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ELAINE SHEPARD'S earthy best-selling
narrative about the war in Vietnam—
biting, comic, tender, angry, explosive!

THE DOOM PUSSY



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HARRY'S HOG HAULERS

BLAST THEIR ASS is printed on pencils and personal cards of Lieutenant Colonel Harry Howton's crews, who call themselves Harry's Hog Haulers. (Combat crews seem uncommonly concerned with their own derrieres or those of the enemy.) Harry is commander of the 311th Air Commando Squadron, stationed at Da Nang. His is one of four squadrons of the 315th Air Commando Group, with headquarters in Saigon under the overall command of Colonel George Hannah.

The men who fly the ten-year-old twin-engine C-123 Providers keep open the vital lifeline in Vietnam. Besides Harry's Hog Haulers, there are Styron's Stallions and the Teeny Weeny Airlines.

The Air Commandos fly the aerial highways on relief and supply missions and land in the jungle on primitive dirt airstrips about the size of a blacksmith's apron. The Commandos go into battle in unarmed cargo planes with two pilots in front, livestock in the rear, and one of the crew whistling "Can't We Be Friends" over the intercom.

The Viet Cong try to make sieves of the big, lumbering aircraft that were originally built as gliders, with engines added as an afterthought. All missions are flown through the constant harassment of ground fire. If the load is a bellyful of AVGAS, dynamite, or thousands of rounds of ammo, a direct hit could explode the whole business. Typical cargo might include concertina, rice, ammunition, people, mail, troops, hogs, cement, spare parts, ducks, chickens, or cows, bound for bases or Special Forces in remote outposts, boondocks, or "boonies," mili-

picked for the job of piloting the high-winged, twin-engine assault transports with the tall upswept tail and huge cargo doors at the rear that yawn open to disgorge paratroops, jeeps, trucks, or bulldozers. Some of the boys who fly the reliable old craft carry personal gag cards reading: A SUBSONIC, FIXED WING, CENTURY SERIES, ASSAULT TROOP CARRIER. YOU CALL. WE HAUL.

I had caught a ride to Da Nang in a T-39, the snappy little executive-type jet. I was going on a mission with Harry's Hog Haulers. As we waited our turn to land, the pilot explained, "Da Nang is the world's busiest airport with only one runway. Fifteen hundred landings and takeoffs on peak days besides two extra traffic patterns for helicopters at the edge of the airstrip. Something lands in Da Nang every twenty seconds."

As we flew the pattern, waiting for permission from the tower to let down, he continued, "Three emergency landings are coming in. Pretty badly shot up."

Ground crews sprayed the runway with foam as we watched from the flight deck.

"This is routine up here in Da Nang," he said. "In a day it's commonplace for ten or eleven to come in with in-flight emergencies or battered by ground fire."

Da Nang Air Base sits on sandy terrain just outside the big port city of Da Nang, which is in Quangnam Province and was formerly named Tourane. On the east is a lovely harbor and the clear blue-green China Sea. Heavily forested mountains of seven thousand feet rise on the west and are clogged with guerrillas, tigers, elephants, and monkeys. One hundred miles to the north the Seventeenth Parallel divides South Vietnam from North Vietnam.

Once little more than a provincial airfield, Da Nang today is a vast US fortress swarming with planes. A wing of the Vietnamese Air Force, VNAF, also is stationed there. Some of the Vietnamese pilots take turns flying the government civilian airline, Air Vietnam. Thus, a pilot flying a commercial plane from Da Nang to Saigon one day might have been piloting a B-57 or Skyraider on a strike against the Viet Cong the day before.

Colonel Franklin H. Scott, commander of the 6252nd TAC Fighter Wing, sat on a powder keg at this crucial air base nestled among three mountain ranges. His job embraced all Air Force activities and the operation of the airdrome. Under



Da Nang: Nobody enjoys his own stories better than Lt. Colonel Harry Howton, CO of the 311th Air Commando Sqdn, whose men call themselves "Harry's Hog Haulers," one of four squadrons under the over-all command of Colonel George Hannah's 315th Air Commando Group. USAF official photo by S/Sgt James Theall



An ARVN soldier is pleased with magical Polaroid shot taken at Ashau.

Photo by Lt. Colonel Harry Howton

