



20 March 1968

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By John L. Frisbee, Contributing Editor

“Cracker Box” Ambulance Drivers Respond to Attack Bien Hoa Air Base

Seventh Air Force News - March 20, 1968 3rd Air Force Tactical

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Seventh Air Force News - March 20, 1968 3rd Air Force Tactical Dispensary, U.S. Ambulance.

0300 hours, 31 January 1968

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The teams of dispensary personnel ... manned the four ambulances [aka: *Cracker Box*] that brought in the wounded.



0400 hours, 31 January 1968

3rd Tactical Dispensary, U.S. Air Force.

TSgt. Charles E. Edwards, Birmingham, AL, noncommissioned officer in charge of the dental clinic, drove the ambulance which made the first trip, 4 a.m., to Bunker Hill-10. Edwards drove with the lights out through the intense ground fire. A bullet hit the windshield but no one was hurt. Mortar and rocket shells were exploding in the area. A friendly helicopter gunship strafed enemy positions nearby with its miniguns.

"It was only a mile and a half drive out and back," said Edwards, "but it seemed like a thousand miles. Both sides were firing every weapon they had and we were in the middle."

0700 hours, 31 January 1968

3rd Tactical Dispensary, U.S. Air Force.

The battle raging around Bunker Hill-10 was so intense the ambulance did not return until after daylight at 7 a.m. By then the enemy had given up trying to take the post and were scattered throughout the area swapping gunfire with base defense forces.

Ambulances driven by Edwards and SSgt. Ernest A. Johnansson, a dental technician from Madera, Calif., were called to pick up the wounded. Edwards brought the first wounded enemy back to the dispensary, assisted by TSgt. James V. Bridges, Charlotte, N.C., noncommissioned officer in charge of medical services for the dispensary. Two security guards accompanied them.

Johnansson brought back another wounded enemy. Assisting Johnansson was Sgt. Albert J. Shimkus Jr., medical services, cut off his clothing, then evacuated him from the area.

1500 hours, 31 January 1968

3rd Tactical Dispensary, U.S. Air Force.

At 3 p.m., SSgt. Leonardo V. Silva, Durango, Colo., a medical administration specialist, went to Bunker Hill-10 to pick up two members of the defense force. One was unconscious from heat exhaustion and the other was suffering from severe leg cramps and could not walk.

"Bullets were flying when we got there," said Silva. "We crawled 50 yards, got to the unconscious man and dragged him back to the ambulance. Then things got hectic," he said. Exploding mortar rounds pinned the medics down for 30 minutes. "We were carrying the other man to the ambulance when a helicopter spotted some enemy nearby and opened up with its miniguns," said Silva. "The one man was able to run the rest of the way, beating us there, before he collapsed," Silva concluded.

News article from the journal of LTC Kenton Miller, 3rd Security Police Squadron, CO.
Seventh Air Force News, March 20, 1968, page 5: [CLICK FOR FULL ARTICLE](#)

Ambulance Drivers Respond to Attack

BIEN HOA — From the start of the 3 a.m., Jan. 31 attack on Bien Hoa AB until later in the day when remnants of the main force of enemy were disposed of, the combat centered around the outpost of Bunker Hill 10, on the east side of the base, and

the jet engine test facility, about 100 yards away. Right in the middle of the struggle were the men of the 3rd Tactical Dispensary. It did not matter to the dispensary personnel on which side the wounded man had

fought. Both friend and foe were evacuated from the battle area and received the best medical care. The teams of dispensary personnel who manned the four ambulances that brought in the wounded demonstrated a spe-

cial brand of devotion to duty. TSgt. Charles E. Edwards, Birmingham, Ala., noncommissioned officer in charge of the dental clinic, drove the ambulance which made the first trip, 4 a.m., to Bunker Hill 10. With him were A1C Dennis W. Fisher, a dental specialist from Houston, and Sgt. Randall W. Brook, Honolulu, an aeromedical specialist.

cut off his clothing, then evacuated him from the area. At 3 p.m., SSgt. Leonardo V. Silva, Durango, Colo., a medical administration specialist, went to Bunker Hill 10 to pick up two members of the defense force. One was unconscious from heat exhaustion and the other was suffering from severe leg cramps and could not walk.



EMERGENCY—Interservice teamwork is displayed in the emergency room of the 91st Medical Evacuation Hospital at Phu Hiep, A1C Stephen R. Tuttle, (left) an Air Force pararescueman joins members of the Army staff in treating a Vietnamese civilian patient. Carefully watching the young medic at work are MSgt. Earl R. Parrish, Tex., (behind Tuttle), SFC Norman R. Sish, Shelby, N.C., a senior medical technician and Maj. Mary Jane K. Paguin, Pittsburgh, Pa., nurse in charge of the hospital emergency room. (USAF PHOTO)

Edwards drove with the lights out through the intense ground fire. A bullet hit the windshield but no one was hurt. Mortar and rocket shells were exploding in the area. A friendly helicopter gunship strafed enemy positions nearby with its miniguns. "It was only a mile and a half drive out and back," said Edwards, "but it seemed like a thousand miles. Both sides were firing every weapon they had and we were in the middle."

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Doctor Fights 3 Wars

PHAN RANG — Maj. Charles R. O'Brian, Fairborn, Ohio, director of medical services at Phan Rang AB, is keeping busy on three fronts. He runs the 35th U.S. Air Force Dispensary, is the flight surgeon, and directs a widespread medical civic action (MED-CAP) program.

As head of the dispensary, he controls doctors, nurses, and



USAF Photos: Paul Schoen.
Courtesy of the Bien Hoa AB Association.

USAF Photo: Paul Schoen



USAF - Wavelen Fielder Collection

Aerial Photo: Hospital/ Dispensary, Biên Hòa Air Base: USAF - Wavelen Fielder Collection Added an Aerial Photo of the Hospital/Dispensary, located on the EAST Side of Biên Hòa Air Base. The photo can be found in the Biên Hòa Air Base Gallery.