to the casualties at the medical evaluation points made possible by

assigning chaplains directly to them, greatly eased the anxiety of the battalion chaplain concerned for his men and released him to continue his ministry on the operation.

Combat Activity at Chu Lai

Chu Lai remained the hub of activity in South Vietnam from August 1965 to April 1966, in terms of battalion and multi-battalion, amphibious and heliborne combat operations. Beginning with Operation Starlite, 17-24 August 1965, six major multi-battalion operations were to take place before Operation Indiana was concluded on 30 March. Piranha (6-10 September 1965), Blue Marlin I & II (8-18 November 1965), Harvest Moon (9-21 December 1965), and Double Eagle I and II (20-25 March 1966) represent the code names of the six largest operations to occur during the period near the Chu Lai enclave.

The necessity of amphibious support for some of the operations created problems for chaplain coverage. On Operation Piranha for instance, the 1st and 3d Battalions, 7th Marines were scheduled for a three day search and destroy mission on Batangan Peninsula and the *Princeton* was assigned to support the operations, receiving and treating casualties as they were helilifted aboard from combat areas ashore. The support function of LPHs of the amphibious force, centering as it did upon delivery of Marines to the combat zone and then standing by offshore to receive casualties, created a requirement for additional chaplain services. Customarily the helicopter landing ship carried a single chaplain. Reinforced battalions, embarked as passengers for a joint Navy-Marine Corps amphibious operation, usually had their unit chaplains with them. Together, the ship and battalion chaplains, usually two in number, provided for the spiritual needs of ship's company and passengers. Since mid-1964, when the landing team concept was fully applied in Southeast Asian waters, chaplains had cooperated in such joint coverage. But with Operation Piranha and subsequent similar combat missions, requirements for religious coverage changed. For the first time the landing teams actually debarked to engage in combat. Passenger chaplains went with their troops. With the requirement to stand by for receiving casualties a need for the broadest possible religious coverage arose onboard the LPH. Both Protestant and Roman Catholic chaplains, as a minimum, were

needed to minister to casualties. In time amphibious squadron (PhibRon) chaplains, usually moving with their ships in the company of the LPHs, were instructed to move aboard the larger ship during combat to provide a ministry to casualties. The amphibious force chaplain, Captain Malcolm S. Carpenter (United Methodist) recommended to the Chief of Chaplains that of the two chaplains assigned to each PhibRon and LPH respectively, one should be Roman Catholic. Approval of Chaplain Carpenter's recommendation eventually assured that Protestant and Roman Catholic chaplains were always available to the LPHs for the ministry to casualties.

During Operation Piranha however, Chaplain Carpenter's recommendation had not yet been implemented. The *Princeton*, in company with other amphibious ships of the SLF, had carried BLT 3/7 since 9 July. The battalion landing team, after an amphibious landing, had resumed its offshore position as the ready battalion of the SLF. Four chaplains gave religious coverage to embarked personnel. Commander Willie D. Powell (Southern Baptist) was the *Princeton* chaplain. Lieutenant Robert L. Bigler (United Presbyterian) was the PhibRon 5 chaplain. Lieutenant Commander Gerard W. Taylor (Roman Catholic) with the main body of MAG-36 was a passenger on board the *Princeton*. When Operation Piranha began, Lieutenant Ralph C. Betters (United Presbyterian) accompanied BLT 3/7 in MAG-36 helicopters to establish a blocking position at the base of the peninsula. Already ashore, Chaplain Taylor had to return to the *Princeton* to provide Catholic coverage for any casualties evacuated to the operating rooms of the ship during the operation. BLT 1/7 with Lieutenant John R. McNamara (Roman Catholic) was making an amphibious assault on the beaches at the northern tip of Batangan Peninsula, and beginning the push along the length of the Viet Cong infested strip of vegetation-covered, jungle-patched terrain. This was the first of three major combat operations for both Chaplain McNamara and Chaplain Betters and the one on which American Marines sustained the lightest casualties. BLT 1/7, in company with Vietnamese Marines and ARVN soldiers on its flanks, drove forward to search the countryside and the villages. The Viet Cong were entrenched in caves and underground tunnels reminiscent of the Japanese fortifications on Iwo Jima in World War II.

During the four-day land operation, the Viet Cong lost 198 men killed in action and eight men wounded. The accomplishment of Operation Piranha was that a traditional Viet Cong stronghold, Batangan Peninsula, less than 15 miles from the airstrip at Chu Lai, was made temporarily secure.

It was significant that several chaplains reported extending their ministry to Viet Cong dead and wounded on successive operations near Chu Lai. Bodies of Viet Cong were collected following each engagement for mass burial by American troops. Respect for the dead enemy was enhanced by brief funeral services conducted by chaplains. Viet Cong wounded were recovered from the field of battle. They were given medical treatment by Navy physicians and corpsmen and a ministry by a Navy chaplain. Chaplain Taylor remembered:

Two Marines were wounded and several Viet Cong were killed, two of them on our flight line. Not knowing what their religion was I gave conditional last rites. Later one of the Viet Cong was brought to our sick bay, regained consciousness and told me through an interpreter that he was Catholic. He was just a young lad, and from what I could gather he had been picked up in some small hamlet and forced to come along with the Viet Cong. He died later on that night.¹⁰

The import of these humanitarian acts lay not only in the chaplains' willingness to extend their ministry even to a deadly enemy, such had been the case with enemy wounded for generations of Navy chaplains, but also that their commanders readily approved the humanitarian acts as appropriate and right and extended their efforts to support such ministries. The philosophical stance that one should do one's enemy the least amount of injury necessary under the circumstances seemed to permeate the thinking of many field commanders. It was a natural extension of the concept of limited warfare and was closely tied to the growing realization that the war in Vietnam would be finally won only when the indigenous population was convinced that their best interests lay in strong support of the Saigon government. Guerrilla warfare, it soon became apparent, was inevitably a war of attrition. Nevertheless, where it was possible to do so, enemy lives were spared. Concern for the best interests of the Vietnamese people also expressed itself in other ways. Chaplain McNamara wrote:

Another example of sincere interest in the people was the great effort by our command to be as humanitarian as

possible in combat. The troopers exercised great fire discipline. Once some fleeing Viet Cong snatched children as shields. Our Executive Officer, Major Max J. Hockenauer, refused permission to fire. For a Marine Sharpshooter they were easy targets. The major's decision was made out of concern for possible injury to the children. Another time a patrol refused to return fire that came from an enemy [having] seen women and children in the area. The people sense the fairness and compassion of such action and respond accordingly.¹¹

Lieutenant John J. Glynn (Roman Catholic) with 2d Battalion, 4th Marines and Chaplain Taylor, in times of relative quiet, extended their ministry to South Vietnamese Catholics, many of whom had been without the ministry of their church for several months. Chaplain Glynn said:

Once it was determined that several hundred Catholics lived in the various hamlets and villages near Chu Lai, it was decided to send out word by the village chiefs that Catholic Mass would be said in the area by a squad of Marines. Late one summer afternoon, we drove to the school house in the settlement of An Tan to find over a hundred people gathered there. After a very touching speech of welcome read by an elder and translated by an ARVN interpreter, we offered what was to become the first of a series of weekly Masses in the local hamlets.¹²

Lieutenant George S. Goad (Southern Baptist) with the 7th Marines reported similar contacts by Protestant chaplains at Chu Lai; he recalled:

Protestant chaplains undertook a project to construct a church for a Protestant congregation in the village of Chu Lai. Our primary support was to be the provision of funds for the construction. Among the very interesting things we learned were that such construction required the approval of the District and Province Chiefs. These men were reluctant at first to approve the project unless they could be done for Catholic, Buddhist and Cao Dai congregations in the village.¹³

In this instance approval was finally granted and the funds raised. It became apparent that the chaplain should release the funds only in small amounts rather than the entire sum at once. The total amount, relatively small to Americans, was overwhelmingly large to the Vietnamese. They seemed unable to cope with the problem of the efficient expenditure of so much money at one time. The first increment was presented to the congregation in a special service conducted in the village. Wisdom dictated the necessity of placing the pastor and two of his laymen very much to the fore during this special service. Every attempt was made to enlist

the congregation in a renewed support of that confidence in the local paper. Marine units were learning the principles of their civic action on the job.

During this period chaplains were most often introduced to combat activity almost immediately upon arrival. In August 1968, Lieutenant Arthur D. Seeland (United Methodist) arrived to relieve Chaplain Smith of the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines. When he arrived in Da Nang, he was initially assigned by the III MAF Chaplain to C Med as a relief for Chaplain DeBock, who had returned to the United States on an emergency leave occasioned by the accidental death of his brother.

When 10 days later, Chaplain Seeland was assigned to 3d Battalion, 3d Marines the battalion was engaged in Operation Rice Straw and Golden Fleece. His tenure at Chu Lai, like that of this battalion, was to be very brief but action-packed. He participated in numerous multi-company operations and the battalion operation, Triple Play (18-19 October), before his battalion was ordered on board the USS *Paul Revere* (APA 1248) to prepare for participation in Operation Blue Marlin, the first joint U.S. Marine-Vietnamese Marine assault landing a few miles north of Chu Lai.

BLT 2/7, whose chaplain was Lieutenant Walter A. Hiskett (Lutheran), a Marine infantry squad leader in 2/7 during the Korean War, also participated in Operation Blue Marlin I, in which the landing force conducted a search and destroy mission to secure a Viet Cong-infested area south of the enclave.¹⁴ Blue Marlin I and Blue Marlin II continued from 8-18 November to secure Highway No. 1 north of Chu Lai. Chaplain Hiskett's unit took up new, semi-permanent positions at Chu Lai in a previously constructed compound, which had a small chapel in the battalion CP area. It was constructed of native materials and had been removed forward to new perimeters. Chaplain Hiskett noted that the chapel was no longer adequate and so, even with the pressure of combat operations, the Marines decided something should be done. Chaplain Hiskett reported:

The men decided to contribute toward building a new chapel which would be large and erected at a more desirable location. We did this and the new chapel was completed by Christmas Eve, when the highlight of religious services for me in Vietnam occurred. The men decorated the chapel with Christmas trees, evergreen branches and red candles. I think this was the most moving Christmas service I have ever experienced. When we mov-

ed the CP to our new location, almost two months later, we also moved our chapel.

Attendance at religious services, both Catholic and Protestant has been outstanding. I owe much of the success to the command of all levels who encourage their men in both word and example. The Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Leon Utter, USMC, takes part in the service every Sunday.¹⁵

Chaplain Participation in Major Operations

Chaplains centered on a few major operations as especially significant, mostly from the point of view of encountering problems of coordination of ministry in the field and to the wounded.

One of the most ambitious operations during this period was called Harvest Moon. West of Chu Lai and 30 miles south of Da Nang in the Hiep Duc/Viet An/Que Son region, the Viet Cong controlled a rice-filled valley 10 miles wide at the mouth and stretching 20 miles inland from the coast. It was bordered by steep hills and jungle-covered mountains on each side. ARVN troops were positioned in heavily fortified emplacements in strategic locations in the valley. Intelligence indicated a massive buildup of enemy troops because the *1st Viet Cong Regiment*, three separate VC battalions, two local force VC companies, and smaller attached units attacked and overran the ARVN position at Que Son, forcing its abandonment.

Three U.S. Marine battalions were selected to join four ARVN battalions to sweep the valley and destroy VC capability for offensive action in the area. One battalion from Chu Lai, the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines was chosen for the operation. The 3d Battalion, 3d Marines recently repositioned in Da Nang from Chu Lai, and the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines embarked in the Amphibious Ready Group as the Special Landing Force, were the two remaining combat battalions participating. Chaplain Hiskett came in with his battalion by helicopter while Chaplain Seeland moved into the area with the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines by truck convoy. Accompanying him was Chaplain Gibson of Fleet Logistics Support Group, who provided Catholic coverage. The 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, accompanied by Lieutenant Thomas B. Handley (Southern Baptist) was also flown into the valley by helicopter in the classical vertical envelopment movement.

On 8 December the battalions were in position and began their sweep through the valley. They

began uncovering caches of food and found scores of weapons. The 3d Marines was first to come under intense fire when Company L approached a hill through adjacent rice paddies. The VC sprang an ambush and the fierce firefight continued for 1½ hours. Air support was called in, the Marines stormed the hill and engaged the heavily entrenched, heavily armed enemy troops. Chaplains Seeland and Gibson attended Company L's casualties.

The following day the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines landed by helicopter to join the push through the valley. Heavy resistance continued near the mouth of the valley but the battalions succeeded in routing VC defenders. Sweeping through the valley, the three battalions captured tons of equipment, factories for the manufacture of clothing and for the publication of propaganda documents, and huge caches of food and ammunition.

As the operation continued, Lieutenant Commander Joe E. Davis (Southern Baptist) and Lieutenant Commander John C. Keenon (United Methodist) of the helicopter landing ship USS *Valley Forge* (LPH 8) and amphibious force flagship USS *Eldorado* (AGC 11), ministered to casualties evacuated by helicopter to the hospital facilities of the Amphibious Ready Group. In the final days of the first week they began to see more cases of immersion foot sustained by Marines who had been wading for days in the valley's rice paddies searching out the enemy. Punji traps also represented a major hazard for infantry Marines. It was a miserable conflict, a dirty war of boobytraps, ambushes, hit and run tactics, and a frustrating continually-moving enemy.

At the operation's midpoint Chaplain Scanlon (Roman Catholic) and Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Peter D. MacLean (Episcopal) were sent to join the medical company which had been formed to accompany 3d Battalion, 3d Marines into the field. Like Chaplains Gibson and Seeland who had preceded them, they spent the remaining days of the operation receiving the wounded at the medical company before the casualties were medically evacuated to field hospitals in Chu Lai and Da Nang, to the *Valley Forge* and to the hospital ship *Repose*.

By 15 December enemy resistance had dwindled to sporadic small arms fire. The enemy dead count was placed in excess of 1,000 Viet Cong confirmed killed with even larger numbers sustaining wounds and being carried or dragged away by their comrades. Hundreds of tunnels and bunker-emplaced

guns were destroyed. A regiment and three separate VC battalions had been rendered incapable of sustaining the fight. Que Son and other ARVN positions were secure.

The 3d Battalion, 3d Marines and 2d Battalion, 1st Marines with supporting companies of other battalions, and Chaplains Seeland, Scanlon, Gibson, MacLean, and Handley, were helilifted out of the valley and returned to Da Nang and the Amphibious Ready Group respectively.

From Que An, the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines retraced its sweep path searching for the *80th VC Battalion*, covering 30 kilometers on foot in 2½ days. At the end of the second day of the battalion's return to the mouth of the valley, a furious ambush firefight occurred which was to compare in intensity to any engagement of the operation, and was to be the last big battle of Harvest Moon. Along the hill line near the village of Ky Phu, two companies of approximately 300 Viet Cong had regrouped and re-equipped themselves. They were lightly dug in and lay in waiting for the long column of 2/7 troops to pass before them. Company G led the way, followed by two platoons of Company F and H&S Company, and the remainder of the battalion. The Viet Cong permitted Company G to proceed past them and opened fire on the following platoons of Company F and H&S Company with mortars and machine guns, attempting to divide the column and destroy the headquarters command echelon in the first burst of fire. Many casualties were sustained in the first moments of the ambush. Chaplain Hiskett, marching with H&S Company, the first to be fired upon, dropped into the cover of the nearest rice paddy dike. He landed in the heavy mud, on his back, burying the heavy pack which he carried on his shoulders. Later he told III MAF Chaplain Garrett that he was like a turtle on its back, since the suction vacuum of the heavy mud made it extremely difficult to right himself. As he did so, Lieutenant Colonel Utter had given orders deploying the battalion, and Company F was driving back through the town, killing VC at a distance of 4 to 10 yards. The Viet Cong were attempting to encircle H&S Company. Chaplain Hiskett had made his way to the side of a house in Ky Phu, in the midst of heavy fire and took position beside a large concrete urn. Seeing a broken window in the house, he threw his pack inside and followed it. Shortly afterwards, he ventured forth again, "moving from position to position, from

squad to squad, from Marine to Marine" providing encouragement to the embattled infantry men.¹⁶

It was three hours before Companies F and G and the rear guard reinforcing platoons stormed the VC positions and routed the enemy. The situation then clarified a bit and casualties could be evacuated to the house on the main street of Ky Phu which became the place of Hiskett's ministry of consolation and personal encouragement throughout the evening and into the night. He remarked that when he later examined the concrete urn beside which he had taken cover, he discovered that it had a neat six-inch hole through it, on line with where he had lain.

After the fight, 105 VC bodies had been counted. Two wounded VC soldiers taken captive revealed that the enemy force were indeed from the North Vietnamese-manned *80th Viet Cong Battalion*, for which the 7th Marines had been given permission to search. After an uneventful night at Ky Phu the battalion moved to a suitable helicopter landing zone for the return to Chu Lai.

Operation Double Eagle, extending from 28 January to 1 March 1966, represented the largest Marine operation of the war to that date. This was true of the chaplain participation also. Phase I began at dawn on 28 January in Quang Ngai Province, almost 20 miles southeast of Quang Ngai City. North Vietnamese regular units were known to be operating freely in the area and Task Force Delta, augmented by the Amphibious Ready Group/Special Landing Force, and appropriate support units, was assigned the search and destroy mission. Chaplains Morton and Kahal, from division headquarters in Da Nang, joined Lieutenant Commander Nilus W. Hubble (Roman Catholic) of Task Force Delta to provide broad religious coverage for the operation. Chaplain Frank Morton, the division chaplain, climbed the nets with Chaplain Hubble and made the amphibious landing. Hubble later reflected:

Frank's usual indomitable spirit and "can do" attitude saw me through this episode as well as the next few days. It was much better to see such things in the movies and recalled Chaplain Cy Rotrige's remark when I was leaving San Francisco, "Remember you wrote the letter volunteering for this. We did not send you against your will."¹⁷

The task force comprised the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, with Lieutenant Raymond Swierenga, (Christian Reformed) attached; the 2d Battalion, 9th

Marines with Lieutenant Patrick J. Dowd (Roman Catholic); and the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, whose Chaplain, Lieutenant Henry K. Loeffler (Lutheran), arrived in Vietnam just as Phase I of Operation Double Eagle began. Chaplain Dowd, recently transferred to the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, came down from Da Nang to join the operation. He wrote:

Upon reporting to the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, I was in for a new experience! I had a pretty good idea what to expect in a line unit, but within the first two weeks I was out on Operation Double Eagle. I learned first how to pack a pack and carry one. It was at this time that I really got a good look at the life of the "grunt." I had always had great respect for these men, but this put all the finishing touches on it. The greatest and bravest men I know are the men in the line companies. They don't live; they exist. All they want is for someone to at least recognize the fact that they exist, asking for little more. Every day they wake from too little sleep, faced with another day which might just be their last. They eat C-rations three times a day; body odor doesn't bother them any longer. There are only two luxuries that interest them, mail and warm beer. I marvel at these men. I wish there was a special medal just for them. These are the MEN.¹⁸

Chaplain Loeffler's battalion, 3/1, while not designated as the Special Landing Force, was embarked in amphibious ships and made an amphibious assault landing in Quang Ngai Province. The battalion, after leaving Okinawa for Vietnam in mid-January, participated in Operation Hilltop in the Philippines in preparatory training for Operation Double Eagle. Chaplain Loeffler was riding in ships of PhibRon-5 with Lieutenant Richard C. Harnett (Roman Catholic) and Lieutenant Robert L. Bigler (United Presbyterian) attached. At sea, all chaplains highlined to provide Catholic and Protestant Communion services for all troops in the convoy. In the early morning of 28 January just before loading the 'Mike' boats, devotions were held in all ships' troop compartments. The Marines then landed in South Vietnam and the operation was begun. Chaplain Loeffler recalled:

After camping in a semi-CP situation on the beach for a week with three sites and four major holes to be dug, my Battalion Commander requested that I join a small, two-company search and clear operation in the highlands. With the gear that can be put in a pack, an altar kit and sometimes a clerk, I began my most intimate acquaintance with the joys of the infantry, hot and cold, wet and dry. I began what was to become my practice on all exercises and operations. Evening Prayers, which consisted of small groups gathered together to hear scripture and to pray for home and help. Every Sunday in the field to crawl from

Marine to Marine to serve the elements as in the middle of the service a sniper opened up on the company CP and held us all below three feet. Sniper fire was as commonplace as inclement weather, and it seemed that every weekend became the occasion for the first-rate rainstorm.¹⁹

After the chaplain and his battalion came out of the field they had one day to begin unloading at Chu Lai when they were recommitted to what became Double Eagle II. They were to march another 10 long days in the hills of South Vietnam. At Chu Lai Chaplain Loeffler requisitioned a can of small altar breads, with the standard 300 in a can, to replenish his supplies for Ash Wednesday field communion. The supply system sometimes makes mistakes. They sent only one bottle of wine, in accordance with this requisition, but instead of a small can of 300 host-wafers the Marine supply system came through with 300 full-sized loaves of bread.

In spite of recurring night mortars the chaplain's pattern for worship continued, with evening prayer services if they did not march into the night, and Sunday Communion when possible. While slogging and sharing a chaplain soon learned to carry only essentials in his combat kit. A helmet, for instance, often doubled nicely as a fine baptismal bowl.

Three chaplains on board ships of Amphibious Ready Group/Special Landing Force during Operation Double Eagle were Lieutenant Commander Joe A. Davis (Southern Baptist) and Lieutenant John W. Pegnam (Roman Catholic) in the *Valley Forge*, and Lieutenant Edwin V. Bohula (Roman Catholic), who rode the USS *Montrose* with his troops of the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines. Following the battalion on this operation gives another vivid picture of chaplain participation in a major movement.

The 2d Battalion, 3d Marines was not involved in the initial landings of Operation Double Eagle, but a day later it was helilifted deep in country. The battalion landed at an old French airstrip and met no resistance. Almost immediately it formed up and started marching. This first march was well remembered since the Marines walked all day and suffered quite a few heat casualties. The helicopters picked up these men as the battalion was traveling fast. Chaplain Bohula wrote:

The pace was terrific and the heat was intense. By the end of the day we had all just about had it. Thank heaven we had to ford a stream waist deep just prior to settling for the night. As on all operations we slept on the ground

under the stars. The next day we started walking again but we first had to recross the stream which meant we walked all day with wet clothes and shoes, since we crossed more streams.²⁰

Half of the force started out and half were to start out a few hours later. The chaplain was with the first half. After a while the heat casualties began to come again and the doctor, corpsman, two others, and the chaplain remained with them, waiting for helicopters to pick them up and for the rear personnel to come up and join them.

After about an hour explosions were heard as Hueys attacked in the vicinity of the forward positions of 2d Battalion, 3d Marines and jets bombed and strafed the area. The forward echelon was ambushed and air strikes were called in. The group with the heat casualties was alone with one machine gun, one rifle, and two pistols and was in a precarious position. An hour or so later the rear guard came up on them and joined the forward elements. The unit dug in beyond a neck-deep river to avoid being entrapped. Its radios by this time were useless since the batteries were worn out. The battalion was unable to contact anyone. Chaplain Bohula remembered:

We crawled over hills, through marshes, and across rice paddies all night. It was pitch black and the trek was almost unbearable. Apparently the artillery had word that we were returning another way and our path was being shelled by H&I fire. Pitch black, rough terrain, and the frequent whine of shells marked the whole night.²¹

As they neared the base snipers fired at them from a farm house, a fatal error since the place was immediately demolished. The weary Marines stumbled into the base camp and sought rest and water. The chaplain held services, and in about three hours the men formed up again and mounted out on another strike by helicopter. As they were taking off, snipers opened up and two helicopters were hit and the one had its gunner killed. When they were landed at the objective, jets were strafing the area, and a couple of Marines were hit by projectiles from a jet which started its run early. Corpsmen and the chaplain attended them immediately.

The next few days were spent mopping up villages and marching through the day. At one point the men boarded amtracs to go by water. Again they walked and climbed, and settled in to await a join-up with other forces, wrapped in ponchos for the cold and clammy night. Chaplain Bohula reported:

Since we were to remain in this area for a few days I caught a copter out to the LPH to get my Mass gear, visit the sick and also visit the *Repose*. It took forever to hitch a ride. With my gear in tow I hopped rides to other units in the area who had no Catholic Chaplain. It was just hit and miss, and running from one unit to another by copter entailed long waits. I was grateful, though, for the C-rations which were always waiting at the units visited. I never knew whether I'd get back to my people at night or even for the next several days. I said Mass on large rocks, C-ration cartons, and even in a hole with the ground before me as the altar. But we held services and the turnout was gratifying even though the men were dead tired.

About mid-February it was hoped the battalion would get a breather in Hong Kong . . . but their hopes were short-lived since they just steamed around for a couple of days to give us time to get combat ready again. Then word came that Phase II of Double Eagle was going into effect. Once again they were transferred to the LPH via the rope nets and in full pack, and took off into VC territory.²²

Phase II of Operation Double Eagle was another search and destroy mission, but this time north of Chu Lai, in the vicinity of the village of Tam Ky in Quang Tin Province. ComUSMACV had requested that the Amphibious Ready Group/Special Landing Force remain in the area, following Phase I, to give support for Phase II operations. Phase I terminated on 17 February and Phase II continued from 19 February to 1 March.

Chaplain Bohula recalled the rapid landing, take-off patterns of the helicopters when the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines was recommitted:

My luck was to have our copter land in the middle of a rice paddy and as I jumped out I went waist deep in the muck. The first minute in the field on a new operation and I smelled 'like that' again. We walked and climbed over hills. Snipers worked us over but prisoners, weapons and supplies were taken. Phase II was another series of long treks, wet, hot dusty treks. Leeches were all over us from the paddies. The rains came at this point as on the other operations, and we were wet day and night. I was lucky to get to the LPH to get my Mass gear replenished and also to get some ashes for Ash Wednesday. It was during this time that the headquarters was hit and our S2 and S3 were hit. Other nearby units sustained heavier losses.²³

Chaplain Bohula was out forward because his colonel wished it so. Since there were chaplains on the beach at the aid station, in the LPH, and in the *Repose*, there was reason for him to follow his colonel's desire. If any one of these places had been short a chaplain, he would undoubtedly have stayed in the rear. During Phases I and II of Double Eagle, these circumstances caused the chaplain of 2d Bat-

talion, 3d Marines to become a familiar face around the transportation and supply points. Coming in and catching copters to the different units' positions became routine. For the most part he took care of his own men but if there was a chopper going to other units who requested a Mass he would go up and work his way back. The control tower did its best to line him up on the first supply run. Without this aid and interest it would probably have been impossible to do half of what needed to be done.

During the latter half of Operation Double Eagle, Lieutenant Lowell M. Malliett (Nazarene) and Lieutenant Walter J. Blank (Roman Catholic) arrived from Okinawa assigned to the 11th Marines and remained with the operation throughout the month, covering artillery units at their scattered locations.

Early in the operation various smaller units taking part in it boarded ships and helicopters and were landed about 10 miles further south along the coast. Chaplain coverage became more of a problem. Some infantry battalions were broken into separate companies or smaller detachments and moved in various directions, some being separated by as much as 15 miles.

Chaplain Hiskett participated in both Harvest Moon and Double Eagle II. His experiences in the two operations highlights the necessity for rapid adjustments by chaplains in this conflict. He began slogging with the rifle companies until he discovered that he was ultimately more necessary at the medical aid station. He describes it as follows:

I travelled with the B.A.S. as a part of the Command Group. The day before the operation was to end the battalion made solid contact as a result of a V.C. guerrilla band set up in ambush. After being pinned down by small arms, machine gun fire, and mortars for over an hour we were finally able to maneuver into a village and set up a Battalion Aid Station. Because of the tactical deployment of the troops and the fact that we were on the move most of the time it was impossible to conduct religious services but I did visit with as many of the men as I could under the circumstances.²⁴

Because of these experiences, on subsequent operations the battalion commander felt that Chaplain Hiskett should station himself at the medical unit to which the wounded would be primarily evacuated. The reasoning behind this was that most operations were lasting only a few days, and due to the tactical deployment of troops the chaplain would be in contact with a relatively small number of troops in the command group. Almost all



Photo courtesy of Chaplain Edwin V. Bohula

Chaplain Edwin V. Bohula in the vehicle assigned to him at Da Nang. In the rear is his clerk, Cpl Earl Benner, and the driver, LCpl Rosales, who frequently rode "shotgun."

casualties are evacuated by helicopter from the area in which their individual unit was operating; therefore, the chaplain would have little opportunity to minister to the wounded and dying. This, of course, was not a firm policy and could be adjusted if the situation warranted. On operations lasting more than two or three days, the chaplain would accompany the troops in the field.

Following Operation Double Eagle, the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines returned to Da Nang, taking up a position on the perimeter which had shortly before been vacated by the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines. Chaplain Bohula reported:

I was amazed at the changes in the Da Nang area since we left in November. There seemed to be more of everything and the roads were wide and decent. Being the only Catholic Chaplain in the regiment I was assigned to cover units other than my own. It was a blessing that my Colonel insisted that I have a Mighty Mite to myself to give spiritual help to all the units.

It was also a great help in getting my personal affairs in

order for my detachment. At my own camp, the chapel was set up and a GP strongbacked tent was erected and connected to the chapel for my successor. All in all I left Vietnam with little reluctance. It was rewarding work. It was hot; it was dusty; it was uncomfortable. But it was real apostolic work—an opportunity that comes to few men.²³

Chaplain Bohula remained in Da Nang until late March when Lieutenant Commander Leonard L. Ahrnsbrak (Assemblies of God) was relieved at B Med in Chu Lai for reassignment by the 3d Marine Division. Chaplain Ahrnsbrak had been in Vietnam since December and had served at the field hospital in Chu Lai. When the 1st Marine Division moved in country in late March, and took operational control of the Chu Lai chaplains, their units, and the enclave TAOR, 3d Marine Division chaplains were restored to their division. The result was that manning B Med became the responsibility of 1st Marine Division Chaplain, Captain John L. Wissing (Roman Catholic) and he assigned Chaplains Ahrnsbrak and

Lieutenant Commander Thomas P. Kenny (Roman Catholic). Chaplain Ahrnsbrak's brief tour of duty with a field hospital was terminated in March and he was reassigned as Chaplain Bohula's relief in the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines. He welcomed the change from Chu Lai's B Med Field Hospital to a line battalion. He stated:

It was my hope in coming to Vietnam to be assigned to a line battalion. The time spent in the medical battalion had allowed me to prepare for the ministry to the wounded and dying that became a frequent occurrence in the months ahead. The frustrations of guerrilla warfare became suddenly apparent to me. During the first three months in our TAOR, one company took a number of KIAs and many WIAs from booby traps only. It was hard on the troops to see their buddies 'blown away' by an unseen enemy. After a few weeks of hearing the explosions, watching the med-evac being effected, scanning the med-evac roster to see who was hit, the frustrations continued to build.²⁶

In early summer the battalion was called on to expand the TAOR, and moved to Dai Loc District. Since there were fewer mines and booby traps there, and the companies had opportunity to actually see the enemy and engage him, morale and attitudes improved greatly. Prior to the move they had learned how hard it was to lose casualties constantly to an unseen enemy. Chaplain Ahrnsbrak showed that frustration. By spending as much time as was feasible in the company positions, he became very close to the companies. During operations, this closeness proved to be a great asset in ministering to the wounded and dying. The days spent in the medical battalion prepared him well for the ministry to casualties when med-evacs were not possible or were delayed. The ministry out in the field on an operation was not just to the casualties, although until the med-evac was completed this became first in importance, but also to the medical staff and the close buddies of the casualty after the evac had been completed. He remembered:

I have seen and shared the heartbreak and frustration of a young doctor who did all he could to save a life under a jungle canopy, only to have the man die of wounds. After attending the dead and having bodies moved, while awaiting other casualties to be brought in, the doctor and the hospital-men need a spiritual ministry. Often this is nothing more than the sharing of the sorrow together. At such times empathy is far more meaningful than words.²⁷

Combat operations were not civic action oriented but chaplains were discovering that in Vietnam at-

ention to the Vietnamese population was always crucial. When Lieutenant Max E. Dunks (Southern Baptist) and Lieutenant Commander Robert C. Franklin (Roman Catholic) were positioned at the battalion aid station in the An Hoa CP area, some office buildings were vacated by the Vietnamese engineers, and because of previous positive contacts, one was graciously given to them to be used for a battalion aid station. During Operation Georgia, the battalion aid station was used as a collection and clearing station for the wounded and sick before they were evacuated to the appropriate medical facility. On several occasions there were as many as 20 wounded men at the aid station for emergency medical treatment. Many men were brought in to be treated for heat exhaustion.

After his experience on Operation Georgia, Chaplain Franklin held that a chaplain—in fact anyone—can communicate his interest in the Vietnamese people as fellow human beings essentially through the exercise of the words of mercy and actions prompted by mere common sense. Assuming that spiritual ministrations are impossible due to differences in religion or other circumstances, the chaplain can at least help comfort the parents of a wounded child. Chaplain Franklin remembered several incidents:

While the 3d Battalion was on Operation Georgia at An Hoa, a little boy was brought into the Battalion Aid Station with both legs severely burned and infected. His parents were terribly distraught and on the point of tears. I took them aside while the doctors and corpsmen were working on the child, gave them a seat in the shade, some cold water, and sat with them trying to convince them that the child would be all right and was getting the best of care. Finally, through an interpreter this was explained at length and they were terribly thankful to me and expressed their appreciation with the "prayerful hands gesture." On another occasion, a wounded Vietnamese soldier was brought in the Aid Station. An interpreter explained I was a Catholic priest. The soldier was Buddhist. While the doctor and corpsmen worked on him, I bathed his face with water, cleaned the blood and grime from around his mouth with my right hand; the left hand he grasped firmly and would not let go.²⁸

Operation Georgia also involved Lieutenant Roger K. Hansen (Lutheran) who arrived in January and was assigned to the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines, to work with Lieutenant Commander Otto E. Kenzler, Jr. (United Methodist). Chaplain Hansen quickly became aware of the fact that artillery emplacements in guerrilla warfare are frequently located on what

might be the front lines. He learned that artillerymen provided their own perimeter security. When walking from post to post at night and learning to sign out when challenged, he became a familiar part of the *modus operandi*, and staying with the troops at night became routine. He reported:

On Hill 55 one of our mortar batteries had moved in and I wanted to be with them. A problem arose in that everytime I visited that battery, the VC would decide that it was a good night to probe and mortar the position. That first night as they hit I tried for what seemed an eternity to get my trousers on. Just why I had to have my trousers on I do not know, but finally the feet slipped through the openings and I remember thinking, "At least I won't die with my pants off." This kind of thing happened the first three times I stayed at this position. The fourth time I went out they jokingly said, "If we get hit again tonight, Chaplain, we are not going to let you come out any more."²⁷

Fortunately for his reputation, it did not happen that night. The next day he moved from position to position to conduct services under a sun that caused temperatures to soar to 136 degrees. After walking up and down the roads that were literally boot-deep dust, the worship with the troops and the swim in the lake nearby were among those things which will long live in the chaplain's memory. The swim was always good for washing out sweat-soaked clothes, and the ingenuity of the men to improvise with C-rations, adding rice purchased from the Vietnamese, made an otherwise ordinary meal seem like a banquet. Mail, good chow, a chance to catch some kind of shower or bath in a stream or lake, cool refreshments on a hot day, and the knowledge of when they could expect to go home, all these made for high morale in the men in the midst of some very difficult circumstances.

Adaptability and Patience

The composite experience of coordinating combat ministry was working in the hearts and heads of all the chaplains so involved. In one, Chaplain Nilus W. Hubble, it broke into expression. The assignment as Regimental Chaplain, 4th Marines, and later at Company A, 3d Medical Battalion prepared Chaplain Hubble for the writing of a lengthy study he called, "The Role of the Chaplains in a Multi-Battalion Operation." In it he clarifies several of the most troublesome areas of the combat chaplain's frustration. He introduced his thoughts in a

characteristically brief manner; "Schedules were fluid, conditions varied. Adaptability became the word for the day. Patience became a necessity."³⁰

Chaplain Hubble acknowledged that conditions and troop movements varied from operation to operation, and he realized that the chaplain in combat needed to exercise his own ingenuity and dedication in the light of his personal interpretation of his mission. Nevertheless, Chaplain Hubble felt that the basic combat role of the chaplain remained the same and that certain guidelines could be stated.

Whenever possible, it was advantageous for the task force chaplain to talk with battalion chaplains as well as their commanding officers prior to the beginning of an operation, meeting with agreement on where the chaplain would be. This prepared the way for most effective utilization of chaplains.

Wherever it was that the battalion had set up a central command post with units working out of it and coming back to it, the chaplain would probably find his best operating area. He could carry out his work at the CP for those coming and going as well as going to his units when advisable.

When the battalion split up into companies or smaller units, Headquarters and Service Company of the battalion involved had usually had a rear echelon adjacent to the task force CP/shore party/med-evac area. Since the shore party was the support unit in this area, it could also support the chaplain operating from there. Thus a chaplain of the scattered-unit battalion would usually find this the best operating area for him.

Some chaplains were concerned and frustrated that Divine Service could not be held frequently and regularly for their troops while in the field on an operation. One advantage of working out of the med-evac/shore party area was knowing when and where the chaplain could go. All chaplains had to keep in mind, however, that Divine Services, while wanted and needed by their troops, were not included in the operational plan according to any schedule.

Another advantage of unit chaplains working out of the med-evac area was that they frequently were able to minister to their troops who were wounded and dead. The wounded often stated that seeing the familiar face of their chaplain had been a welcome sight when they were brought in. Unit chaplains had found from experience that they usually had been of more help to the troops in this way rather than "humping it" with a rifle company and having no

contact with anyone except the man before him and the man behind him on the trek.

Slogging and sharing in combat will always be a serious and necessary undertaking of chaplains with Marines, and circumstances are always changeable, and methods debatable. However, as a general summation Chaplain Hubble listed an experienced and valuable insight. He concluded:

Many chaplains feel that they have to be with their

troops on patrol no matter what. If they have not identified themselves with their troops back in the base C.P., it is too late to do it on the line or on the patrol. This is not World War II or Korea. The chaplain on the line or on a patrol is mostly a burden rather than an asset. The men are sacrificed from the ministry of the chaplain when the chaplain finds himself with a squad or a patrol or even a company under the guise of being with his troops. Chaplains who have been in Vietnam from the beginning and thought their place to be in the line of fire with their troops have concluded (after learning the hard way): stay where you can minister to all your troops.³¹