

West Point Goes to War

of the war are already visible. For one thing, Vietnam has reversed—perhaps permanently—one of the United States military's oldest traditions. Historically, America has relied for its defense on a citizen army, with the result that the U.S. armed forces in wartime have been noted for an essentially civilian outlook. But in Vietnam, about 60 per cent of the enlisted men, 30 per cent of the officers and nearly all the senior noncoms are career soldiers—and from the beginning they have set the tone for the entire force. Says Lt. Gen. Bruce Palmer Jr., U.S. Army deputy commander in Vietnam: "We seem to be getting away from the citizen army concept and I think it's a tragedy . . . It's true that we've avoided a lot of hard feeling, but we don't know yet the extent of the price we've paid for it."

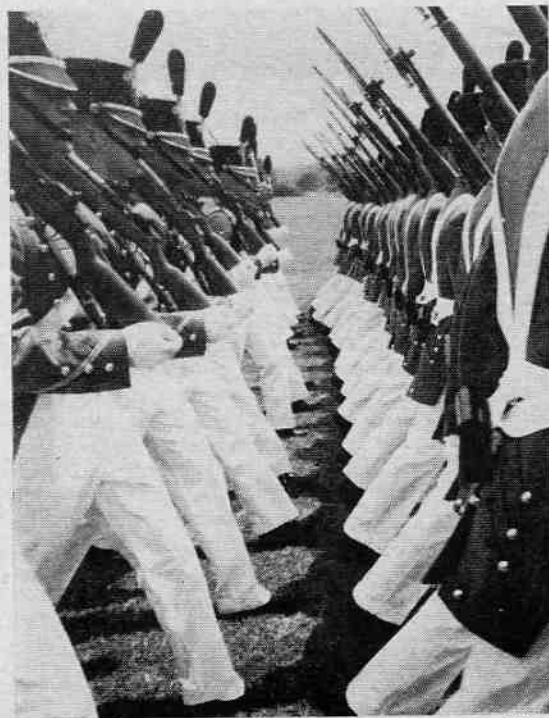
Part of the price has been to make of the Reserves and the National Guard safe havens from service in Vietnam for young men of higher-income groups. As a result, the poor—and especially the Negro poor—have shouldered a disproportionate share of the fighting. Though only one out of nine draft-age American males is Negro, two out of every nine enlisted men killed in Vietnam are black.

There are signs, however, that the suffering and the universally acknowledged gallantry of Negro GIs in Vietnam will have hopeful consequences both for the Army and for U.S. society in general. Increasingly, Negroes are moving up the noncommissioned ranks and into the officer corps. And it is safe to assume that in the future, Negro colonels and generals will be a far more common sight.

Potential Problems: But the Vietnamese war has also raised some potentially serious problems for the U.S. armed forces in the future. The training, tactics and strategic assumptions that have developed out of the counterinsurgency experience in Vietnam may well prove irrelevant in any subsequent, conventional conflicts. Against an enemy armed with anti-aircraft guns, for example, the helicopter would be highly vulnerable. And General Westmoreland warns: "In a conventional war where the enemy has airpower, we will have to learn to pay a lot more attention to concealment from the air . . . to make more night movements and practice more dispersion of our troops."

In addition, because of the importance of pacification in the Vietnam war, the U.S. command in Saigon has tended to emphasize the political role of its officer corps, thus fuzzing the clear distinction that has traditionally existed in the U.S. between the fighting man and the government official. So far, however, this has not produced politically obsessed officers of the kind the French Army developed in Algeria, and General Westmoreland is determined that it shall not. Says he: "An officer has to be politically sensitive . . . But I don't want to water the military man down to where he becomes more of a diplomat than a fighting man. His job is still to win wars."

In the dark, leafy hills overlooking the Hudson River just above Stony Point, the cannon boomed out with a tremendous roar. Waves of stiff-backed cadets in "tarbucket" hats and formal gray-over-whites paraded smartly over the Plain while their parents and dates looked on proudly from the grandstand. Then, under a broiling sun at Michie Stadium, the 579 first classmen who had made it through four years of drill and hazing and classrooms listened to the commencement-day oratory. Up to the platform they were called, one by one, for their diplomas, and when it was over they flung their caps high in the air in the traditional West Point graduation gesture.



At the Point: "Fighting is our business"

That was commencement week at the U.S. Military Academy a little more than a year ago. The Class of 1966 was graduating, and if the clichés and trappings so dear to the Hollywood filmmakers of the 1930s were still very much in evidence, something new and ominous had been added to the scenario: the war in Vietnam. The cadets of the class of 1966, the 168th since the Academy was established in 1802, had long since come to see their own personal destinies as being inextricably linked to Vietnam. Like those earlier classes which sent so many young officers out to bleed and die at Lundy's Lane, Buena Vista, Gettysburg, Chateau-Thierry and Normandy, they, too, would soon be off to war—a war that has already cost the lives of 108 West Pointers.

Not that the class of 1966 seemed unduly disturbed at the prospect—far from it. "Fighting is our business—Business is good," reads a sign in an instructor's of-

fice, and most members of the class seemed to endorse that statement. Out of the 579 graduates, a majority had volunteered for service in Vietnam; and of that number, 98 were chosen to go first.

What were they like, these Vietnam-bound volunteers? How would they fare after leaving West Point? To find out, NEWSWEEK singled out ten of the volunteers as they pinned on their second lieutenant's bars on commencement day, June 8, 1966. The ten:

■ Lt. James C. Gleason, quarterback on the 1965 lightweight All-Eastern League football team, a rugged blond from the rich farming country near Aurora, Ill.

■ Lt. George B. Utter, a personable young man with ink in his veins; his father edits the *Westerly*, R.I., daily Sun.

■ Lt. John B. Buczacki, a tough and sharp-featured New Yorker known to his classmates as the "buzzard."

■ Lt. Rhessa H. Barksdale, the soft-spoken, handsome son of a banker from Jackson, Miss.

■ Lt. Gerald T. Cecil, out of Hazel Green, Ky., in the heart of Appalachia. His father, a dairy and tobacco farmer, is also postmaster of Hazel Green (population: 259).

■ Lt. Peter J. Lantz, a blunt-spoken former enlisted man in the regular Army, the son of a retired artillery colonel now living in Orlando, Fla.

■ Lt. Philip D. Riley, a West Point hockey star whose father runs a stationery store in Dedham, Mass.

■ Lt. Gill H. Ruderman, a rugged 6-footer who was born in Israel. His father, a retired chief warrant officer in the U.S. Army, now lives in Philadelphia.

■ Lt. John C. Eberle, a husky young officer from the Midwest plains. His parents own a dairy farm in Long Prairie, Minn.

■ Lt. Richard M. Swain II, gangling and taciturn, whose father sells embalming supplies in St. Augustine, Fla.

Dissimilar as their backgrounds were, after four years of West Point, the young officers had quite a lot in common. To begin with, they were all unabashedly patriotic, and none expressed any doubts at all about the war in Vietnam. "It is a just war," said Lieutenant Utter earnestly. "We have to take a stand somewhere." And the others agreed on that, as well as on Utter's credo of fledgling professionalism. "I think we ought to be out there," he said. "The duty of a soldier is combat; unless a man can do it, he's no good to the Army."

Naturally, too, all of the ten were intensely proud of being West Pointers. They believed in West Point's motto of "Duty, Honor, Country," and they were

equally proud of its great history. Lee and Jackson and Grant, Pershing and MacArthur, Ike and Patton and Ridgway, were more than just names in history books for them. They were fellow West Pointers; and so were some of the top commanders in South Vietnam, including Gen. William C. Westmoreland.

The West Point pride was there. Yet, to a man, the ten refused to draw invidious comparisons between themselves and the products of the Officer Candidate Schools and the ROTC. How did West Point officers stack up against the others in Vietnam? "Impossible to say," said Lieutenant Lantz, and he was right. For the West Point graduates, who make up 7 per cent of the officer corps in Vietnam, are scattered among many units, and while the Army recently has made studies of the relative performance of West Pointers and other officers, the Pentagon steadfastly refuses to divulge the results.

If West Pointers do not dominate the lower echelons of the military scene in Vietnam, however, their influence at higher levels is quite apparent. Of General Westmoreland's 39 top officers, 21 are West Pointers. And while some OCS and ROTC officers may chalk this up to the influence of the mythical "West Point Protective Association," the true explanation would seem to be something far different. West Pointers are dedicated to Army careers; many of the others are not. Beyond that, as one non-West Point officer in Vietnam explains it: "Where the West Pointers show up is in combat. There is just something about behavior that is drummed into them. Because of their education, they don't ask questions when there is a job to be done. They do it. ROTC people, on the other hand, are inclined to ask 'why?'"

Glamorous: And if all segments of the U.S. officer corps in Vietnam have produced their share of heroes, the West Point variety has proven somewhat more glamorous. Col. Robin Olds, a former All-American tackle at West Point and a World War II flying ace, for example, now has four MIG kills to his credit over North Vietnam—more than any other pilot. And who can forget the courage of Capt. William Carpenter, the famous "lonely end" at West Point and another former All-American? Badly outnumbered and on the verge of being overrun by a North Vietnamese unit in the central highlands, Carpenter called in an air strike on his own position. The Viet Cong were finally beaten back—at a heavy cost. "I lost a lot of people in that strike," Carpenter sadly remarked later. "But you saved the company," his commanding officer replied.



Olds: MIG-killer

A year ago, the ten young volunteers selected from the class of '66 were still far from ready for heroics in Vietnam. They were mint green; and before heading overseas, long months of rigorous training lay ahead. First came three weeks of airborne training at Fort Benning, Ga. To qualify for an airborne patch, each trainee had to make five good jumps, and all the West Pointers did it. By early last fall, with peeling skin and blistered feet, the ten were well embarked on the roughest part of their training—Ranger School.

In its first phase, Ranger training was relatively conventional. There were long road marches and basic platoon tactics, survival training and hand-to-hand combat techniques. But as often as not, the West Pointers had to forget that they were all officers and gentlemen. "When I first saw Lieutenant Cecil," reported NEWSWEEK's Philip Gailey after a visit to Fort Benning, "he was in a sawdust pit crawling on his belly like an awkward snake. After some practice in hand-to-hand combat, Cecil and two others left their rifles in the pit. When they came back after a short break, they faced a



Carpenter: Lonely hero

jut-jawed sergeant who had buried the guns under the sawdust. Coldly, the sergeant ordered the lieutenants to fall on their bellies and root around for their rifles, all the while calling out 'Here weapon! Here weapon!'"

"If you lose your sense of humor in this game, you're through," Cecil commented later, spraying a stream of tobacco juice against a nearby tree for emphasis. "The constant harassment is good for you," Lantz agreed. "You find out your limits and capabilities."

The worst, however, was yet to come. In the second phase of Ranger training, deep in Georgia's Chattahoochee National Forest, the West Pointers were trained for warfare in a mountain environment much like the terrain of South Vietnam's central highlands. For three weeks the young officers lived and slept among the mountains and the steep cliffs, swinging from ledge to ledge, listening to the blistering commands of rough-tongued sergeants. "What the—-are you doing?" yelled one. "Lean out from that rock. This is no paid vacation." "Yes, sir," grunted one of the young officers; then he lowered himself down a sheer rock surface with a rope, leaning back until he was nearly perpendicular to the cliff and walking as if he were upright.

Sadism? This exercise, known as balanced climbing, was designed to develop mountain skills and confidence, and so were some of the other things that seemed, at the time, to be sheer sadism. "Knock off 25," a sergeant would shout, and a West Point trainee, weary from hours of climbing, would position himself on a slanting rock, overlooking a dizzying drop to the valley below. Then, dutifully, he would do 25 quick push-ups with a heavy pack on his back, finishing them off with a Ranger yell and one more push-up for good measure.

The last part of the rugged Ranger training, spent in the Florida swamps near Eglin Air Force Base, was the most demanding of all. This was the jungle-training phase of the Ranger course, conducted by Maj. "Chargin'" Charlie Beckwith; to all who have undergone it, it is known as a real "gut-buster."

Beckwith is proud of that reputation. "If a man is bloody stupid," he shouted at the young officers, "his mother will receive a telegram and it will say: 'Your son is dead because he is stupid.' Let's hope your telegram just says: 'Your son is dead.' Or, with the training we give you here—and every word is important—maybe you won't need any telegram at all."

On that cheery note, the program began. There were combat exercises in fire against hidden targets, in river and stream crossing techniques, and in counter-guerrilla tactics in general. Then the trainees were sent out to slough for fourteen days through the jungle swamplands alive with water moccasins, scorpions and alligators.

And when finally they emerged exhausted from the swamps, having forced a simulated enemy into the sea, the

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would-be Rangers headed happily for the trucks that were to take them back to base camp. "They are under the impression they have completed the course," chuckled Major Beckwith. "Here's where I stop the trucks and we hike across country 17 miles back to camp. Last time one boy started to run. He yelled, 'I'm going to make it, I'm going to make it,' and then he collapsed." Beckwith beamed. "That's all right. He drove himself until he dropped."

In the end, all ten of the West Pointers also met Beckwith's standards and proudly added the Ranger tab to the Airborne patch on their sleeves. And by this stage, last November, they were no longer quite the same innocent, stiff-backed cadets who had tossed their white caps in the air the previous spring. They had been through the toughest training in the Army. And, three of the ten—Lantz, Utter and Barksdale—had found time to get married.

After training, the ten split up and headed for temporary assignments with regular units garrisoned in the U.S. For a few months, they settled down to do the dozens of routine tasks a junior officer must learn to perform: leading their own platoons, serving as mess officers, helping to train other soldiers. But as spring of 1967 drew near, the young West Pointers were, more than ever before, eager to leave for Vietnam. "Once you volunteer, you want to go," said Lieutenant Eberle in a slightly edgy voice. "We want to see how good we are or poor we are as leaders."

Hazardous Goal: Eberle and his comrades did not have long to wait. By last week, most of the ten had arrived in Vietnam, and the others were not far behind. As they all well knew, three members of their class, three of the original 98 volunteers, had already met death in Vietnam, and most of the new arrivals would soon go out to lead their own patrols, that most hazardous of all assignments for young, inexperienced officers.

For NEWSWEEK's ten West Pointers, then, the ultimate test of four long years at the Academy, and months of Airborne and Ranger training, was at hand. And, to a man, they felt ready. "I want to get out and lead a platoon and do what I can do out there," said Lieutenant Buczacki soon after arriving at Bien Hoa air base outside Saigon. Lieutenant Cecil, Kentucky all the way, put it more colorfully. "I knew all the time," he said, "that I could come over here with a platoon and get my insides knocked out. But I remember what a colonel down at Fort Hood told me: 'The object of war is to make the other guy die for his country, not to have to die for yours.'"

Then, thoughtfully, the young lieutenant shifted a wad of tobacco in his mouth. "Of course," he drawled, "two months from now when I'm pinned down in an ambush, I'll say, 'God, was I stupid to volunteer!' But no, not really. I'm not going to second-guess myself. I wanted to come here and I'm glad I'm here."

AN AMBASSADOR

ON THE WAR

BY ARTHUR GOLDBERG



Newsweek—Gotfryd

In nearly two years at the United Nations, my most constant preoccupation has been the search for a just and honorable negotiated peace in South Vietnam. Our lack of success has been the keenest disappointment of these two years. But we cannot afford to let this disappointment turn to discouragement.

Our efforts in the U.N. have been of three kinds.

First, we have pursued *quiet diplomacy*. Throughout these two years I have been in constant contact on Vietnam with Secretary-General U Thant. In July 1965, within days of my arrival, I brought him a letter from President Johnson, encouraging him to renew his peace efforts. This was the first of many such exchanges. Most recently, last March 14, when the Secretary-General made a significant proposal for a cessation of hostilities to be followed by talks, we again supported his initiative in principle. Regrettably, our adversaries did not.

Second, we have sought *formal U.N. action*. In January 1966 we asked the Security Council to take up Vietnam. After extended debate the Council put the matter on its agenda. But it has been prevented from acting by the opposition of various members, especially the Soviet Union and France. Although these opponents offer various procedural arguments, the reality seems to be that these powers are not yet ready to join in seeking a negotiated solution. We hope these attitudes will change. In the meantime, the presence of the question on the Security Council's agenda provides a reference point which could be very useful in the future.

STRESSING LIMITED AIMS

Third, the United Nations has continued to serve as a forum for *debate and public proposals* on Vietnam. Some members have, of course, used U.N. debates to attack the Vietnam policy of the United States. Others have supported our position. In our own statements we have sought to avoid polemics and have concentrated on constructive efforts.

To this end, we have emphasized the strictly limited aims for which we fight in Vietnam. We are not waging a "holy war" against Communism. We seek no American empire or sphere of influence in Asia. We do not seek to impose—nor will we allow to be im-

posed on the people of South Vietnam—a military solution or an unconditional surrender. Rather we seek a negotiated political solution based on two points:

1. That the people of South Vietnam shall have the same right of self-determination—the same right to choose their own future, free of force or external interference, that the United Nations Charter affirms for all peoples.

2. That reunification of all Vietnam shall be decided upon through a free choice by the peoples of both the north and the south without outside interference. We are fully prepared to support the results of that choice.

THE MISSING INGREDIENT

The leaders in Hanoi have hinted several times that peace discussions could begin if the bombing of North Vietnam were stopped. But we have probed in vain for a clear indication of how they would reciprocate for our cessation of bombing, what assurance would be given that neither side would derive any military advantage from the other's de-escalation and whether their purpose would be an honorable negotiated settlement, not a mere surrender by one side.

The essential missing element, I believe, is not merely a solution of the bombing question but something more basic: a readiness by the leaders in North Vietnam, and by those who chiefly support them, to consider that the strictly limited aims to which the U.S. adheres may be compatible with their own vital interests, and a willingness to explore that possibility.

Thus far the United Nations has been no more successful than any other instrument in the effort to bring about the necessary discussions. But we do not exclude the possibility of further reference of the Vietnam problem to the United Nations. Senator Mansfield recently made a constructive proposal to this effect, and we are carefully reviewing his ideas.

We have long since made clear that we are ready to discuss and negotiate on Vietnam in the United Nations, the Geneva Conference, an Asian conference or any other suitable forum. Whatever the forum of future negotiation, we continue to believe that members of the United Nations all share a responsibility for peace; and the greater each member's power, the greater is its responsibility.

TEN WHO CHOSE VIETNAM



Fledglings: Of the 579 members of West Point's class of 1966, most volunteered for Vietnam. On graduation day in June 1966, ten of the volunteers gathered around a cannon overlooking the Hudson. Left to right, standing: Lieutenants Gerald T. Cecil, John B. Buczacki, George B. Utter, Gill H. Ruderman, James C. Gleason, Peter J. Lantz, Richard M. Swain II, Philip D. Riley, John C. Eberle. Front: Rhessa H. Barksdale



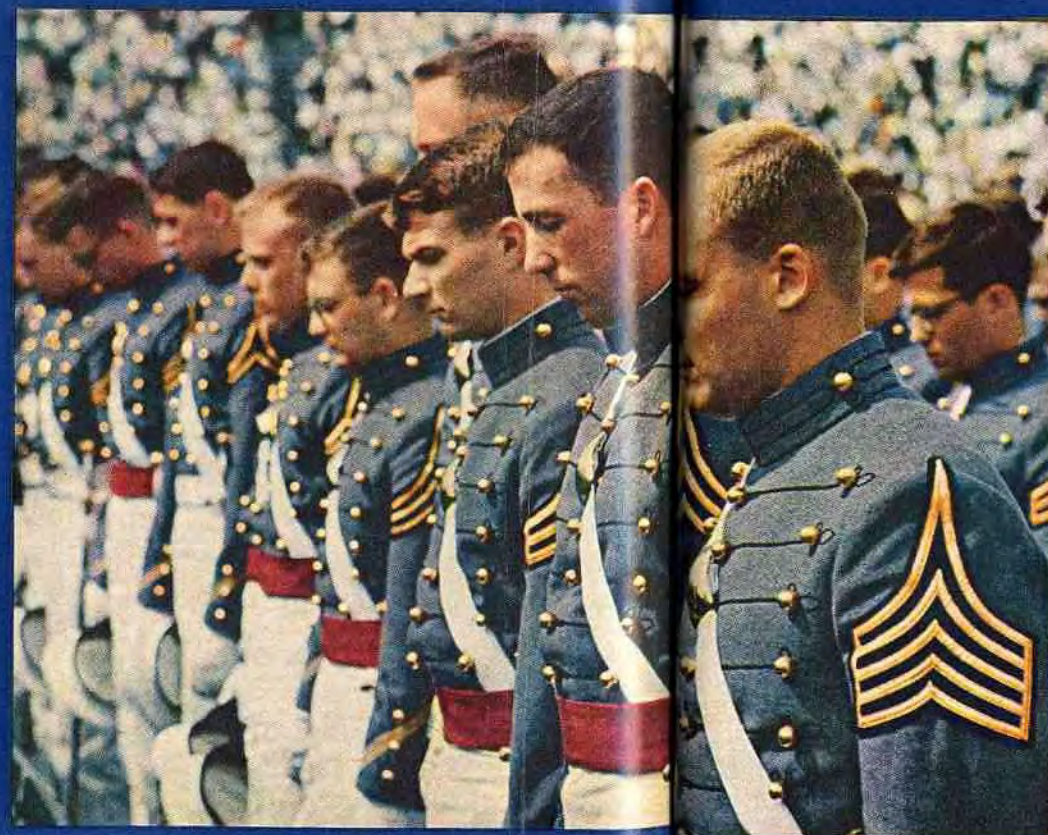
Hats off: Eberle joins in a traditional graduation ritual



Proof: After the commencement ceremony, Utte plays the diploma it took him four hard years to earn



Reward: Barksdale gets a kiss from the future Mrs. Barksdale



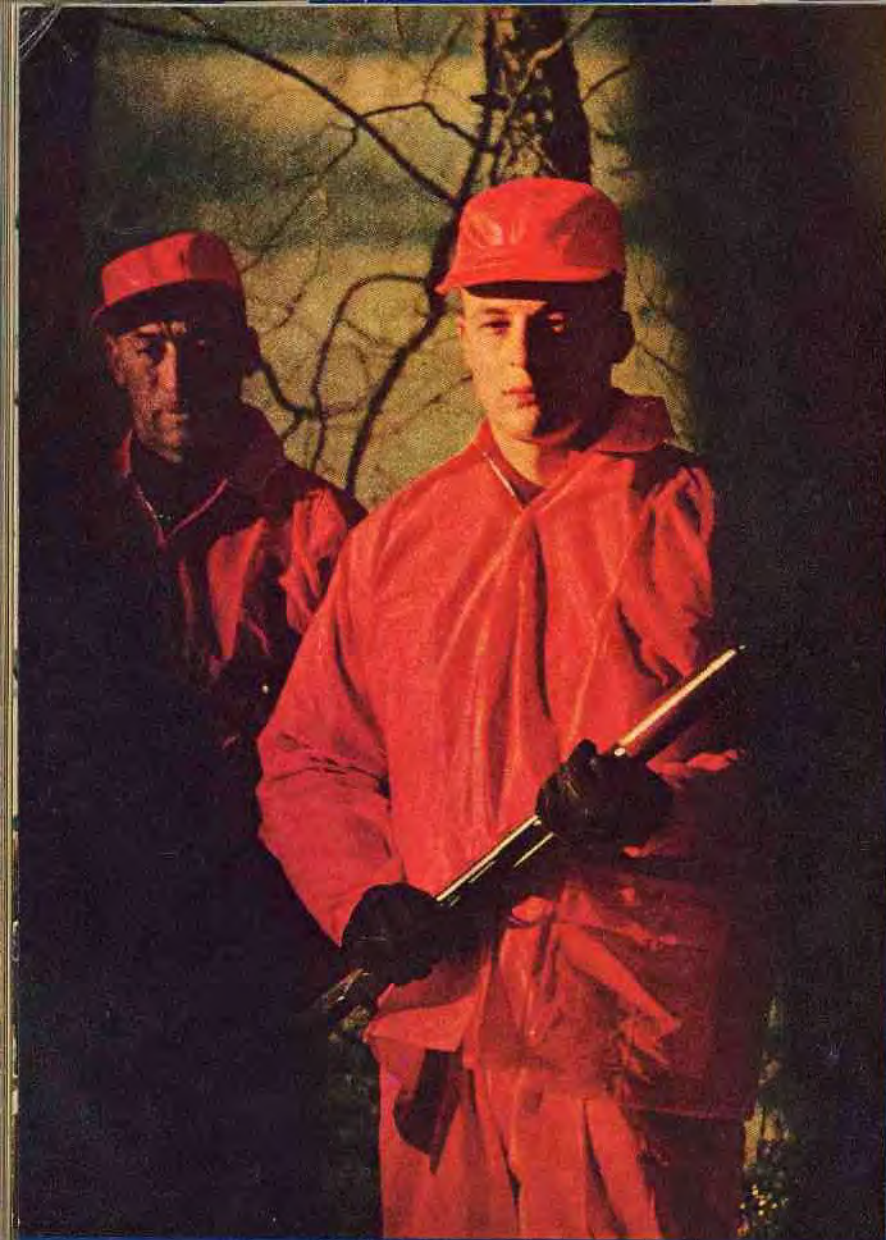
Prayer: Eberle (right) and Riley (third from front) reverently bow their heads



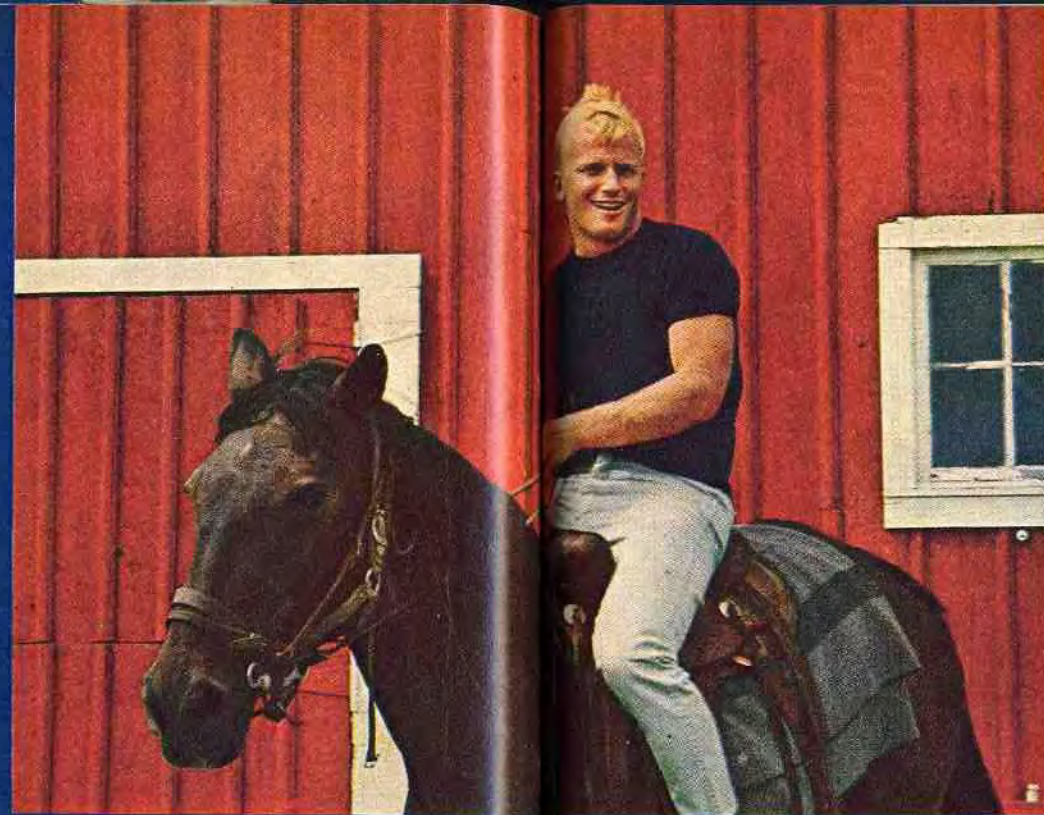
Congratulations: Buczacki receives his diploma

Wedding: Lantz and his new wife stroll across the Academy's grounds

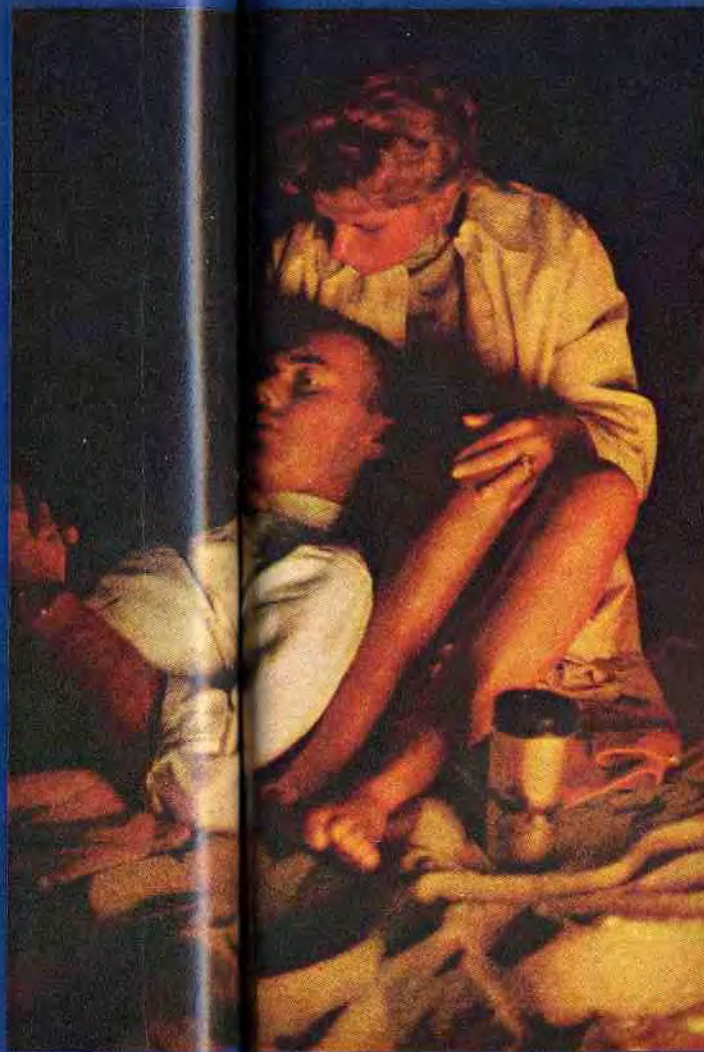




On leave: Eberle and his father get in some wintertime hunting in the Minnesota woods



Saddled up: Gleason relaxes on his horse near his home in Illinois



On a beach in Rhode Island: Utter and wife, Judy, enjoy firelight



Good luck: Riley and friends at farewell party in Massachusetts

Farewell: Eberle says good-by to his mother and father

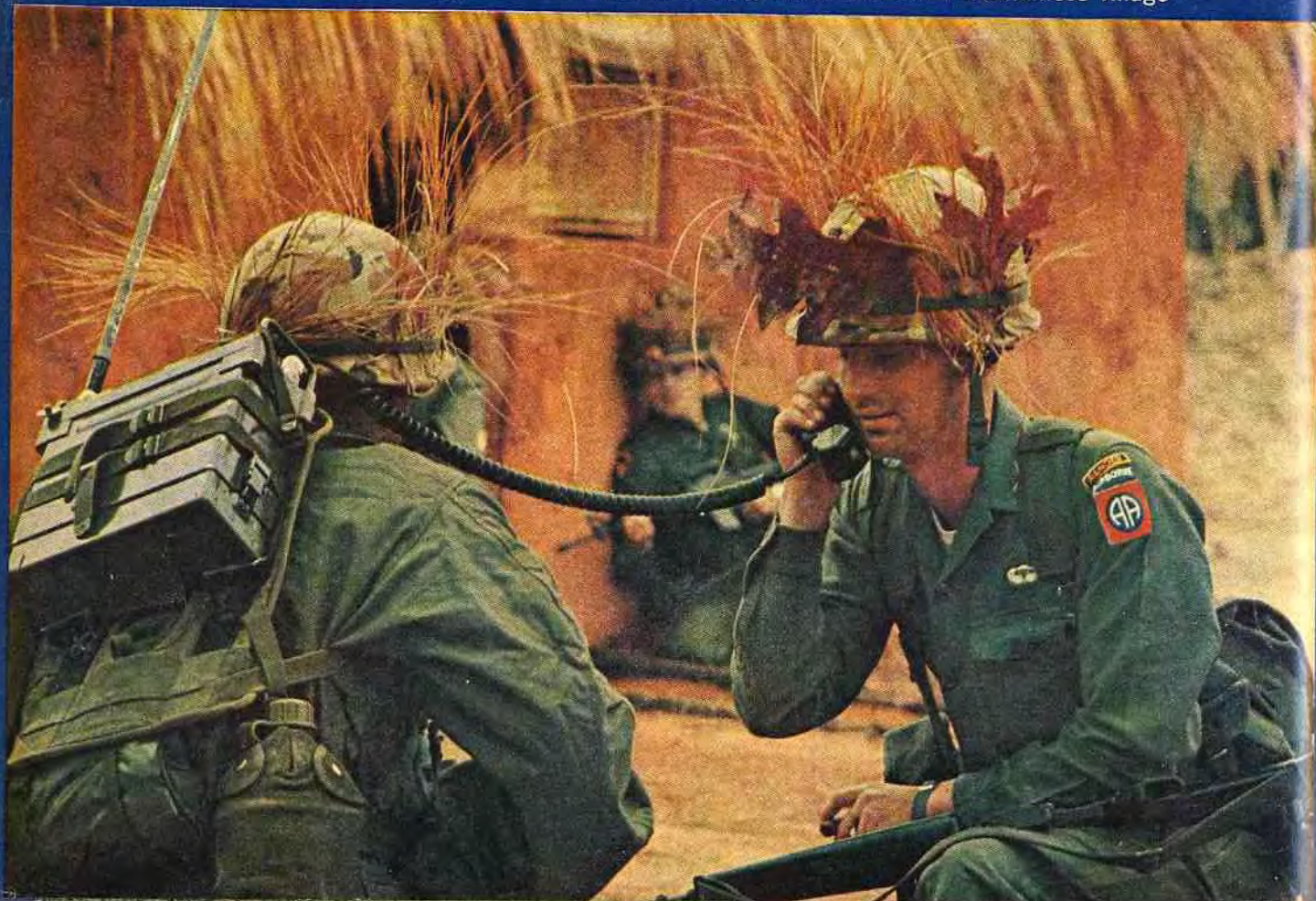




Training for combat in Vietnam: Cecil learns to shove aside a lunging bayonet



On maneuvers at Fort Bragg: Buczacki talks on radiophone in simulated Vietnamese village



Chopper landing: Barksdale leads his platoon across a field at Fort Hood, Texas

Essential lesson: Riley guides helicopter-borne troops in for a landing at Fort Carson, Colorado

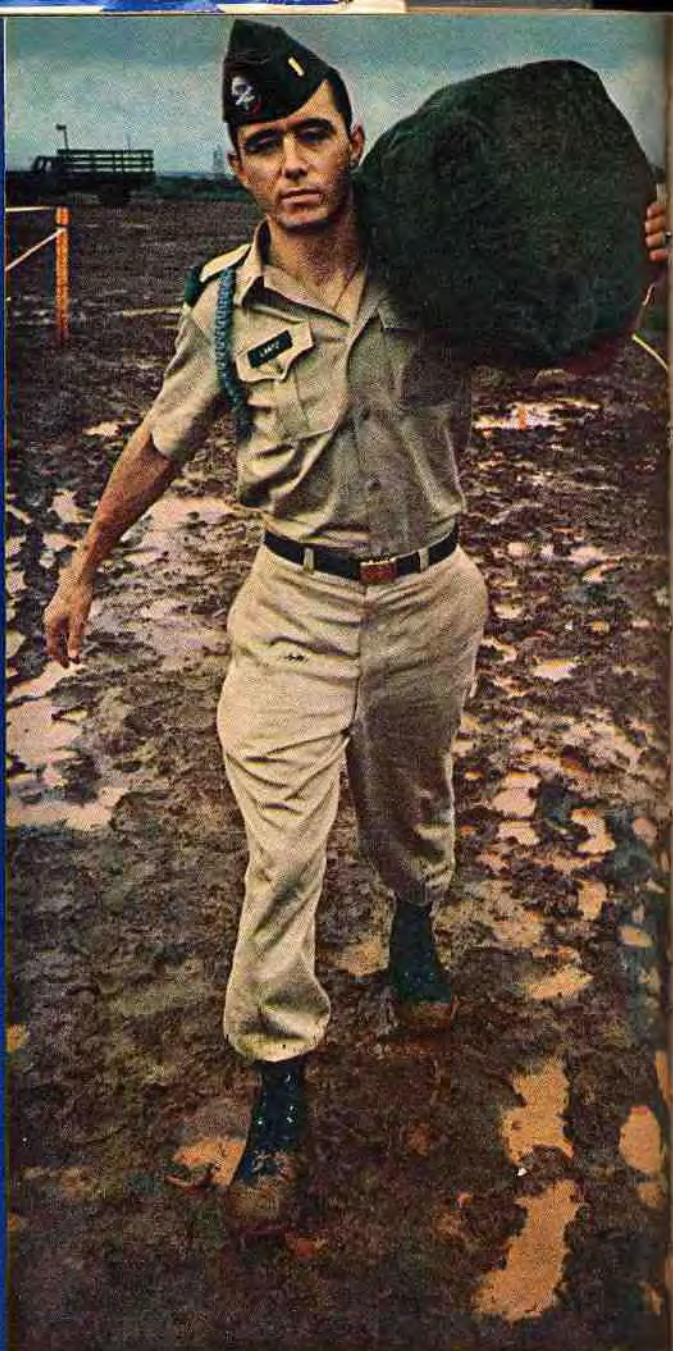


Tank talk: Utter, on maneuvers at Hood, points out assault objective

Surrender: Buczacki and captured 'VC' at jungle training school



Welcome to Vietnam: Buczacki and airline hostesses at Bien Hoa field outside Saigon



Arrival: Lantz slogging through the mud at Pleiku en route to the 173rd Airborne

General Issue: Cecil receives his M-16 rifle from a supply sergeant at Bien Hoa

