

..... PARTING SHOT



John T. Wheeler/AP

Two Marines, One Boat

Two Marines, one borrowed boat. Near Chu Lai on Nov. 20, 1965, a patrol reached a river they couldn't ford, and they turned to the oldest technology on the shore: a round fisherman's craft woven from rattan and reeds known as a coracle.

The little boat wasn't built for rifles, packs, or combat boots. It was pushed along by two long,

awkward oars, more wobble than glide. But it floated, and that was enough.

They crossed two at a time - quiet, dangerous work - then turned the boat back for the next pair until the far bank was secured.

A 20th century war, an ancient boat. In Vietnam, improvising often made the difference between stopping and moving, between almost and across. ♦