

Hard Fought Small Battles Typify Indochina Fighting

By FORREST EDWARDS
HANOI, Indochina (AP)—It started when 200 Vietnamese guerrillas ambushed a French patrol. It ended with one village in flames and another raked from end to end by tons of bombs and artillery shells. In between was a wild chase across reeking rice paddies under a blazing sun, clinging to the muddy side of a bucking tank that dived into irrigation ditches, chewed its way through paddy dams and stopped every hundred yards to hurl a half-dozen shells at Vietnamese fleeing on foot or hiding in thickets.

"A pretty ordinary day in the delta," was the way the English-speaking French sergeant, Michel Letterrier, put it.

"You mean the heat or the fighting?"

"Both," he answered.
The first 12 miles out of Hanoi on the French supply line to Haiphong seaport had been dull and slow.

FRENCH SOLDIER
Then a dust whirlwind spun around a bend in the road and grew into a French soldier furiously pedaling a bicycle and shouting.

"The Viets. Ambush!"
The Vietnamese had struck hurriedly and sloppily—less than half a dozen of the patrol had been wounded and none killed—and then split. Half fled through the fields on one side of the road, half on the other side.

Two American-supplied M24 tanks rumbled up from a post only a mile down the road, swung their turrets and began pumping shells into clumps of trees a half mile from the road. Four others soon joined them. One shell cut a power line. It writhed and spat jagged electrical flashes in a rice paddy.

The lead tank, the Dunkerque II, swerved off the road. Seconds later it was covered with mud as it clawed through a rice paddy.

There was not an inch of dry footing anywhere on the tank. And hanging on was a two-handed job. The rice paddy had been freshly fertilized. The stink was sickening.

Peasants in the paddies fled when

the shooting began—all except one old couple. The old man dug into his clothes, brought out what looked like a pass and waved it as the tank rumbled past. The old woman looked at the ruined dikes that would have to be repaired and buried her head in her arms.

The tanks fanned out in a line a half mile wide. Every hundred yards or so, the squadron leader, Lt. Joseph Muraccioli, would order them to stop and he would search the area with his glasses. When he spotted the fleeing Vietnamese, the turret guns would belch smoke and flame. Geysers-like eruptions would show where the shells landed in the mud.

Muraccioli and Sgt. Charles Desble fired rifles into suspicious-looking huts and tree clumps as the tanks kept up the chase.

The lieutenant began swinging his squadron to the right in an attempt to intercept rebels fleeing toward the Vietnamese-infested village of Nham Hoa Thuong, two miles away.

Just as it looked as if the tanks might get between the Vietnamese and the village in time, they hit a seemingly bottomless paddy. The Dunkerque settled lower and lower its treads churned but only dug the tank deeper into the mire.

RADIO INSTRUCTIONS
Muraccioli grabbed the radio and relayed firing instructions to French artillery units. The first salvo bracketed the Vietnamese village. Others raked it from side to side for an hour. Fighter-bombers sped over it, dropping 500-pound bombs.

"No use any more," the lieutenant said. "By now the Viets are all underground in the village. But maybe we killed some with our tank guns before they got there. See, the infantry is moving up to look for dead and wounded."

Using trails broken by the tanks, units of Vietnamese and North African troops, commanded by French officers, were moving toward the tanks. They passed and pressed forward in thin, straggly lines.

Then came the long job of getting the mired tank free.

Miles behind the Dunkerque, on the other side of the road from the ambush site, smoke and flame rose from another small village. An artillery shell or bomb had touched off one straw-thatched hut and fire was leaping from hut to hut.

Later a French briefing officer reported:

"Moderate losses to a Vietnamese force that ambushed a patrol on the Hanoi-Haiphong road. Losses to the patrol were very light. There were no other losses in the action."

TL Councilman Resigns Post

TULELAKE—The resignation of Councilman Jerry Van Buskirk, who has held a seat on the council for the past two years was accepted by city fathers meeting Monday night, June 21. Van Buskirk gave reasons of health for leaving. He will seek a lower climate in the hopes of benefiting a heart condition.

The council accepted his decision to retire with regret and voiced appreciation for his work in the cleanup program on the city dump.

Van Buskirk, owner of the Ford agency here for several years, has closed his business.

CAP Cadets Attend Camp

The Klamath Falls Squadron, Oregon Wing, Civil Air Patrol, sent 11 cadets to the summer encampment 1954, held at the Portland Air Force Base, June 19-27. Local CAP cadets attending the training meet are: Captain Jerry L. Keese, Lt. Richard Crawford, Lt. Pat J. Lilly, Sergeant Nancy J. Tanner, Sergeant Billy Peak, Sergeant Pedro Colley, Corporal Patsy Allen, Corporal Norman Ward, PFC John Say, Pvt. Margie Dorrell, and Pvt. James Bradbury.

HST Improving From Operation

KANSAS CITY (AP)—Harry S. Truman is showing steady improvement in recovering from the emergency gall bladder and appendix operation he underwent three days ago.

Dr. Wallace Graham said last night the former President "is making progressive recovery" and that he sat up twice for periods of about 20 minutes yesterday. He said he should be able to walk some today.

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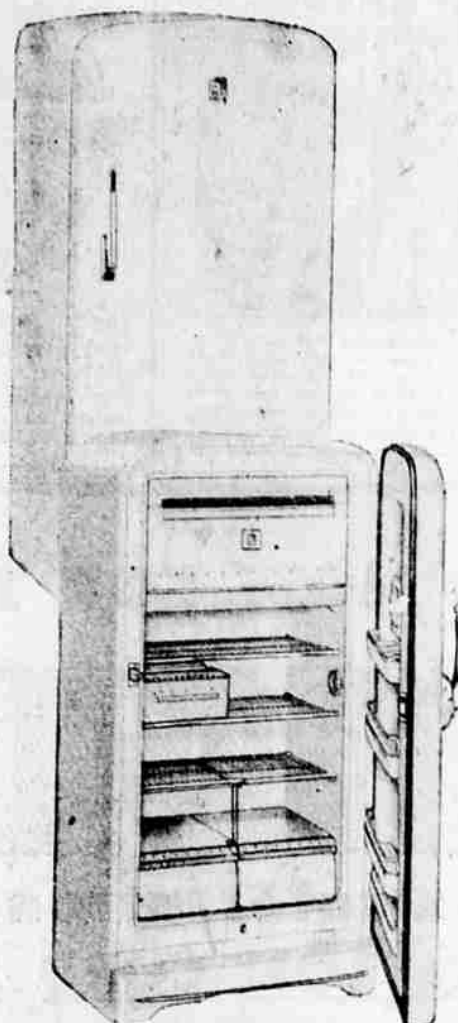
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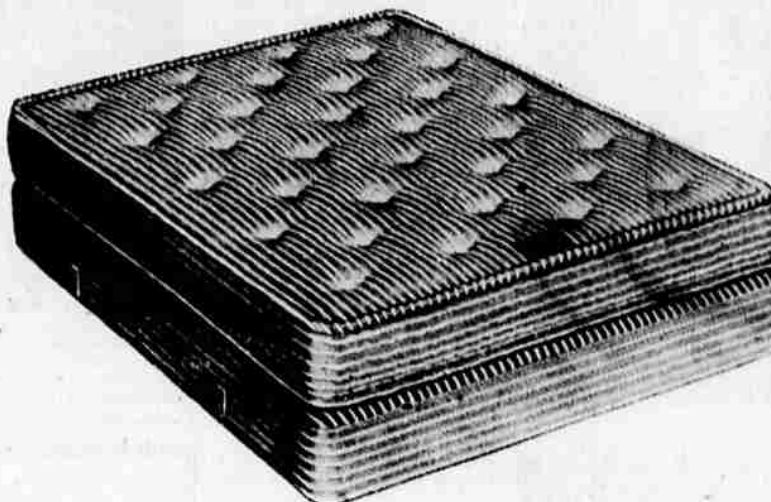


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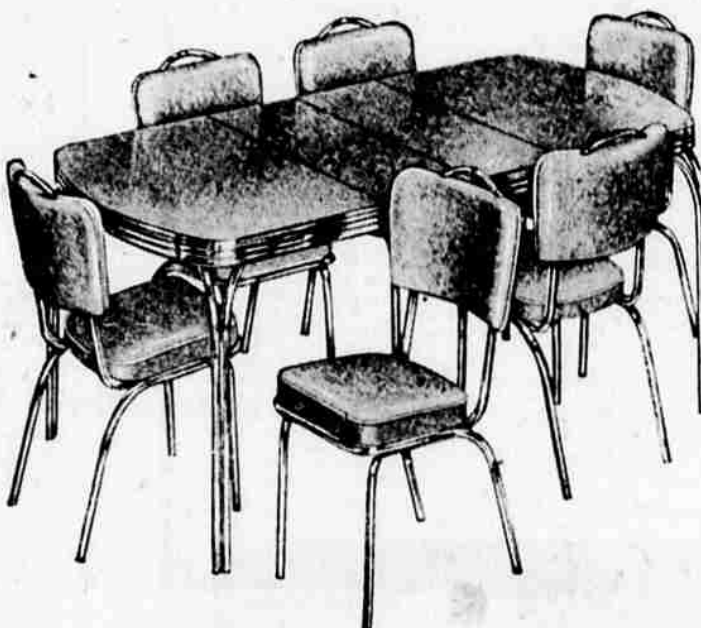
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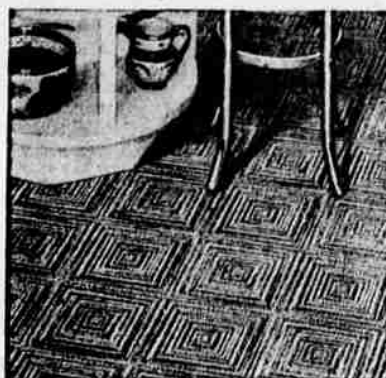
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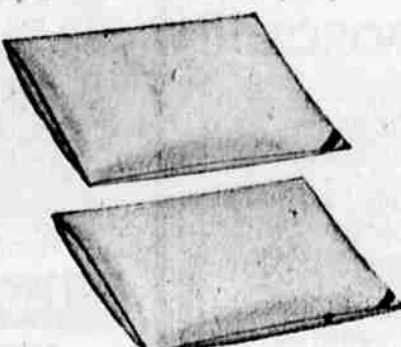
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