

# Plei Me Defenders Fight Off Northern Regulars

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — Robin Mannoek of The Associated Press joined the relief column that reached the battered Special Forces camp at Plei Me Monday.

By **ROBIN MANNOCK**  
PLEI ME, South Viet Nam (AP) — After seven days of continuous action, the handful of U. S. Army advisers behind the barbed wire at Plei Me know they have been pitted against the Viet Cong's first team — a regiment from North Viet Nam's 308th Infantry Division. It shows on every haggard, grime-smudged face.

A relief column of more than 1,300 Vietnamese rangers, infantry, tanks and armored personnel carriers reached the besieged Special Forces camp Monday. The Viet Cong caught them in the open, and for more than an hour enemy mortars, heavy machine guns and automatic weapons poured fire into the relief force and into the camp.

Capt. Russell Hunter, the camp's doctor from Abilene, Tex., seemed to be everywhere inside the camp's perimeter as dead and wounded were carried in.

His week-old growth of beard was caked

with brick-red dust and his eyes stared with fatigue.

One wounded U.S. adviser was brought to Hunter's underground aid station by other Americans. They carried him through the wire, under sniper fire, when South Vietnamese soldiers balked at bringing him in.

For some of Plei Me's defenders, the assault was too much. A noncom ripped the bandage off one Vietnamese soldier's arm and found no wound. Screaming with rage and grabbing him by the jacket, the noncom hauled the cowering soldier from a trench and kicked him back into the fight.

The camp's defenders retaliated with 50-caliber machine guns, mortars and small arms. U. S. Skyraiders and jet attack bombers pummeled thickets on a gentle rise south of Plei Me where the Viet Cong lay hidden.

Each time there was a lull, shots from concealed Viet Cong snipers sent everyone scurrying for cover.

Bomb fragments and shrapnel splattered the camp as the planes and big guns hit close to the wire. Gunners of the U. S. 1st Air Cavalry division fired volley after volley of white phosphorus and high explosives with terrifying accuracy.

The Americans in Plei Me credited the planes with saving the camp. American pilots flew hundreds of sorties by day and night.

"When I meet a flyboy after I get out of here, I'm going to hug and kiss him," said Maj. Charlie A. Beckwith. He commanded an American team which came to the rescue of Plei Me's beleaguered troops last Thursday with two companies of Vietnamese airborne rangers.

With no water for washing or shaving, Beckwith, 36, looked like an emaciated grizzly bear. He is from Atlanta, Ga.

"I thought it was all over, chief," said Staff Sgt. Frank Kowalski of Utica, N. Y. Kowalski, an artilleryman from the 1st Cavalry, had been attached to the Vietnamese 22nd Ranger Battalion.

"I bounced into a hole but it was a real small one and I bounced right out again," he said. Kowalski counted 10 mortar shells passing overhead as he sought a better hole.

Kowalski's forward artillery observer — another American — was wounded in the arm by a mine.

The onslaught pinned down part of the rangers in trenches, bunkers and tunnels dug

by the Viet Cong less than 100 feet from the outer wire on the northern edge of Plei Me, scene of the heaviest attacks last week.

The Viet Cong abandoned the earthworks and several of their dead.

"It was as much as I could do to stay there," said Capt. Paul Leckinger, 32, of Rochester, N.Y., senior U.S. adviser to the 21st Rangers. Leckinger had spent part of his fourth son's first birthday hugging the dirt Saturday night when a North Vietnamese regiment began to attack the relief column on its way to Plei Me.

Crouching in forward trenches inside the camp were Plei Me's garrison and their families. Wives comforted infant children next to their menfolk. Most are members of the Montagnard tribes of Viet Nam's central highlands. The camp is about 210 miles north of Saigon.

Montagnard youngsters in their early teens shouldered carbines and prepared to defend their squalid bunkers.

After one brief firefight a Viet Cong prisoner was brought in. He was Cao Kuan Hai, 22, a master sergeant in the 324th Regiment of the North Vietnamese 308th Division.

He smoked a cigarette as he sat on the

floor of a hut and answered questions put to him by Brig. Gen. Doan Van Quang, commander of South Viet Nam's Special Forces, who had flown into Plei Me that morning.

Cao said his unit left Phu Tho, in North Viet Nam, in July and reached the area a week ago. He wore dust-stained khaki jungle fatigues. His badly swollen feet bulged out of sandals made from an old automobile tire.

Cao said volunteers to fight in South Viet Nam were easy to obtain because intensive American bombing in the Communist North was reducing already scant food supplies and soldiers could count on getting enough rice.

A diary found on the body of a dead North Vietnamese showed that the soldier's unit had been in position by the roadside since Oct. 19.

That was the day the camp first came under attack. The Viet Cong strategy apparently was to draw troops into a trap and destroy them as they came down the road.

The strategy almost succeeded.

The relief column came under withering fire Saturday night and was split in two. But Leckinger, who was bringing up the rear with half of the 21st Rangers, denied his men were ambushed.



# The Battalion



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## Scott Carpenter To Speak Nov. 5

### Teague Fete To Feature Space Pilot

Scott Carpenter, Mercury astronaut who piloted America's second orbital space flight, will be a featured speaker at the appreciation dinner Nov. 5 for Congressman Olin E. Teague.

Announcement of the second space speaker came from Chairman Ford D. Albritton Jr., who called Carpenter "one of America's real heroes."

"Commander Carpenter, who traveled both to the edge of the sky and the depths of the ocean, has been in an excellent position to report on Congressman Teague's efforts to put America first in the space race," Albritton noted. "We also expect Carpenter to relate some of his experiences in orbit and under the sea."

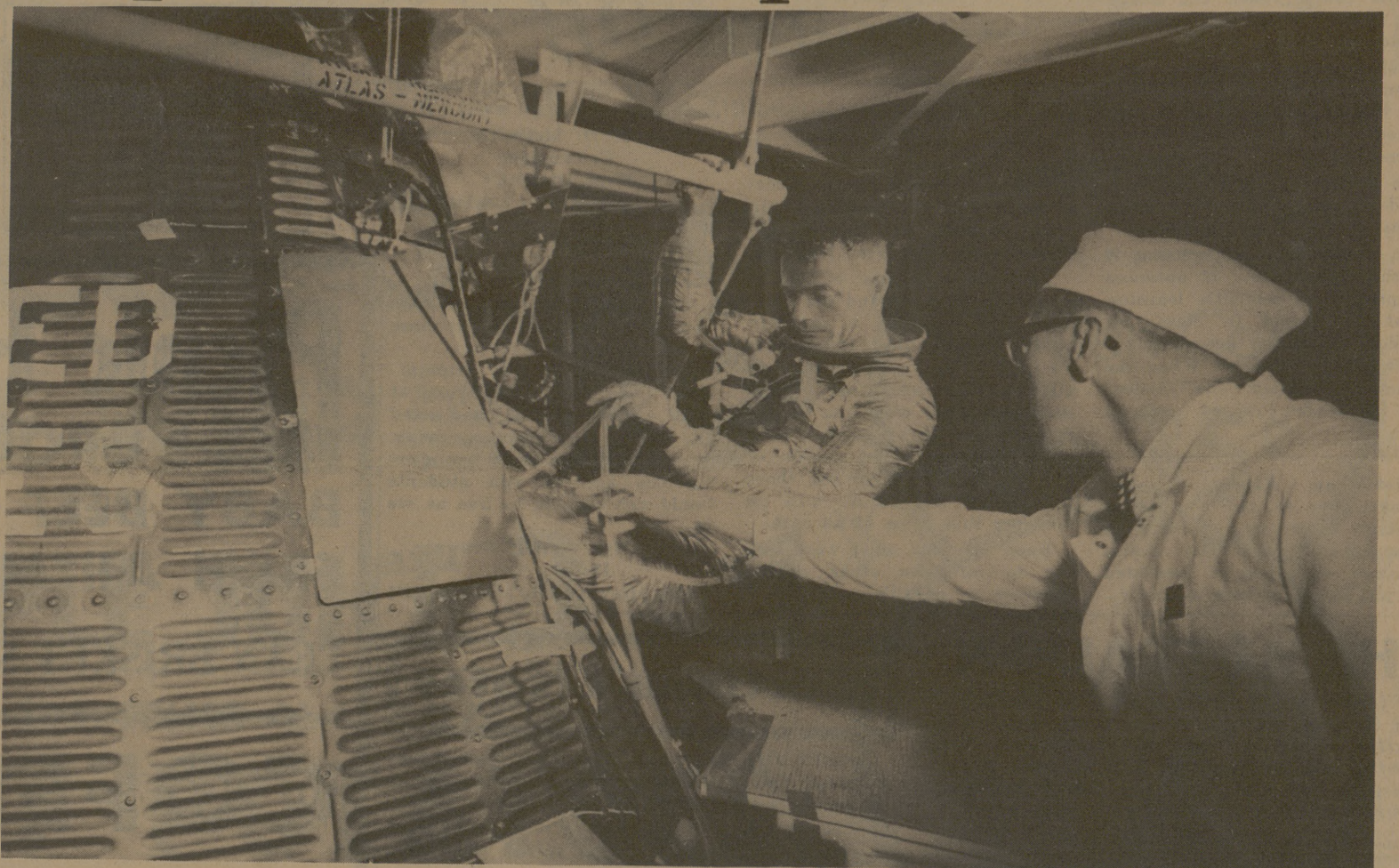
Albritton added that acceptance from the Aurora 7 pilot would undoubtedly push the meeting into larger rooms in Sbsa Dining Hall. He urged citizens of Bryan-College Station to arrange for tickets immediately.

"We already anticipate an overflow crowd," Albritton said.

Albritton said Carpenter, other speakers and Congressman Teague would be available for personal greetings and autographs at the banquet.

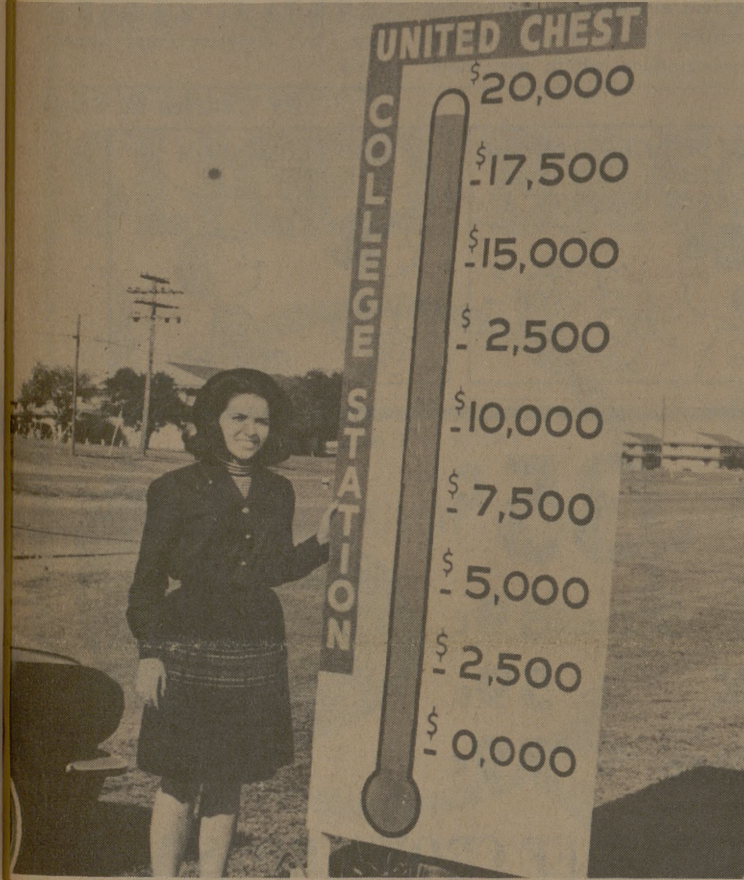
He reminded the tickets are available at local banking institutions, the Memorial Student Center, the Ramada and Holiday Inns and the Chamber of Commerce.

Carpenter joins the NASA launch chief, Dr. Kurt Debus, as major speakers honoring "Tiger" Teague. A third key speaker will be announced soon.



**ASTRONAUT SCHEDULES TALK HERE**

Mercury Astronaut Scott Carpenter prepares to enter his spacecraft prior to becoming the second American to orbit the earth. Carpenter will speak here at the appreciation dinner for Congressman Olin Teague Nov. 5.



**CHEST DRIVE NEARS GOAL**  
Texas A&M coed Fran Kimbrough checks the thermometer gauge which shows the 1965 College Station United Chest drive has nearly reached its goal of \$20,000. The goal is expected to be met and surpassed during the annual fund drive, which began Oct. 11.

### Debaters Post Strong Showing At Lubbock Invitational Meet

The Debate Club's senior and junior teams each won two out of four rounds at the Texas Tech Invitational Tournament this week. The student representatives also placed in individual competition.

Sim Lake, a senior from Fort Worth, ranked third in two preliminary rounds of extemporaneous speaking. Junior Marvin Simpson, also from Fort Worth, placed fourth in two rounds. Lake and Simpson comprised the senior debate team.

Sophomore David Gay from College Station ranked third and seventh in prose interpretation, and Benny Mays, sophomore from Grasper, placed fourth in extemporaneous speaking. These students were junior debate team partners.

Club sponsor Carl Kell said the teams defeated Hardin Simmons University twice, Odessa Junior College and the Air Force Academy. He added that they

lost to Adams State College (Colorado), North Texas State College, Angelo State College (Texas) and the University of Arizona.

Competing schools were not ranked.

He also says that these same students will attend the next debate tournament at TCU Nov. 5-6.

### Liberal Arts Head Schedules Speech

Dr. Frank W. R. Hubert, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, will address the Texas A&M Graduate Student Banquet Saturday.

The banquet is set for 7 p.m.

in the Memorial Student Center Ballroom.

Hubert became dean of the College of Liberal Arts this fall after serving as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences since 1959. Prior to that time he was superintendent of Orange schools.

The speaker is president of the Association of Texas Colleges and Universities, chairman of the Commission on School and College Relations of ATCU and a member of the executive committee.

He is also a member of the state executive board for the department of religion in public education, Texas Council of Churches. He is a councilor for the Texas A&M Research Foundation and listed in Who's Who in America.

Wallace Johnson, president of the Graduate Student Council, said two Former Student Association awards will be announced during the banquet. They include \$200 for a Ph.D. candidate and \$100 for a master's degree candidate.

### USIA Official To Deliver SCONA XI Major Speech

A top official in the United States Information Agency will deliver a main address at the eleventh Student Conference on National Affairs Dec. 8-11 in the Memorial Student Center.

Charles T. Vetter Jr., Information Coordinator for the USIA Office of Public Information, will speak at one of the five plenary sessions open to the general public.

Vetter joins Dr. Frank Trager, professor of International Affairs at New York University, as a SCONA XI speaker. The three remaining major speakers

slots will be filled at a later date.

A 1946 graduate of Hamilton College, Vetter attended the School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D. C. and Georgetown University Law School.

He also attended The Academy of International Law at The Hague and received a law degree from National University Law School in 1953.

During World War II Vetter was a naval aviator who served as an American instructor and liaison officer with the French Naval Training Mission. He was awarded French Naval Wings for his contributions to the French Navy.

He joined the State Department as a research and liaison officer in 1950 and assumed the same job for the USIA in 1953. In 1955 he was assigned as an advisor to the Director of Public Relations of the Government of East Pakistan. He was later a USIA political science lecturer in West Pakistan.

Vetter joined the Professional Training Staff of the USIA in 1956 and became employee development officer in the fields of International Communications and Communism.

He has held his present post since 1962. Vetter is a regular lecturer at the State Department Foreign Service Institute, the Military

### Theological Fellowships Available

Any married or single student interested in a ministerial career may fulfill this interest with the aid of the Rockefeller Brothers Theological Fellowships Program.

Interested persons can submit their names to J. Gordon Gay at the YMCA Building. He will then send these names to the program advisors.

Gay, campus representative for the Rockefeller Foundation, said the program attempts to provide well-educated laymen for our churches.

Financed through a \$100 million fund, this program selects 67 outstanding students across the nation interested in a ministerial career and sends them to any accredited theological school for one year. All expenses are paid for each student, and married students are allowed extra expenses.

If after one year the individual decides to discontinue his training, he is permitted to drop the program. If he does decide to continue, he must then seek financial support from local churches or similar organizations, since the Foundation with draws its aid after the year.

Gay adds that the program is set up only for those who are undecided about a ministerial career. The Foundation will not accept students who have already decided on pursuing this career.

### Consolidated Sets Senior Class Play

A&M Consolidated High School's annual Senior Play will be staged Saturday. The play, "Sabrina Fair," will be at 8 p.m. in the high school auditorium.

The play will be a romantic comedy based on a modern Cinderella story.

The major characters are Peggy Owen as Sabrina Fairchild, Frank Lamb as Mr. Larrabee, Ann Ballinger as Maude Larrabee, Scott Hervey as Lynus Larrabee and Rick Landmann as David Larrabee. The director is Mrs. Jan Alston.

Admission are adults, \$1; students, 50 cents; and Aggies 50 cents with an ID card.



**DR. FRANK W. R. HUBERT**