

Black Lions Surprised To Find Jungle Pool

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By PFC Tom McGibbney

(2/28 Inf IO) — To the average Division soldier in Vietnam, the element of surprise has become a way of life. The weird and unusual are common here. But what really surprised the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry «Black Lions» was when they found a swimming pool in the middle of the jungle.

Members of A Co stared in disbelief when they came upon this strange sight while on patrol north of their Lai Khe basecamp.

The immediate reaction of many was that it was a gigantic bunker. SP4 Ralph Carasco, Phoenix, Ariz., was puzzled by what he saw. «I thought it was a mirage. Either that or my eyes were going bad. You just don't find a swimming pool in the middle of the jungle.»

«I was on a cloverleaf patrol when I first saw the pool.» recalled SP4 Dave Brown, Montgomery, Ala., a team leader in A Co's 1st Plt. «I didn't know about it being there and was really surprised when I saw it.»

Close examination showed it to be an Olympic-sized swimming pool of concrete,

with adjoining dressing rooms. Then the typical BIG RED ONE humor came out. Speculation on its use ranged from its being a VC R & R center to an elaborate convention hall for mosquitoes.

The pool was built years ago by the French. Why it was constructed at such an obscure location is unknown, but now the pool is clothed by the encroaching jungle surrounding it. Years of green moss, mold, fallen trees and stagnated water had engulfed the huge hole in the ground.

To SP4 Jim Bellman, Huntsville, Ala., it was a real shock. «I had heard of Lai Khe's famous swimming pool before arriving here,» he related. «I had been wanting to use the pool at the first opportunity, but this is ridiculous.»

In contrast to Bellman's version, SP4 Donald Bourland, Canyon, Tex., knew of the pool's existence. «I had heard about the pool being there, but was surprised to see it. We pulled ambush there one night and didn't get anything, but when we left a lot of guys were scratching their heads.»