

## Maintenance Operations in the 162<sup>nd</sup> Avn. Co.

1969 -1970

Written and compiled by Larry Tabert

To give you an idea of the demanding selection criteria for attendance at the Army's Aircraft Maintenance Officer Course (AMOC) in 1969, I, as a recent rotary wing flight school graduate, 20 year old 1<sup>st</sup> Lt., was offered the opportunity to attend based on my extensive background as a part time mechanic while in high school!

I graduated AMOC in October, 1969 and found myself arriving in the Delta of Viet Nam at the 162<sup>nd</sup> Avn. Co. around December 5<sup>th</sup>. The 162<sup>nd</sup>, had just moved in September from Dong Tam to Can Tho in IV Corps, just about in the middle of the delta. It was now under the 13<sup>th</sup> Avn. Bn., 164 Avn. Group. Dave Holt made the move with the unit and recalls, "I remember someone flipping a coin at the time of the move to determine which Avn. Co., the 162<sup>nd</sup> or 191<sup>st</sup>, would get the newer helicopters when we came to Can Tho. The company that got the new helicopters would let the other company get the barracks. We won the newer helicopters and moved into tents. I still don't know who came out on top in that deal!"

The commander when I arrived, Maj. Ken Loveless, saw that I was maintenance "qualified". Since I had not had an operational aviation assignment since graduating from flight school, he wisely assigned me to one of the flight platoons for a while to learn the AO. In hindsight, I recognized that he also wanted me to learn to fly! During my first month, I flew operational missions all over the delta with the Vultures. I also spent some time with the outgoing maint. officer, Cpt. Arthur "Butch" Jenkins and also with 1Lt. Stephen Garret and CW2 Steve Wiseman, learning to actually test fly the UH-1H and C models. At that time, AMOC for most attendees, was a course on the maintenance paper trail and theory of maintenance test flying, no flying involved.

The Vultures and Copperheads, lift and gun platoons, respectively, flew combat and support missions throughout the delta from the southern tip of the country north toward the 3 corps area and from the east coast to the west coast. We had 23 UH-1H "slicks" and 6 UH-1C "Charlies".

### **Facility**

We were fortunate to share a large hangar with the 191<sup>st</sup> Boomerangs. As a matter of fact, their new maintenance officer was one of my AMOC classmates, Cpt. Ron Jeffers. We arrived in RVN together and would DEROS the same date. Ron was a terrific neighbor and many times in the coming year, we would help each other in finding parts and solving maintenance problems.

Mortar activity at Can Tho was low, but one night, "Charlie" found our hangar and put 4 or five holes in the roof, causing significant damage to the aircraft inside. As I recall, our

“hangar queen” had been rolled outside to make room for aircraft actively undergoing maintenance. Cpt. Jeffers on the other side of the hangar had his “hangar queen” inside that night. He was able to declare it a total loss due to combat damage! Dave Holt recalls, “I was in the hangar the night it got hit, Clayton, Bemis, and Franklin were there too. We ran out to the bunker just before the first one hit. I pushed Bemis through the opening into the bunker so there were no personal injuries.” We couldn’t say the same for the aircraft inside.

## **Operations**

I became the maintenance platoon leader on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, ironically, the same day my first daughter was born! We had some great people on our team. When Cpt. Jenkins DROSD in late February, I was lucky to inherit a couple of great warrant officer test pilots, Steve Wiseman and Fred Auger. Fred was also our Tech Supply Officer and “Scrounger of the Delta”. As the year went on, Steve and Fred left and WOs Jerry Dean, Jim Bishop, Dan Herdon, Charlie Thomas, and Gerry Cote were assigned to the platoon as maintenance test pilots.

The maintenance NCOs were key to keeping things running smoothly. My first platoon sergeant was a problem. He was significantly older than me, and although he talked the talk, he wasn’t always there when needed. On several occasions, I recall having to pull him out of the club, a bit tipsy, to get things done. The other NCOs were sharp though, had experience in their jobs, and tried to help keep me on the right track. In June, we received two new NCOs, SFC Edwards (CRS on his first name) and SSG Edward Parks. These guys were new in country, but knew their stuff and took over. They couldn’t believe how much administrative work I was having to do. SFC Edwards said to me, “Sir, all you need to do is sign the paperwork and test fly the helicopters! We’ll take care of the rest.” And, they did that. I’ll never forget them. I never saw them again after my tour, but have always wanted to thank them for their dedication and support of me and our maintenance operations.

I inherited our method of scheduling aircraft against their flow toward the 100 hour inspections. I remember it being called a PE (Periodic Evaluation?). We had a white board about 3’ x 4’ divided by 10 vertical lines representing 10 hour intervals. A 1” wide Velcro strip was glued from top left to the bottom right. We had 29 tin cutout helicopters with a tail number on each and Velcro on the back. Each night, the position of each cutout corresponding to a flyable aircraft was adjusted accordingly for its time left to inspection. The idea was to schedule aircraft to keep the cutouts evenly spaced down the Velcro line on their way to PE. We worked with operations and, using estimated mission flight times, tried to keep the spacing even, but it wasn’t unusual to see three or 4 cutouts “humping” each other! I would scribble the times of each flyable tail number on a scrap of paper and go over the missions. As I was researching this history, I came across one of my lists. As I reviewed the numbers, memories flooded back about many of the tail numbers! Most of you reading this can certainly remember that, even though they were

all the same type of aircraft, each either had, or would gain their own separate personality. New ones (FNH?) didn't stay new for long!

In May, we received a Transportation Corps (TC) captain (I was Field Artillery branch) who was maintenance qualified. Since I was still a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt., he became the Service Platoon Leader and I was assistant, which was OK with me. I preferred the flight line over the office anyway.

A couple of months later, he was relieved and transferred due to an incident not related to maintenance and I was again the Service Platoon Leader. I made it until about October when we Cpt. Keith Stubbs arrived from Vinh Long, a base several miles north of Can Tho. He had been the maintenance officer of a fixed wing company that had been shut down or turned over to the VNAF. About that time we also received a new maintenance qualified Lt., Gerry Rittenhouse. I was relegated to the assistant until my tour ended in December.

For most of my tour, our maintenance platoon was worked 7 days a week, 12 hour days or more. I tried occasionally to give them a Sunday afternoon off. I'd tell them to be sure they weren't in the company area so they couldn't be called back! We also had movies for the crews after their shifts. For the night shift crews, there was always midnight chow! And sometimes a movie in the morning. There was something weird about getting done at 7 or 8 in the morning and having a drink, watching a movie and going to bed!

I mentioned Vietnamization and that brought to mind our experience with that effort. Toward the end of my tour, October or November of 1970, the Vietnamese were beginning to take over a significant roll in fighting the war. This meant that their pilots were beginning to fly with us and we were beginning to turn over some of our aircraft to a Vietnamese aviation unit, based, I believe, at Bin Thuy just up the road from Can Tho. I recall preparing some of our aircraft for transfer. We could only transfer our new birds because they were the only ones good enough to pass the rigid acceptance inspections of the receiving units! So, we got rid of our good birds and kept our old high-time birds going through skill and hard work. Quite a challenge at times!

### **Test Flights**

Test flights were conducted all hours of the day and night. They were usually flown single pilot with a maintenance mechanic in the other seat. If the maintenance procedure was performed by a team, the team chief would go. This served two purposes: to teach him about what was being checked and to make sure he knew the necessity of doing the job right! Whenever maintenance was performed, especially one resulting in a red X in the logbook indicating a non-flyable condition, the work had to be inspected and signed off by a technical inspector (TI). After the signoff, the test pilot would also inspect the work to verify its completion and correctness. Of course, a complete pre-flight would also be performed.

There were many “lessons” to be learned by an FNG maintenance test pilot in RVN. When I was attending AMOC, several of the “old, crusty” CW2s coming from RVN would often contradict the “school solution” being taught for many maintenance procedures. For example, the process of fine tuning lateral blade balance by using wraps of masking tape, the “school solution” gave way to swagging the amount of lead (or 7.62 rounds, no tracers, please!) to put in the blade retaining bolts.

We did a lot of night time maintenance work and test flying to get the aircraft ready for the next day, often, right on through to the next morning. Sometimes, maintenance teams would finish a job and the aircraft would only need a Maintenance Operational Check (MOC) to check that the repaired item functioned correctly. Early one morning, 2 AM or so, one of our test pilots (name withheld to protect the guilty!) went out to MOC one of our slicks. He untied the blade, got in and began the run-up. Something wasn't right, this was the smoothest bird he'd ever started. Then he noticed that there was no rotor RPM! The crew chief hadn't re-installed the short shaft yet. Well, it was a long day and night.

The books didn't always cover every situations. Sometimes you just had to find different ways to get to a solution. Jerry Dean came into the hangar one night after test flying an H model for a strange lateral vibration. He said, “You've got to go fly this one with me, I don't know how to describe it except to say it seems to jump sideways when you pull power to climb on downwind.” I went up with him and sure enough, it seemed to do exactly that and seemed to be related to the use of left pedal. We tried a few things to figure it out, but with no luck. The next day, I had him do hovering turns left and right while I watched on the ground. At one of the switches from right turn to left turn, I thought I saw a gap open up where the tail joined the fuselage. I waved him in and sure enough, there was a broken tail boom retaining bolt. Nothing a little duct tape couldn't fix! Bolt replaced, the aircraft flew fine.

On another occasion, one of the slicks came back at the end of the day with a write-up of a 64 PSI overtorque at the termination of an especially aggressive high overhead spiral approach to a hot LZ. At that level, we were looking at just about replacing the helicopter. We talked it over among our maintenance pilots and TIs and looked at the performance charts. The charts said an H model shouldn't have been able to pull more than 60 PSI. Below 62 PSI would only require replacement of a few components and inspection of the rest of the drivetrain. So I and one of the other test pilots went out to see what she could do under the same conditions the next day. After several attempts, we weren't able to pull more than about 58 PSI. We then performed the appropriate procedures for that level of overtorque and the aircraft flew fine. Not a school solution, but seemed appropriate to the situation and times.

Fred Auger submitted the following about night test flying:

The worst for me was the downwind hydraulics off flight test that almost did us in. It was another black night with only the base smudge pots for our landing field reference. My left seat chief technician, Sam, turned off the main hydraulic switch. As soon as he did, the cyclic slammed to the left rear position causing a nose high left turn attitude

where the bright night stars were now our visual guides. We were rocketing straight up in a cyclic climb. With all of my might, I tried to pry the cyclic off of my crushed left leg. I yelled to Sam to turn on the hydraulic switch. It was the second yell that did the trick, Sam responded. He reached up and slammed the hydraulic switch to the hydraulic assist position. All of my forward cyclic force practically launched me through the front canopy. We were now nose over, attempting the world's first UH-1H somersault. My flight orientation was a mess. "Wings level, wings level!", was all I could remember. "When in extreme attitude, always level your wings then worry about the rest". I remembered this from my flight school days. The aircraft was leveled and I resisted jerking the cyclic back now under full hydraulic control again. Poor Sam's eyes were as wide as saucers. Since I also feared vertigo, I contacted Can Tho PAR for an emergency landing approach. Not knowing what in the hell caused such a violent hydraulic failure condition, I sure as hell was not about to risk this situation again. Plus, my poor brain was not in the best condition. With my emergency landing call, PAR wasted no time. I was rolled around and guided in by real professionals. At my final approach hover, I thanked PAR and hovered back to the revetment. When we shut down, Sam got out and proceeded to vomit in the pond behind the aircraft. We later learned of a one way hydraulic valve replacement that had been incorrectly performed by a maintenance crew member who had a known substance abuse problem. Sam and his team had their own justice far better than any well deserved court martial. That was good enough for me. Since we made our aircraft ready quota with two birds to spare, I chose to wait until morning to finish this aircraft.

## **Maintenance Procedures**

We had our own engine shop and technician. Many of our engines came to us as rebuilds from our maintenance support in Vung Tau. I don't recall the unit. At some point toward the summer of 1970, we began to have a rash of engine failures. The finger seemed to be pointing toward our engine shop, maintenance crews, test pilots, and procedures. Our technician was competent and we followed procedures. Yet the engines kept eating up their compressors. We finally started looking closely at the internal compressor blades for engines we were receiving from rebuild out of Vung Tau and found significant damage to the blades. It appeared, the rebuilds weren't being performed correctly. An investigation ensued and, in the end, they discovered problems with the engines we were receiving.

Sheet metal repair was performed by one military sheet metal specialist and two civilian Dynallectron employees. I can remember one of their names, Bob Schuyler (sp?). Although our military guy was pretty good, these two civilians were miracle workers. It was phenomenal what they could build and rebuild. A gaping hole in a tail boom with stringers blown through. No problem, we'll make new ones and cover that nasty hole! After a particularly rough day for our defoliation crew, they came back with about 65 holes in the aircraft. Amazingly, the pilot was the only one on board injured with just a small facial scratch from the shattered windshield. I thought it would never fly again, but our sheet metal crew went to work and had it up in just a few days. The work included some major structural rebuilding. The funny thing about having civilians working for me

was, even in a combat zone, I had to sign their weekly time cards and approve their overtime!

We had a prop & rotor shop, but only had the capability to dynamically balance tail rotors. The shop was too small to balance a main rotor so we did it on the aircraft. Toward the end of my tour, our commander obtained some kind of corrugated steel plates which were assembled into a long cross-section oval shaped shelter to set up for main rotor balancing. This allowed dynamic balancing without effects from the wind or other elements.

Charlie models were real stubborn to track. You would get it right according to the tracking flag, both low and high speed, in the revetment. Then you'd fly it and it would beat you to death. What we needed was somebody to hold the tracking flag as we made a high speed, low pass down the runway. No volunteers. Then someone came up with a way to track it in flight, at night. The device was extremely simple, a couple of aluminum rods about 4 inches long, about 1/2" in diameter. One end was tapped and machine screws were inserted so about 3/4" stuck out. Reflective 3m tape was wrapped around the other end, one with yellow and one with red. At night, with the landing light fully extended, pointing up toward the rotor system, you could see the track of each blade. You then knew what each one was doing in flight and could make your adjustments accordingly. I don't remember seeing that in the manuals or hearing about it in AMOC!

What would maintenance be without inspections? I've recently dug through letters I wrote to my wife while I was in RVN. Seems, I didn't vent my troubles to the chaplain, but to my wife in my letters. I was complaining to her that we were going to be the victims of a Command Maintenance Management Inspection (CMMI). Yes, in a combat zone. It's not right until the paperwork is right, right? I remembered hearing about those in one of my AMOC classes, but the instructor said not to worry, they don't do them in RVN. So much for the school solution!

In preparation for the inspection, we tried to clean up our act and make sure the parts we had were on the books. I found a couple of Conex containers outside next to the hangar that contained spare parts that weren't appropriate to store in our Tech Supply room in the hangar (2<sup>nd</sup> floor above the shops). Not appropriate means that they weren't on the books and we couldn't even use most of them, let alone identify them! Things like a CH-34 tail gear and windshield. We took a load of them to Vung Tau to try to turn in, but they wouldn't accept the parts without them being appropriately identified and tagged. How do you identify items you don't have parts manuals for? After several futile attempts, these parts were "discretely" disposed of so no questions would be asked when we had our inspection. Alas, inspection day came and went and we didn't pass. At this point, in my mind, the phrase, "So, now what happens, are they going to send me to Viet Nam?" came to mind. But we took the inspector's comments to heart, corrected the deficiencies, and eventually passed! We had a major billets construction project going on at the same time just to keep it interesting.

## **Aircraft Recoveries**

We used to keep a “ready kit” of parts we anticipated might fail, ready to grab on first notice of a bird down for a possible maintenance problem. On the call of a bird down, we’d head out with a couple of mechanics and our parts to try to make the it flyable so it didn’t have to be “hooked” home.

We got a call late one afternoon that one of our Charlie models was down at an outpost in the U-Minh forest well south of Can Tho with a hydraulic leak. Knowing there was a hydraulic line in the transmission well that was prone to cracking, we made sure we had one before heading out to fix it. We headed out southbound, Lt. Gerry Rittenhouse, was my co-pilot. He was just three weeks in country, I had about three weeks to DEROS. We were confident we had the right part to fix the problem and that we and the other crew would be back at the club drinking brews in a few hours. On the way down, we dodged thunderstorms trying to work our way to the outpost.

Upon our arrival, the Copperheads were overjoyed to see us come to their aid. Our guys went to work on assessing the problem and discovered we didn’t have exactly what we needed to make the repair. Several attempt to “jury rig” it failed, the evening was becoming dark night and thunderstorms were all around. Then we got news of an intelligence report that they were expecting a mortar strike on the outpost around 11:00 PM. It was time to leave the Charlie model and head home. We would come back in the morning with the right parts. We loaded ourselves and the Copperheads into our bird and took off into pitch black night, punctuated by lightning flashes all around. I was able to contact Can Tho tower to find out that the weather was clear there, so I knew if I headed in that direction, about 020 degrees, we’d eventually see Can Tho. The immediate problem was that the ceiling was less than 1’000 feet and it was very DARK. We shut off the nav lights to ensure we didn’t make a good target to someone on the ground.

As we flew on, the ceiling started to drop and we kept descending. One good thing about flying in the Delta, you knew there were no obstructions above 50’! I thought to myself, “I’m not going lower than 500’ MSL. Another complicating factor was that the clouds ahead seemed to slant on the horizon. There were not ground lights or moon, so we were essentially IMC (Instrument Meteorological Conditions) trying to fly airspeed, heading, and altitude – on a TAC ticket (Tactical Instrument Ticket). I was at the controls and found myself feeling we were in a descending left turn, probably due to the sloping horizon. Of course, like it or not, I was correcting by applying right aft cyclic. One of the Copperhead in the back yelled, “Your headed back south, check your airspeed!” Sure enough, I’d reversed heading and was at 40 knots. Yikes! I pushed the nose forward, fighting my instincts and trying to turn left back toward the north. I’d get one thing right and the other two would be out of whack. I was starting to feel like we were upside down, my first real brush with vertigo. After awhile, I didn’t think I could keep it upright and was about to give the controls to Gerry in the left seat so I could try to get my head straight, when he said something to the effect of, “I hope you got a handle on this, I feel like I’m upside down!” My heart sank. I remember leaning over and banging my head on

the plexiglass window and telling myself to get it together or we would get down in a ball of flame. I forced myself to work a good cross check and gradually got everything back together. About 10 minutes later, we punched out of the soup and saw the lights of Can Tho about 15 miles ahead. From that point, there wasn't a cloud to be seen ahead. When we finally parked in the revetment, I wasn't the only one to kiss the PSP!

On another occasion, I was awakened one morning about 9:00 AM after working all night. At the time, I worked the night shift from about 4:00 PM till launch the next morning. I'd just fallen asleep when someone from operations summoned me to get up, grab my flight gear and get to the flight line to be picked up. One of our birds had gone down and was sitting in a rice paddy, intact. We needed to go recover it. I asked what the problem was and was told that the pilot thought the engine had been shot, there was a loud bang, so they put it down. One of the other ships picked up the crew and passengers. We climbed on board the slick that took us to the bird sitting in a rice paddy about half way between Can Tho and Vinh Long. As we circled overhead looking at the UH-1H, it was in the middle of a rice paddy, tree lines about a ¼ mile away on all sides, the scene looked pretty calm. There were no covering aircraft. No sign of activity on the ground. I told the pilot to take us down. I don't recall the maintenance person with me that day, possibly Charlie Hott, but as we left our bird and ran through the paddy to the downed aircraft, I told him to untie the rotor and walk it backward. If he could see the turbine spin in the tail pipe, pull the tie down and get in, I would try to start it. The turbine turned, he got in and. In the meantime, I popped the fuel cap and peered in looking for evidence of a possible grenade, did a run around the aircraft looking for booby traps and found none. I got in, hit the trigger and it lit and started up. I gave a hand signal to the crew that brought us that we were going and then took off. At this point, I realized I didn't bother to grab my helmet as I left the other bird so I flew trail off of them all the way home. I still don't know if I was cleared to land back at Can Tho, but they didn't shoot us, so it must have been OK!

We had a Charlie model in maintenance at Vung Tau forever. Since it didn't seem to be getting fixed, the CO told me to go get it and bring it home. This might have been Maj. Moore, CRS! The bird had been somewhat stripped while there. When we arrived, it was missing a rotor blade and several instruments including an engine oil pressure gauge. The maintenance unit said we couldn't have it because it was missing a main rotor blade. I told them to give me a blade and a tracking flag and my crew would put it on, then we'd be on our way. Well, this C model had the nastiest lateral vibration, and we couldn't work it out. We balanced it as best we could and headed out to Can Tho late in the afternoon following our maintenance bird. We were depending heavily on the caution lights to keep us safe because several of the actual gauges were just holes in the panel. We got the aircraft home and repaired it ourselves. Oh, that nasty lateral seemed to be caused by the Cobra blade the maintenance unit provided us! (at least, that's what I remember as the explanation of the problem by our TIs upon our return!)

I have pretty vivid memories of the following recovery, but Dave Holt, one of our maintenance line crewmen wrote a story about it for our Vulture and Copperhead website. (<http://www.162ahc.com>). Dave and Charlie Hott were my primary recovery

team and our unscheduled maintenance line crew (Ash & Trash). Dave gives a great account of it, so I'll let him tell you about it. It is followed by comments by Bill Tuttle, one of our Copperhead Charlie model pilots who covered us during this operation.

## **SOMETIMES AIRCRAFT RECOVERY IS SCARY**

By David Holt

(Maintenance Flight Line Crew Member)

It was late in the evening and we (Charlie Hott and myself) got a call on our radio to meet our Maintenance Officer at one of the revetments. We were working unscheduled maintenance that day and were about to get off and let the night crew have it. When we got there, he told us that a ship was down in a river in the U-Minh Forest and we needed to pick it up.

A flight crew flew us down there (Charlie Hott, Lt. Tabert and myself) with our box of straps to rig the aircraft. It was late and dark when we got there and the pilot turned on the landing light to show us the situation with the aircraft. Tracers started coming up toward us from all over the forest. The Lt. asked me if I would go down and rig the ship. I told him I would go if he would. I never told him but I was scared and didn't want to go. (Lt.'s comment: I was scared and didn't want to go either!)

Well, luckily, we didn't go down that night. Instead, the Navy was called and 3 River Patrol Boats came up river to guard the helicopter. Actually, they couldn't make it all the way to the downed ship and anchored just around a bend, about 50 yards or so away. We flew down from Can Tho the next morning at 5:00 AM and dropped into the water with our slings to rig the ship. The Lt. went first and I waited until he came back to the surface and threw him the box of slings. I jumped and Charlie followed. After the Chinook picked up the ship, our ship was supposed to hover over the water and pick us up. So much for plans, they couldn't get down low enough to pick us up.

The Lt. said he would rig the mast, so that left the rotor turning and tying down to us. The 90 degree gear box and part of the tail rotor were out of the water but the cabin was over half full of water. We finally got the rotor turned to match up with the tail boom and Charlie was going to dive down and pull the strap around the boom. He thought I had got hold of the strap and turned it loose. We dived several times trying to locate that strap but no luck. We then went into the cabin and removed all of the seat belts and tied down the main rotor with them. It looked shabby but it worked. The Chinook came in and hooked up. When the ship left the river, water was pouring from every opening.

The three of us then swam over to the bank (the kind you see in the old jungle pictures) with the exposed roots. We got hold of the roots and stayed low in the water. While we were holding onto the roots, large ants got on us and started stinging. Our ship was circling at several thousand feet, rounds were going off everywhere and people were yelling. I was wishing I was someplace else. We heard someone nearby yell and we got lower in the water. He was closer the next time he yelled. This time we could tell he was

speaking English and had a Boston accent (no Cong ever sounded like he was from Boston).

He came up to us and said they were ready to go. He told us that the boats were waiting on us around the bend and they would take us down river and out to Sea Float. I was real happy to see the Navy that day. Those boats had real fire power. They had a twin 50 on a turret, a single 50 with a rocket launcher, six M-60's and several ARVN's with M-16's on each boat. I think all of them were firing as we left. When we got out to Sea Float it was about noon and they were eating, they asked us to eat with them but our ship was landing on one of the barges that made up Sea Float. We flew back to Can Tho and found out that the Chinook pilot that was flying our sling load bumped the release button and our effort was wasted.

### **Further to Dave Holt's Story on Aircraft Recovery**

By Bill Tuttle

(Copperhead Gun Pilot)

Dave mentions the ship they recovered went down in the river. Actually, Mike Rigney had a shot-up engine and put it on the north bank of the Nam Can River. He got a Bronze Star with V for it—he doesn't know why, either, since it involved "aerial flight"—but that's the reason the hangar rats were doing a recovery in the first place. Then the tide came in, which is when all the fun started. I was in the high Charlie model that day, so most of my time was spent watching my Lead ship snoop and poop around. Lead spent most of his time giving us a running commentary about Larry Tabert (affectionately known as "Fat Albert") ducking under water every time one of the VC in the nipa palms on the south bank popped off a shot at him. Our gunner had a jammed 60, so he and I just sprayed the south bank with our M-16s whenever Lead said, "And down he goes again!" We either discouraged the VC, they ran out of ammo or they decided to watch the fun when the Hook lifted the Huey out of the muck, because they stopped shooting after about twenty minutes. And it wasn't the first time the Innkeepers punched off one of our ships—they previously dropped Triple Nickel (full of rockets, red smokes and CS) upwind of a village on Go Cong island. Seems there was a TV crew from a major stateside network gathering "local color" footage when a cloud of pink CS drifted down on the ville. We heard about that one for weeks!