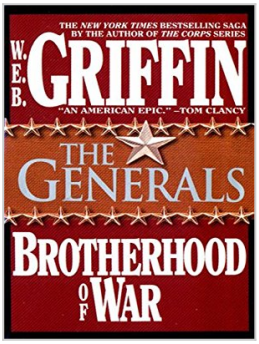

The Generals (Brotherhood of War Book 6)

By W.E.B. Griffin

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They were the leaders, the men who made the decisions that changed the outcome of battles...and the fate of continents. From the awesome landing at Normandy to the tortorous campaigns of the South Pacific, from the frozen hills of Korea to the devastated wastes of Dien Bien Phu, they had earned their stars. Now they led America's finest against her most relentless enemy deep in the jungles of Southeast Asia. It was a new kind of war, but the Generals led a new kind of army, ready for battle--and for glory...

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Editorial Review

About the Author
W. E. B. Griffin is also the author of the bestselling Corps, Brotherhood of War, Badge of Honor, Men at War, and Honor Bound series. He has been invested into the orders of St. George of the U.S. Armor Association and St. Andrew of the U.S. Army Aviation Association, and is a life member of the U.S. Special Operations Association; Gaston-Lee Post 5660, Veterans of Foreign Wars; China Post #1 in Exile of the American Legion; and the Police Chiefs Association of Southeast Pennsylvania, South New Jersey, and Delaware. He is an honorary life member of the U.S. Army Otter & Caribou Association, the U.S. Army Special Forces Association, the U.S. Marine Corps Raider Association, and the USMC Combat Correspondents Association.

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BROTHERHOOD
OF WAR

BOOK I: THE LIEUTENANTS

BOOK II: THE CAPTAINS

BOOK III: THE MAJORS

BOOK IV: THE COLONELS

BOOK V: THE BERETS

BOOK VI: THE GENERALS

BOOK VII: THE NEW BREED

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PRESIDENTIAL AGENT

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THE GENERALS

BROTHERHOOD OF WAR BOOK VI

BY W. E. B. GRIFFIN

PART ONE

PRIORITY

0215 ZULU 15 OCT 62

FROM HQ MAC VIETNAM

TO JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF WASH DC

INFO: C-IN-C PACIFIC HONOLULU HAWAII
US EMBASSY SAIGON

SUBJECT: DAILY REPORT OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING LOSS OF US MIL PERSONNEL FOR PERIOD 0001 ZULU-2400 ZULU 14 OCT 62

1. TWO (2) US ARMY ENLISTED PERSONNEL HOSPITALIZED SAIGON 1350 ZULU RESULT VEHICULAR ACCIDENT BETWEEN US ARMY THREE-QUARTER-TON TRUCK AND

INDIGENOUS PASSENGER AUTOMOBILE.

2. TWO (2) USAF ENLISTED PERSONNEL HOSPITALIZED SAIGON 1410 ZULU SUFFERING EXTREME GASTROINTESTINAL DISTRESS BELIEVED CAUSED BY IMBIBING INDIGENOUS IMPURE ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES.

3. ONE (1) US ARMY CAPTAIN, ONE (1) US ARMY LIEUTENANT, THREE (3) US ARMY ENLISTED PERSONNEL KILLED; ONE (1) US ARMY ENLISTED MAN MISSING IN ACTION; TWO (2) US ARMY ENLISTED PERSONNEL HOSPITALIZED RESULT WOUNDS SUFFERED DURING PERIOD 1430 TO 1615 ZULU DURING UNSUCCESSFUL VIETCONG ATTEMPT OVERRUN SPECIAL FORCES CAMP VICINITY NUI BA DEN.

4. ONE (1) USAF MAJOR HOSPITALIZED 1625 ZULU RESULT INJURIES SUFFERED IN CRASH LANDING T-28 AIRCRAFT DA NANG.

5. ONE (1) US ARMY MAJOR, ONE (1) USN LIEUTENANT (MC), ONE (1) USMC CAPTAIN, TWO (2) US ARMY LIEUTENANTS HOSPITALIZED 2030 ZULU SAIGON MINOR RESULT BURNS SUFFERED WHEN LIQUID PETROLEUM GAS COOKING STOVE BACHELOR OFFICERS QUARTERS #3 EXPLODED.

6. ONE (1) US ARMY ENLISTED MAN HOSPITALIZED 2205 ZULU DA NANG RESULT BLOW TO HEAD FROM BLUNT INSTRUMENT SUFFERED WHILE GUARDING US ARMY CLASS V DUMP DURING SUCCESSFUL ROBBERY.

7. SUMMARY:

BY COMMAND OF GENERAL HARKINS:
JAMES C. WILINNS
BRIG GEN, USMC

I

(One)
Nui Ba Den
Republic of South Vietnam
15 October 1962

The incident referred to in paragraph 3 of the Daily Report of Incidents Involving Loss of U.S. Military Personnel for the period 0001 to 2400 14 October 1962 took place at what was officially known as Camp 7.

Camp 7 was, however, known to its American garrison as Dien Bien Phu II, and there was a neatly painted sign to that effect. Even more informally, it was known as “Foo Two.”

The American garrison consisted of nine soldiers: a captain, a lieutenant, two master sergeants, three sergeants first class, and two staff sergeants. There were also 160 Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) officers and men under the command of an ARVN captain. The ARVN troops were in many cases accompanied by their dependents, of whom there were 236, ranging in age from babes in arms (some of

whom had been delivered by Sergeant First Class Dugan) to grandfathers and grandmothers. Most of these, though they looked to be about ninety, were in fact in their late forties or early fifties.

The American garrison was officially “A” Team #16 of the First Special Forces Group. Two members of the Team were Afro-American: Lieutenant A. L. Wills, the Exec, and SFC Dugan, the Medic. The Old Man—who was twenty-six—Captain William French and everyone else save Master Sergeant Petrofski, the Operations Sergeant, were White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Petrofski had been brought to the United States as a teenager from Russia.

Once a month, in compliance with Army Regulations, Lieutenant Wills (who in addition to his other duties was Minority Affairs Officer) interviewed SFC Dugan to inquire if he had in any way been subjected to unfair treatment because of his race and/or color. Wills’s report was afterward endorsed by the commanding officer and sent up through channels.

When the big attack came, Lieutenant Wills was in the command post, bent over a Royal portable typewriter, very carefully composing a letter to higher headquarters advancing the argument that practitioners of the Russian Orthodox faith were obviously a minority group within the U.S. Army, and that therefore, under the applicable Army Regulations, the Army was obliged to make provision for Master Sergeant Petrofski to have access to the spiritual guidance of ordained Russian Orthodox clergy. The enlisted man in question, Lieutenant Wills wrote (at the suggestion of Staff Sergeant Geoffrey Craig), was showing visible signs of lowered morale as a result of being without spiritual guidance. Under the tenets of his faith, Master Sergeant Petrofski was unable to seek such guidance from available Protestant or Roman Catholic chaplains.

Lieutenant Wills believed that Staff Sergeant Craig was an uncommonly clever fellow. Even though Craig was the youngest man on the team, he had been the unanimous choice of everyone to replace SFC Caseby as Assistant Operations Sergeant on Caseby’s completion of tour. And Wills’s concern for Master Sergeant Petrofski’s spiritual welfare—a stroke of pure goddamned genius—had been Craig’s idea.

There was no question in Wills’s mind that when the letter was sent through channels, action would be taken. As Craig had pointed out, they would have two choices. They could either find some Russian Orthodox priest willing to come out to the boonies where there was a good chance of getting his ass blown off, or they could send Master Sergeant Petrofski on some reasonable schedule to the Russian Orthodox church in Saigon.

Even if he actually had to make an appearance at the Russian Orthodox church, that would give him anywhere from twenty to forty-eight hours in Saigon. In Saigon a Chinese copy of the Russian Moisin-Nagant rifle was worth a hundred dollars or a case of whiskey to the Chairborne Troopers. Kalashnikov assault rifle (in shorter supply and therefore in greater demand) was worth two hundred fifty, maybe three hundred in excellent condition. A Vietcong flag was worth at least a bottle of whiskey. Petrofski was a great big sonofabitch, and could carry maybe a half dozen of each wrapped in Vietcong flags in a couple of duffle bags.

The weapons bunker held nearly thirty Moisin-Nagants and eighteen Kalashnikovs. There weren’t many Vietcong flags, but the ARVN dependents could make up a couple dozen over night. The very least Petrofski could be expected to bring back from his spiritual pilgrimage to Saigon would be a couple of cases of good Scotch and bourbon whiskey and maybe even a couple of grand. With a little bit of luck—by, say, bribing an Army Aviator—he could do much better than that: A new stereo system would be nice (theirs was on the fritz), and maybe a small refrigerator. The one they had was small, old, and showing signs of decrepitude.

Some months after Staff Sergeant Craig had joined the team, Lieutenant Wills had found the moment to ask him if there was anything to the stories going around that he was related to Lieutenant Colonel Craig W. Lowell.

“We’re first cousins once removed,” Craig had replied. “Or second cousins. I never got that straight. He and my father are cousins.”

Lieutenant Wills had found that fascinating. Lieutenant Colonel Craig W. Lowell had quite a reputation within the Green Berets. For instance, Lowell had been an asshole buddy of Brigadier General Paul T. Hanrahan, the ranking Green Beret, going back to some John Wayne escapade Lowell had been involved in with the general when Lowell was a young lieutenant in Greece. For another instance, when Lowell visited the general at the Special Warfare Center at Bragg, he usually arrived at the controls of his own personal quarter-million-dollar airplane. The word was—and the airplane seemed to prove it—that Lowell had more money than God.

“You rich, too?” Wills had asked.

“About as rich as he is,” Staff Sergeant Craig had replied, matter-of-factly, “but we rich people don’t say ‘rich.’ We say ‘comfortable.’”

“Then what the hell are you doing in the Army?”

“Why, Lieutenant, I thought you knew,” Staff Sergeant Craig said dryly, “my friends and neighbors selected me to keep the world safe for democracy.”

“And then you volunteered for Forces?”

“Not exactly,” Craig said.

“What does that mean?”

“It means that I was in the stockade at Fort Jackson facing a general court and five to fifteen at Leavenworth when Cousin Colonel offered an alternative.”

“What the hell did you do?”

“I punched out my basic training platoon sergeant,” Craig said. “The charge was ‘assault upon a noncommissioned officer in the execution of his office.’ I broke the sonofabitch’s jaw.”

“That was dumb,” Lieutenant Wills had said, without thinking.

“That thought has run through my mind once or twice,” Staff Sergeant Craig admitted. “On one hand, five to fifteen in Leavenworth is a long time. On the other, the last I heard, they weren’t shooting at people in Kansas.”

Afterward, Lieutenant Wills had wondered if asking Craig about himself had been smart. What he had back in the States had nothing to do with what was going on at Foo Two, but he was made a little uncomfortable knowing that a member of the team was so close to the brass. It might have been better not to know that.

The dull growl of the hand-cranked siren actually started a moment or two before the first mortar round came in.

“Oh, shit!” Lieutenant Wills said. In another couple of minutes, the letter would have been finished.

“What the hell!” Staff Sergeant Craig said, as he picked up his M-14 and started out of the command post.

Daytime attacks on Dien Bien Phu II were rare. They were too costly for the Vietcong. It was much easier in the daytime to locate Charley’s mortar positions than it was at night. And Foo Two’s ARVN mortar men were pretty good with mortars themselves. Charley could therefore expect incoming immediately after he had fired his third round. So it was much safer for Charley to sit out in the boonies in the dark, lob a couple of rounds in, and then get the hell out of there before getting himself blown away.

And Charley had also learned that if—because of mines, concertina wire with tin cans attached, and Claymores placed here and there—it was difficult to approach Foo Two at night, it was even more expensive to try during daylight, when there were 150 people shooting with everything from old M-1 .30 carbines to M-60 7.62-mm machine guns on tripods.

These considerations had been respectfully, and in some detail, pointed out to both the commanding officer of the 39th Infantry Regiment of the People’s Liberation Army and to his political advisor by the commanding officer of Number 9 Company, who would lead the final assault on Foo Two.

The political advisor had explained to him that the war of liberation against the puppet regime in Saigon could not succeed until the people recognized the inevitability of victory. Though Captain Van Hung Au did not quite understand what that meant, he certainly didn’t think he was in any position to question the judgment of a lieutenant colonel who had come all the way from Hanoi to offer his experience and guidance to the 39th Regiment.

And then there were several practical reasons why the base on Nui Ba Den had to be eliminated, the political advisor continued. Some of these were military in nature: The puppet soldiers, under American leadership, had reduced below a level that could be accepted the flow of arms and other supplies down the valley.

They were, furthermore, interfering with liberation efforts in their immediate area. It had become difficult, for instance, for the People’s Democratic Government to collect the taxes necessary to support the war of liberation. In more than a dozen incidents, tax collectors had been betrayed. Thus, when they had entered villages to collect pigs, chickens, rice, and vegetables, and to find “volunteer” porters to carry supplies down the valley, they had been met by Green Beret and puppet troops.

This tended to breed disrespect for the People’s Democratic Government. The situation, furthermore, was going to get worse, unless stopped. Because of the success of the base on Nui Ba Den, Intelligence had learned that the American Green Berets intended to establish bases at other points where they could disrupt the flow of supplies south, and breed greater disrespect for the People’s Democratic Government.

It was consequently decided at the highest echelons that the base on Nui Ba Den had to be eliminated.

The commanding officer of the 39th Regiment had then explained the tactical situation.

First of all, as Chairman Mao had so often pointed out, it was the greatest wisdom to attack the enemy when and where he did not believe an attack would occur. Second, the Americans and their puppet soldiers on the mountaintop believed themselves impregnable to an assault by anything less than a regiment. There was no reason for them to believe that a regiment was anywhere near.

Consequently it was intended to attack the base on Nui Ba Den in regimental strength in daylight.

Since Intelligence had reported that approximately once every ninety minutes radio contact was made between the Green Berets and their headquarters, the plan called for the attack to begin immediately after the American radio operator signed off. Initial mortar fire would then be directed at the American communications bunker, and would continue until the bunker and/or its antennae were destroyed. Once this was done, there would be a period of at least ninety minutes during which the Americans' superiors would think that all was well at Nui Ba Den.

The next phase of the attack, lasting fifteen minutes, would be a heavy mortar and rocket attack on the base. Since the puppet soldiers were accustomed to return fire without much regard to their ammunition supply, they would fire what ammunition they had almost with abandon, confident that the attack would be like the others they had experienced. The defenders of Nui Ba Den would therefore expend their ammunition in futile counterfire against a force which, with the exception of the troops exposing themselves momentarily to fire their mortars and rocket launchers, would be safely below ground.

Phase Three of the attack would be the first assault wave. Nine companies of infantry were available for the assault, including Captain Van Hung Au's Number 9 company. These would attack three companies at a time. While it was to be hoped that the first wave would succeed in breaching the first and second perimeter lines, that seemed unlikely to happen.

What could be expected was that Nui Ba Den's defenders, still unaware of the size of the force attacking them, would expend what was left of their ammunition.

Five minutes after Assault Wave One began its assault, there would be another five-minute mortar and rocket barrage on the enemy positions. Immediately thereafter Assault Wave Two would begin its assault.

Finally, there would be one more rocket and mortar barrage, followed by Assault Wave Three. Assault Wave Three would be commanded by Captain Van Hung Au. It was politically necessary that he survive the battle, so that the local people, who knew him, would identify him with the victory.

There would be no prisoners—unless any of the Americans were found alive. If that was the case, these were to be given first priority for medical attention. After all the Americans had been photographed, their wounded were to be taken away. (Publication of such photographs in the United States and elsewhere tended to diminish enthusiasm for the war.) Second priority was the removal of small arms and ammunition. Third priority was the removal of People's Liberation Army dead. It was politically necessary not to leave large numbers of dead People's Liberation Army soldiers on the site. Fourth priority was the removal of wounded.

The weapons, ammunition, and other liberated supplies would be cached in tunnels to be built for that purpose, together with the heavier weapons (mortars, rocket launchers, and ammunition) brought in for the assault. They would be moved after the anticipated sweep of the area had been accomplished by puppet troops.

The dead would be buried in tunnels, and the tunnel mouths sealed.

Insofar as possible, the wounded would be moved. But it would be regrettably necessary to eliminate the wounded who could not be moved or who seemed likely to expire. They would be buried in tunnels.

The assault force would then disperse.

Priority in the evacuation from the battle site was to be given to the photographers and, if there were any,

American prisoners.

Captain Van Hung Au would be informed when his role in the assault was over, whereupon he would disperse his men and await further orders.

(Two)

Foo Two SOP (Standing Operating Procedure) in the event of an attack prescribed the duty stations of the officers and men of the “A” Team. The commanding officer, the operations sergeant, and the commo sergeant were to go to the CP (Command Post). The exec and the deputy operations sergeant were to go to Bunker Hill. The medic was to go to the Dispensary, a sandbag bunker identified with a Red Cross and a neatly lettered sign reading “Obstetrics and Gynecology.” The others of the “A” team were charged with seeing that the ARVN troops did what they were supposed to be doing.

Dien Bien Phu II made reference to the heavily fortified French positions at Dien Bien Phu, which had been overrun by Ho Chi Minh’s forces some years before the Americans had become involved in Vietnam. The implication was that Dien Bien Phu II, like Dien Bien Phu, was surrounded by enemies and about to get blown away. This wasn’t a precise analogy, for Dien Bien Phu had been in a valley, and Foo Two was on the top of a mountain. Still, Foo Two was in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by hostile Vietnamese. And it was clear to every member of the “A” Team that, presuming Charley was willing to pay the price, Foo Two was just as vulnerable as the original.

“Bunker Hill” did not, except as a play on words, refer to the hill in Boston. Foo Two’s Bunker Hill was a bunker built on the top of the hill.

The hilltop consisted of three granite pinnacles, each about ten feet tall, each separated from the others by a few feet. Bunker Hill used these three pinnacles as its foundation. The paths between them had been roofed over with timber, and the roof protected by layers of sandbags. Surrounding this structure was a four-foot-high wall of sandbags. Within the wall of sandbags were four M-60 machine gun positions, each roofed over with timbers and sandbags. Their fields of fire covered the entire compound and most of the approaches to the compound. There were also several sandbag-protected rifleman’s firing positions. The heavy armament of Bunker Hill was mortars, of which there were four. Three were 60-mm M-19s, which could throw shells just over a mile. The one 81-mm M-29, Bunker Hill’s heavy artillery, could throw its shells almost two miles. Two of the 60s were emplaced so as to cover the approaches to Foo Two where the terrain interrupted the machine guns’ beaten zone of fire. The other 60 and the 81 were emplaced to bring the most logical approach to Foo Two under fire.

The passageways between the stone pinnacles were stacked with ammunition, as was the “room” formed in their center. Bunker Hill was both Foo Two’s first and last line of defense. It was from Bunker Hill that the first rounds in defense would be fired; and if Foo Two was overrun, it would be the last place the enemy could reach.

It was for that reason that the exec and the assistant ops sergeant were assigned to Bunker Hill by the Foo Two SOP. The exec had telephone and Handie-Talkie communication with other defense positions, backing up the Old Man in the CP. The assistant ops sergeant was in charge of the ARVN riflemen, machine gunners, and mortarmen; and the ops sergeant, down below, was in charge of the troops manning Foo Two’s defense perimeter.

Since at that moment there seemed to be one hell of a lot of incoming, Staff Sergeant Craig resisted his

natural instinct to take cover (Christ, it won't last more than a minute or two at the rate they're firing) in one of the foxholes; instead, he ran like hell toward Bunker Hill, and then scrambled up its sides. The round-the-clock team of ARVNs on duty had already brought two of the 60-mm's into action, and as he jumped over the sandbag wall he heard the much deeper crump of the 81-mm.

Breathing heavily from the exertion, Staff Sergeant Craig ducked into one of the covered rifleman's positions and dug in his pocket for earplugs. The first time Charley had pulled this kind of shit, he'd found himself next to an M-60 machine gun, and the noise had made his ears sing for ten days. Master Sergeant Petrofski, taking pity on him, had given him a spare set of his earplugs. Later he showed him an ad in The American Rifleman from which he could order some for himself.

When he had the plugs (rubber and aluminum devices that permitted normal hearing until a ball-and-piston arrangement closed as sharp sound waves struck it) in his ears, he looked down at the compound.

"Oh, shit!" he said.

Lieutenant Wills, who could have been no more than sixty seconds after him out of the CP when the siren went off, was quite obviously dead, lying in a spreading pool of blood twenty-five yards from the CP. He had taken a near-direct hit from one of Charley's mortars.

There wasn't much left of the CP. It had taken Christ only knew how many rounds—enough to displace a lot of sandbags and to tear open most of those that were left. The roof and one wall were gone. And as he watched, two more rounds came in, so close that they nearly went off together.

The only place the mortars seemed to be landing was on the CP.

What the hell was going on?

What was going on was very simple. Charley was determined to take out the CP. Charley had taken out the CP, which meant that he had taken out the Old Man and Master Sergeant Petrofski as well.

That meant several other things—more things than it was comfortable to consider.

First of all, under the Foo Two SOP, it meant that command of Foo Two passed to Bunker Hill. But since the exec, who was to assume command in case the Old Man got blown away, was also dead, command passed to Master Sergeant Petrofski, the ops sergeant.

No one had really believed it would ever be necessary to go any further down the chain of command, but the Foo Two SOP listed it anyway—right down to #9, the assistant armorer.

Staff Sergeant Craig put his Handie-Talkie to his lips.

"Foo Three, Foo Four," he said, and listened, and then repeated it. There was no answer.

Foo Two radio call signs followed the chain of command. Foo One was the Old Man; Foo Two the exec; Foo Three the ops sergeant, and Foo Four the assistant ops sergeant.

The chain of command had descended to him.

"Foo Five, Four," he said to the Handie-Talkie. Five was the commo sergeant.

"Go."

“You all right?”

“Antennas are down. The generator’s gone, too, so it’s a moot point.”

“When did they last check in?”

“About sixty seconds before all this shit started.”

Goddamn! With the antennas down, they couldn’t yell for help. Until the net tried to check in—and that wouldn’t be for an hour and a half—nobody would have any idea that Foo Two was under attack.

“How soon can you get on the air?”

“Forget it,” Foo Five said. “Where’s Wills?”

“Dead.”

“Shit!”

“Six, Four.”

There was no answer.

“Seven? Anybody?”

“Nine, I’m here,” the assistant armorer reported in.

“You all right?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. Wills and the Old Man are both dead?”

“They don’t answer.”

“This is Seven. I just took a look. I can’t see anything. It looks like they’re dumping everything on the CP.”

“What about Eight? Eight? You there?”

“He’s in that M-60 position, I think maybe his radio’s busted. There’s people over there.”

“Let me know if you see anything,” Craig said. He leaned against the sandbags.

And then he had one more uncomfortable thought: Just as soon as Charley was convinced that the CP and the communications had been taken out, he would divert his attention to Bunker Hill. And if he took out Bunker Hill, that would be the end of it.

There was almost a continuous roar of Bunker Hill’s mortars. The ARVNs were well trained. They could maintain a steady fire of ten or more rounds per minute from each of the mortars, and if they could have unpacked the ammo from its wooden crates any faster, they would have fired faster.

As Lieutenant Wills had once solemnly pointed out, there was enough 60-mm and 81-mm ammo in the passages of Bunker Hill to fight a war.

Craig jumped to his feet and ran to the ARVN officer in charge. He tried English, and that didn’t work, and

then he tried gestures until the ARVN lieutenant understood him. His face showed that he thought Craig was either crazy or a coward, or both.

Why should they move the mortars under the protection of the timbers and sandbags of Bunker Hill when they were doing damned well what they had been trained to do, fire Bunker Hill's mortars in counterfire?

Craig held up his index finger, and pointed with his hand to the command post, nearly concealed in a cloud of dust and smoke and still taking a round every five or ten seconds. Then he extended a second finger, and indicated Bunker Hill.

The CP had been first, they were next.

The ARVN lieutenant got the message. He started in one direction around the wall of sandbags, ordering the mortar crews to take their weapons and the machine guns and themselves into the protection of Bunker Hill's passageways. Staff Sergeant Craig went in the other direction, making his point where he could with gestures, and in the case of the last mortar crew, with the muzzle of his M-14. For a chilling moment, he thought it was entirely likely that the sergeant in charge of this crew, who looked at him with loathing, was going to reply to his orders to stop firing by turning his carbine on him. He had a family below in a sandbag bunker that he felt compelled to protect.

But he gave in and ordered his crew and the mortar inside, then sent two of them to fetch the M-60 on its tripod and the half dozen cans of ammo beside it.

The first Charley mortar round landed on Bunker Hill as these ARVN soldiers squeezed by Craig into the passageway. The second followed a split second later. He was so stunned by the force of these explosions that his eyes went out of focus, and his ears rang, despite the earplugs. Something stung his lip, and he thought he had been dinged by a stone fragment.

He staggered farther inside the passageway, gesturing impatiently to two ARVN soldiers to block the entrance with whatever they could. Then he made his way to the "room" at the center of Bunker Hill.

The mortar barrage was intense now, rounds falling without pause. The force of the shock waves moved, it seemed, even through the solid granite pinnacles. A nearly steady fog of sand particles trickled between the timbers supporting the sandbag roof, and visibility, never good, was now really bad.

The pair of two-hundred-watt bulbs that normally burned around the clock in the room in the center of Bunker Hill were of course out. They had died when Charley got the generator bunker. But there was one Coleman lantern hissing and burning brilliantly on the table, and two ARVN soldiers were squatting on the floor, trying to pump another one into life.

There was something warm and wet on Craig's chin. He put his hand to it to wipe it off, and his fingers came away sticky and red. He looked down at them, and then at his shirt. There was blood on his fingers, and a teardrop-shaped patch of blood, glistening in the light from the Coleman lantern, on his shirt.

As he was examining this in surprise and shock (he felt light-headed, and wondered if he was going to throw up or crap his pants), the ARVN lieutenant came to him, pulled him none too gently to the folding chair beside the table with the Coleman on it, and pushed him into it.

He examined the wound carefully, his face so close that Craig could smell the garlic and whatever-the-hell-else on his breath, and then gave sharp singsong orders. A first aid kit (a Foo Two kit, not the official GI model: a 7.62-mm steel ammo can, packed with what the Old Man thought should be in a first aid kit)

appeared on the table, and the ARVN lieutenant pushed Craig's head so far back that he had to close his eyes to keep from being blinded by the sand trickling through the spaces between the timbers.

"OK, Number One," the ARVN officer said finally, and Craig sat up and opened his eyes.

The ARVN officer made his thumb and index finger into a "C" to indicate the size of the wound, and then drew on his own face the location. It went from the center of the lip four inches into the cheek. Craig put his fingers carefully to his face. There were two bandages over most of his mouth, one on top of the other, held in place by adhesive tape looped several times around the base of his skull. If he tried to move his head, there was a sharp pain. There was also a dull, tooth-achelike pain extending from his mouth up to his forehead.

Stone fragment, my ass!

He wondered if he would have a scarred face.

He nodded his thanks to the ARVN officer, and then tried French: "Beaucoup ammo," he said. "Tout les ammo."

The ARVN officer raised his eyebrows questioningly, and Craig repeated what he had said, this time adding gestures. He wanted mortar ammo from the crates lining the passage unpacked, so that it would be more readily available when the barrage lifted, and they could go outside and start shooting back.

There was no longer any question in his mind what Charley was up to. Charley wanted to take Foo Two, not just lob a couple of rounds in to make people nervous.

He walked through one of the passages again, until he thought he was far enough so the Handie-Talkie would work.

"Four, anybody out there?"

"Where the fuck have you been?"

"I think they're going to start coming up the hill when the barrage lifts," Craig said.

"Figured that out all by yourself, did you?" Nine replied.

"In the meantime, make goddamned sure they don't get the M-60s," Craig said. "We're going to need them."

"You still got any mortars?" Seven asked.

"And lots of ammo," Craig replied.

"Maybe you're not as dumb as you look, Four."

"Check in, will you, guys?"

Seven and Nine checked in. There were no other replies.

Craig went farther inside Bunker Hill.

(Three)
U.S. Army OV-IA Aircraft Tail Number 92524

Heading: 040° True
Altitude: 10,500 Feet
Indicated Airspeed: 270 Knots
(Plateau Montagnards, Republic of South Vietnam)
1525 Zulu, 14 October 1962

The Grumman OV-1A “Mohawk” is a two-place aircraft. The pilot and the other crew member (most often, but not always, another pilot) sit side by side. The fuselage tapers from the noticeably bulbous nose, at the tip of which the cockpit sits, to the rear, where there is a triple vertical stabilizer tail structure. Excellent visibility is provided through large Plexiglas windows. The bulbous forward portion of the Mohawk has been likened to the tip of the male member, with eyes.

The aircraft is powered by two turboprop engines, mounted on the upper surface of the wings. Beneath the wings are hard points, from which auxiliary fuel tanks, weapons pods, and the like may be suspended. On some models, long side-looking radar antennae were mounted beneath the fuselage. The fuselage from the trailing end of the wings to the tail structure is equipped with doors. Behind the doors are shelves on which communications and sensory devices of one sort or another are mounted. These are called black boxes, and the Mohawk was designed to accommodate a great number of black boxes.

Army Aerial Observation had moved into the electronics age. The black boxes in a Mohawk, for example, could find by infrared and other sensory techniques, a tank, a truck, a motorcycle, a campfire, twenty soldiers; locate them precisely within a few feet, distinguish the truck from the tank or the motorcycle; and instantaneously transmit this data to equipment on the ground, which would then instantly print out a map of the area under surveillance, with neat symbols indicating the precise location of trucks, tanks, soldiers, campfires, and the like.

There were two pilots in Tail Number 524. They sat on Martin-Baker ejection seats, wearing international distress or ange flight suits and helmets with slide-down, gold-covered face masks that completely concealed their faces.

The only visible difference between the pilot and the copilot of 524 was that the pilot was considerably larger than the copilot, and that his orange rompers bore the insignia of a major and a senior aviator, while the copilot was identified by his insignia as a basic aviator and a chief warrant officer (W-2).

524 was on automatic pilot. Both the pilot and the copilot sat with their feet on the deck (off the rudder pedals) and with their arms folded across their abdomens.

“Watch it a minute, will you?” the pilot said over the intercom. Then he searched through the multiple zippered pockets of his orange flight suit until he found what he was looking for, a folded piece of paper on which was written “Kilimanjaro 115.56.”

He then turned in his seat, pushed his face visor inside the helmet, and leaned to his right toward the communications panel between the seats, next to the trim-tab mechanism. His face could now be seen. It was finely featured and very black. He was, he had often thought, the genetic result of sexual congress sometime in the late eighteenth century between some comely central African tribal maiden and an Arabian slave dealer who had dallied with the merchandise as it was being shipped to the New World.

His name was Philip Sheridan Parker IV. His father was Colonel Philip Sheridan Parker III, USA Retired, who had commanded a tank destroyer regiment across Africa and Europe in World War II. His late grandfather, Colonel Philip S. Parker, Jr., USA Retired, had commanded a regiment of Infantry assigned to the French Army (as opposed to the AEF) in World War I. His late great-grandfather, Master Sergeant Philip

Sheridan Parker, had charged up San Juan and Kettle hills in Cuba with Colonel Teddy Roosevelt. Master Sergeant Parker's father, First Sergeant Moses Parker, had served with the 10th United States Cavalry (Colored) under Colonel (later Major General) Philip Sheridan, for whom he had named his firstborn. Parkers wearing the crossed sabers of Cavalry (in Major Parker's case, superimposed on a tank, for he had been commissioned into the Regular Army as a second lieutenant of Armor) had participated in fifty-three campaigns and/or officially recognized battles of the U.S. Army. Major Parker had participated in three campaigns of the Korean War, and was currently engaged in the fifty-fourth Parker campaign.

He dialed 115.56 on the AN/ARC-44 radio, and then put his hand on the Mohawk stick and triggered the radio transmit function.

"Kilimanjaro, Kilimanjaro, Army Five Two Four."

The copilot, his face still shielded by his face visor, turned to look at him curiously. "Who's Kilimanjaro?" he asked.

When there was no reply from Kilimanjaro, Major Parker repeated the call twice again. And when that didn't work, he put his hand on the second AN/ARC-44's controls, to the rear of the first set.

"A friend of mine has a nephew down there eating snakes," he said. "He asked me to say hello."

He repeated his call to Kilimanjaro three times. There was no response.

He folded his arms on his chest for a minute, thoughtfully, and then said, "You don't suppose we're up here without a radio, do you?"

The copilot pushed his face mask up inside his helmet and consulted the chart he had on a clipboard on his lap. Then he adjusted the first ARC-44 and pushed the radio transmit button on his stick.

"Grizzly, Grizzly, Army Five Two Four, how do you read? Over."

"Army Five Two Four, Grizzly reads you five by five."

"Thank you, Grizzly, Five Two Four reads you loud and clear. Out."

"Give me the chart," Major Parker said. The copilot handed it to him.

Major Parker studied the chart. It was an Aerial Navigation Chart, not a map, but Kilimanjaro on Nui Ba Den was listed on it as an auxiliary source of data for radio navigation.

"I've got it, Charley," Major Parker said, and reached up and turned off the autopilot.

"You want me to report what you're doing?" the copilot asked.

"Let's take a look first," Major Parker said. "It's only a couple of minutes."

He went back on the air three minutes later.

"Grizzly, Grizzly, Army Five Two Four."

"Go ahead, Five Two Four."

“Five Two Four is at coordinates Mike Seven Charley, Baker Three Baker. Kilimanjaro is under heavy ground attack and does not respond to radio calls. I say again, Kilimanjaro is under heavy ground attack and does not, repeat not, respond to my call.”

“Five Two Four, hold your position and stand by.”

Major Parker circled Foo Two for about five minutes at four thousand feet, which was presumed to be outside the range of Charley small arms and machine gun fire.

“Army aircraft in vicinity Mike Seven Charley, Baker Three Baker, this is Navy Two Two Seven.”

“Go ahead Navy Two Two Seven, this is Army Five Two Four.”

“I’m at two zero thousand, five minutes west your position. I’m a flight of four F-4 aircraft. What have you got for us?”

“There’s a Green Beret camp on the top of the mountain under attack by what looks like a regiment. I can’t raise them on the radio.”

“OK, where do you want it?”

“You better make a pass, it’s a pretty small camp.”

“OK, I got you on the tube. Where are they in relation to you?”

“Half a mile north.”

“OK. Making descent at this time. You guys wait for the word.”

The first F-4 appeared not quite three minutes later, moving so fast that Parker didn’t see him until he was almost over the smoke-shrouded camp. He then pulled up in a steep climbing turn.

“Get on my tail, we’re going in on the deck with napalm,” the Navy flight commander ordered.

The next time Parker saw aircraft, they were below him, flying in a V down the valley. They passed over the camp, and then a moment later, the approaches to Dien Bien Phu II erupted in great orange bursts, followed immediately by clouds of dense smoke.

They made four napalm passes before they communicated again.

“Army Five Two Four, we’re out of ordnance, but there’s help on the way. They will contact you on this frequency.”

“Thank you,” Major Parker said politely.

Three minutes after that, the copilot touched his shoulder, and pointed.

A flight of six Douglas A-1 Skyraiders—very large single-engine propeller aircraft with the capacity to carry an awesome amount of ordnance—were approaching from the north.

Parker wondered if the cure wasn’t liable to kill the patient.

“Aircraft approaching Mike Seven Charley, Baker Three Baker, this is Army Five Two Four.”

“We have you in sight, Five Two Four, go ahead.”

“Charley has not, repeat not, overrun the target area,” Parker said. “Avoid the encampment.”

“Roger, Five Two Four. Where is Charley?”

“Everywhere but on the top of the hill.”

“Roger. Understand everywhere but the top of the hill.”

“Affirmative.”

Major Parker then flew in circles to the south of Dien Bien Phu II, privately fuming at the brass assholes who forbade the arming of Mohawks under any but special conditions. The rocket and weapons pods on his Mohawk had been removed. Because his mission today was a medium-altitude electronic surveillance, he was at the controls of an unarmed and useless airplane: The goddamned brass were splitting hairs about which of the armed forces was permitted to shoot who and when.

He flew for about thirty minutes until a flight of helicopters appeared, obviously bound for Kilimanjaro. When they got closer, he was surprised to see that they were Bell HU-1Bs, the new Hueys. That meant the Utility Tactical Transport Helicopter Company, the first of its kind, was operational. This was, he thought, probably their first mission.

And then, because there was nothing left that he could do for Kilimanjaro, he headed toward Da Nang to refuel.

(Four)
Dien Bien Phu II
1620 Zulu, 14 October 1962

There were nine HU-1Bs in the relief flight; and Major Parker had guessed right, this was their first operation. The Huey was the first helicopter designed and built specifically for military operation. The nomenclature stood for Helicopter, Utility, Model 1, Version B. It was powered by a turbine engine, and it was a great improvement—especially in engine life—over the Army’s previous cargo helicopters, the Sikorsky H-19 and H-34, and the Piasecki H-21 Flying Banana, all of which had gasoline piston engines.

The Hueys flew in three V’s of three aircraft, the following V’s a hundred yards behind and two hundred feet above the preceding V. There was only one helipad, a circular area a few feet wider than the helicopter arc, marked with an “H,” but there was room for three Hueys to land within the inner barbed wire of Foo Two, and the first V came in for a landing simultaneously. The first chopper landed far from the H-pad, because it was going to be on the ground for a while, and didn’t want to block other flights any more than it had to.

The first chopper to land carried the commanding officer of the First Special Forces Group, a tall, erect, very handsome bull colonel. Had he been sent over by Central Casting, a producer shooting a military film would have rejected him for being too young, too handsome, and too articulate to be a Green Beret colonel.

Blissfully unaware of the incongruity, he jumped out of the helicopter with a World War I Model 1897 Winchester 12-gauge trench gun in one hand and a leather attaché case in the other. These accoutrements were less strange than they at first appeared. There was paperwork to be accomplished here, and it simply made sense to bring the attaché case holding the paper; the case served as an efficient portable desk. And there had been no improvement since World War I in a shotgun firing 00-buck shot as an up-close people

killer.

The first chopper also disgorged two physicians and four medics. The doctors wore the caduceus of the Army Medical Corps on their collar points, but not the Red Cross brassard of the noncombatant. Given the option of wearing the brassard and placing their faith in the willingness of the Vietcong to adhere to the provisions of the Geneva convention, or not wearing it and going armed, they had opted to be armed, one of them with an issue .45-caliber pistol, the other with a Ruger Super Blackhawk single-action .44 Magnum revolver.

The medics immediately started looking for wounded. The other two Hueys unloaded Green Berets, some of whom started moving through the carnage, and others to unload supplies—food, ammunition, stretchers, and a collapsible radio antenna—from the helicopters. When the supplies had been unloaded, two Berets started erecting the antenna, and the others picked up stretchers and went looking for the medics.

Colonel C. David Mennen took a quick professional look around the carnage and quickly concluded Foo Two had taken a clobbering. There was very little left of what had once been the command post, and Staff Sergeant Craig, a bloody bandage covering his mouth, was almost frenziedly digging in its rubble. At least, he thought, he would not that night have to write a letter beginning, “Dear Craig, I thought you would like to know what I have learned about how your cousin died.”

It was tough writing those letters to strangers, infinitely tougher when they had to be written to friends, and soldier friends, who would be unimpressed with the phrases about “inspiring his fellow soldiers” and “in the highest traditions of the service.”

The kid looked shook, and the wound looked nasty, but he was alive, and if he also looked a little hysterical, so what.

Colonel Mennen walked through the rubble and carnage, searching for whoever had taken charge. He found bodies covered with shelter halves and blankets, but no Americans. Then he walked to the Huey in which he had arrived. It had been turned into sort of an emergency aid station, with one of the doctors and two of the medics providing immediate attention to the most seriously wounded, the majority of whom were the dependents of the ARVN troops.

“What about our wounded?” he asked.

“Two,” the doctor replied, looking up from his repair of the ugly compound fracture of a small boy’s leg. “One took some small-caliber fire in the chest; it missed the vitals, or he wouldn’t be alive. The other one took some superficial flesh wounds, but I think there’s internal damage. They’re both on their way out of here.”

“That’s all?”

“Four known dead, and almost certainly the CO died in the CP.”

Colonel Mennen did the arithmetic. Four KIA plus one probable KIA was five, two evacuated was seven. Staff Sergeant Craig was eight.

“We’re missing one,” he said.

“The kid with the bloody mouth told me Charley made off with the operations sergeant.”

“Goddamn!” Colonel Mennen said. If there was anything worse than getting killed or wounded, it was

winding up a prisoner of Charley. When they weren't amusing themselves tormenting prisoners in their cages, they were marching them around showing them off to Vietnamese peasants.

"How is he?"

He was privately shamed with his awareness that his concern for Staff Sergeant Craig was less based on his welfare than on his availability.

"According to the commo guy, the one who took the small arms fire, he was a regular John Wayne. The others got blown away almost as soon as it started, which left him in charge. All but one of the ARVN officers got blown away, too, so he ran the show. According to the commo guy, he saved everybody's ass with his mortars. They were inside the wire twice, he said."

"I was asking about his condition," Colonel Mennen said.

"I haven't looked at him," the doctor said, and gestured toward the small boy on the helicopter's seat. "Not as bad as these people. He's walking around."

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