

# Santa's On His Hué



**BY XANDE ANDERER**

“I don’t remember that night being a joyous one, just another night that happened to be Christmas,” recalls Doug Berg in the preface of his book of photos and stories, *A Snowman in Hell: Christmas in Vietnam*. And who can blame him? How difficult it must have been to force oneself into a holiday mindset while broiling in tropical heat inside a concertina wire-fringed parcel of bulldozed jungle.

But it’s a tribute to the human heart to see the lengths to which American men- and women-at-arms went in order to bring as much of the yuletide spirit as pos-

sible to a war-weary landscape: makeshift Christmas trees made of splintered shards of wood, sandbag snowmen, humble hooches trimmed with faux garland and garish store-bought decor from back home.

But it’s never really Christmas without Santa Claus. And just like the real St. Nick, who seemingly manages to be everywhere at once as he visits children worldwide in a single night, unlikely Santas popped up all over the war zone from the DMZ to the Delta. That included the 3rd Marine Division’s Howard F. Carrier of Chevy Chase, Maryland, pictured above playing Santa at the orphanage at Phu Thuong on Christmas Eve 1965. ■