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Wartime Memories of Southwestern Michigan Veterans, Volume 2:

Stories from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East

Edited by
Denise Perry Donavin

Designed by
Hollie Ayres

Lest We Forget Project Manager
Don Alsbro

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WORLD WAR I

Royal Marine in World War I

Frank Hartley

When the war broke out in August 1914, it meant that it would be several years before I could or would become a Methodist minister. On September 12, 1914, I volunteered for the Sherwood Foresters and that same day I was sent to Derby—the headquarters of this particular regiment. Before I left, I went home and told my mother. She told me that my father was very angry. He had said , " He shall never darken the doors of this house again." Being a man interested in the union or labor movement, he thought the war was just another capitalist effort to gain greater control over the working people.

I took the train from Nelson, the nearest depot to Barrowford, and arrived at Derby about midnight, Since it was too late to provide me with a regular place to sleep I was placed in the guard house along with the drunks and others who had in one way or another offended military regulations. But something far more important for me was in store the next morning.

After breakfast, all the new recruits were lined up and then those who were nonconformists were asked to take a step forward. A nonconformist was a man who refused to conform to the old law which required everyone to attend the Church of England. I took a step forward and there were about 25-30 of us who did not belong to the Church of England. We were marched off and taken to an upper room which served as a small chapel. We waited for someone to appear to conduct the morning service. To my great surprise, the minister who came had been my own minister several years before—Mr. Graham.

Immediately he said, "Frank Hartley, what are you doing here?"

He immediately put me to work distributing the hymnals. I cannot remember what he preached about but I do know that all the other men took notice that the minister knew my name, and from that time on somehow they expected me to live in a different way than the average recruit.

My stay in Derby was cut short. Early in the week volunteers were asked to join The Royal Marine Light Infantry, Portsmouth Division. All together 800 men were asked to volunteer—400 for the Portsmouth Division and 400 for the Chatham division. We left Derby on Wednesday September 16 and arrived at the Royal Marine Light Infantry Barracks the next day. We were completely outfitted with the uniform of the Royal Marines, and then began our field training and drilling. Early in December, we were sent to a small village In Hampshire called Titchfield. Here we were billeted in the public houses, much to my disgust. But it was not long before the men knew I was an abstainer from alcoholic beverages.

We were given Christmas leave and I went home. My father by now had become reconciled to the fact that I was in the service. When we returned to Titchfield, we were moved from one public house to another, and here the proprietor, knowing that I would not drink said to me, "As long as you are here you will never get a drink in this house."

On the 25th of January 191.5 we left Titchfield for an unknown destination. I had made many friends In Titchfield, the man who played the organ in the Congregational Church and his wife and family. Two other boys and I spent most of our spare time in their home. Mr. and Mrs. William Stride became second parents to me.

We marched for several days through the New Forrest. The words 'The New Forrest' are somewhat of a misnomer, since the forest was called new when it was planted in the time of William the Conquerer—900 years before. We were housed for the night sometimes in school houses and sometimes in beautiful homes. We came to the villages of Dorsetshire, Here we received more training. One day we marched to Salisbury Plain, one of the great military areas of England. We were inspected by King George V. A few days later we entrained for an unknown destination. It proved to be Devonport, where we embarked for the ship Gloucester Castle. When we set sail we had no idea where we were bound. The farther we sailed the warmer became the weather. One day we passed through the straits of Gibraltar. The trip through the Mediterranean was beautiful. The ship stopped at the island of Malta. We were not allowed to go ashore.

After many days we came to Port Said and disembarked. We set up tents and began more training. Carrying a 70 pound pack and a rifle, we were marched up and down in the sand. One night a friend and I went into the town and had a good supper. I have never tasted coffee like that which was served in that small café.

Two incidents happened to me which I can never forget and which I believe played an important part in my decision to become a Methodist minister. While we were en route we were vaccinated, and the effects on many men were unpredictable. One night I fell out of my bunk and I found myself in the sick bay,

the Naval term for a hospital. I stayed there about two days, and then returned to my regular place along with the other men. I do know when finally we landed ashore to go on active service that many men still had open wounds from the vaccination.

The second incident came one night when I was asked to get the beer for the men, that is for the men who eat along with me day by day. I told the corporal. “I cannot do this.”

“Do you know that you are disobeying an order?” said the corporal

I answered, “Yes. I know what I am doing.”

Then he brought a sergeant and he asked me to bring the beer for the men. I still refused. Then the lieutenant came and he asked me, and I gave the same answer. Then I was ordered to go to the top deck and soon I was surrounded with officers and noncommissioned officers. They went into a huddle and came and asked me if I would ask someone else to get the beer for the mess. I told them that I could not do that either.

While the rest of the officers were conferring to know what to do with me, a sergeant came up to me and asked, “Hartley, are you trying to be a Christian?”

I answered him, “Yes.”

Then he replied, “Stick to your guns. Then they cannot do anything to you.”

I stuck to my guns.

About that time 8 bells were sounded and someone said, “The canteen is closed now and it is too late to get the beer tonight.”

When the senior officer heard this, he turned to me and said, “Dismiss”.

The sequel of this incident was that whenever I deviated from any other order, my lieutenant always reprimanded me sharply by saying, “Hartley.” And I respected him. Unfortunately I saw him killed a little while later.

We stayed in Port Said for about two weeks, and then we re-embarked for an unknown destination. We went ashore on a little Greek island of Mudros, which gave us some idea of the terrain where we would be fighting the enemy. However, we sailed to the Dardanelles, and we arrived about April 25th, when the first troops were put ashore. The big guns of the British Navy sent volley after volley into the Turkish positions. Every time a volley was fired the sound of the explosion shook every ship in the harbor. On April 28, 1915 about 6:00 pm, we were disembarked and taken ashore and immediately taken to the battle front. It was very rough going, climbing steep ridges and making our way through some prickly bushy shrubs. We would push up one man and then he would help to pull the rest of us up.

The smell of war was everywhere. The smell of death filled the air. We found ourselves on a high ridge facing the enemy in the valley below. My platoon, composed of 16 men, was soon decimated. Our lieutenant was killed and several others were wounded. One night we were sent out to reconnoiter, but we found no one on our left flank. Our supplies were running low, especially our water. One time we tried to make a cup of tea, but just as we got the water boiling the enemy began a savage attack and in the melee the water was knocked over.

Many times I saw men trying to bring us water who would either be killed or wounded. We were not relieved until Friday the 7th of May. We went to the back of the lines for a rest. Saturday night we were sent on outpost duty and early Sunday morning we were to come back. We were given rations and ammunition and told to return where we had been the night before. I was carrying a large biscuit tin full of rations, my rifle slung across my shoulder and we had just made a right turn when suddenly I felt a sharp pain in my back. I was wounded. The man immediately behind me was killed and. the bullet went through him and entered my spine. This was on the 9th of May 1915 about 6:00 am.

A big Australian soldier picked me up like a baby and carried me to a place of safety. I waited for first aid and the medical corpsmen. They came a while later and placed me on a stretcher and began carrying me down to a field hospital. On the way the enemy began shelling and the two stretcher bearers put me down in the middle of the road and ran for cover. Fortunately none of the shells fell anywhere near me. By about 11:00 am, I was carried aboard a hospital ship. We waited until the ship was full then sailed for Alexandria. I was placed in a hospital there for a few days. Later, a train full of wounded men took us to Cairo, where we were placed in a school house which had been turned into a hospital. While I was in Cairo, I was able to walk around if someone would lift me onto my feet. Because I could walk one day we were taken to see the Sphinx, on a street car, which seemed to me to travel faster than any other street car I had ever ridden. As we were about to leave and return to the hospital a Mohammedan started to say his prayers right in the middle of the street car tracks.

We were taken back to Alexandria and put aboard a hospital ship to return to England. The journey

was beautiful and being, able to sit on the deck of the ship in the sunshine helped me to recover from my wound. On our arrival in England we were taken to Hasler Hospital in Portsmouth, England. Then we were given leave to go home.

I shall never forget my arrival home. When I got to the railway station at Nelson there were no street cars running. But my father and mother were there to greet me. My father, who earlier had been very much opposed to my volunteering, was happy to see me and he carried my bag and we walked home.

After my return I was sent to my old barracks at Gosport, Hampshire. Then I was given a job in the paymaster's office, which I held until I was discharged on the 28th of June 1916. In the meanwhile I became re—acquainted with my old friends Mr. and Mrs. William H. Stride. I made monthly visits to the sick bay to check on my recuperation from my wound.

After many months, an order was given that all wounded men now stationed at barracks were either to be discharged or returned to active duty. I had been to Hasler Hospital for an operation on my back where they found pieces of the bullet, which were removed.

Hundreds of men were brought together at Hasler Hospital to be examined as to their fitness for active duty or their unfitness and thus be discharged. All of us more or less dreaded the examination. I was the third man into the inquiry room. About 10 senior medical officers including my own were seated around a big table and they had our medical history records before them. When I entered, I was told to stand near the senior chief, as the medical officer is called in the British Navy, and my own chief was next to him. They conferred a few minutes. As I watched very closely I noticed the senior medical officer write across my medical history sheet, these words: "Unfit." I could scarcely conceal my elation. On Friday I, along with others, was posted for discharge on Wednesday, June 28th, 1916. Thus my career in the service was over.

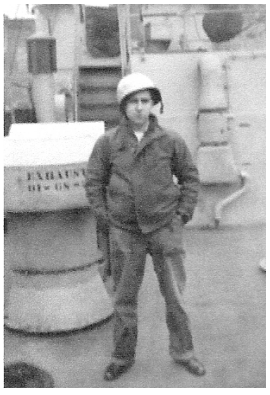
Before I was discharged, I went to Manchester with my mother. As we were walking along the street, a woman, a perfect stranger, came up to us, and pointing to me and my uniform said, with tears streaming down her face, "My boy was a Marine, but he did not come back."

Then my mother answered, "Yes I had a boy who did not come back."

There on the streets of an English city two women, each with a great sorrow came to know and understand each other. They remained embraced for quite some time, two women who had found each other in their common grief. We parted but never saw the woman again. Some 30 years later, I came to a deeper understanding of what those two women felt for each other when I lost my only son in World War II.

WORLD WAR II

WWII - Korea - Vietnam - Navy Active Duty August 1943 - April 1971
Paul M. Allen Captain U. S. Navy (Retired)



When Pearl Harbor was bombed, December 7, 1941, I was a senior in high school. Because of the declaration of war the next day, the departure of all those 18 years of age and older into the armed forces reached crisis proportions. In response, the all-male high schools, in Boston, Massachusetts, where I was born and raised, accelerated the graduation date of all seniors by four months to February 1942.

At the time of graduation I was too young to enlist or be drafted. I had the choice of going to college or the defense industry. I chose the defense industry. All my classmates were gone to war within 6 months after graduation. Some of them died in action the same year. For six months I worked at the Boston Navy yard as a shipfitter's helper at 58 cents an hour rotating between three shifts every month repairing and constructing ships. After gaining some experience I joined a private shipyard building Landing Craft (LCI and LSM) and miscellaneous coastal tankers as a certified Navy welder at $1.03 per hour. The country was still in the throes of the depression and this kind of money for a 16 year old was very much appreciated. Trouble was there was nothing to buy. The war effort was consuming everything and all essentials including food, fuel and cigarettes were being rationed. Cigarettes were 10 cents a pack but you could buy individual cigarettes, called loosies, at the local grocery for a penny each.

As the defense industry output became more efficient, at our small shipyard by mid-1943, we were turning over to the Navy an LCI every 7 days. They would man it with a crew of 21 enlisted men and three officers (all averaging 4 months experience) and off they would go, join a convoy somewhere south. There they would pick up 200 passengers (a company of troops), then sail thousands of miles to Europe or the

Pacific at a maximum speed of 15 knots. None of us that bid them bon voyage wanted to be with them in such a fragile and dangerous environment.

By mid-1943 I was old enough, 17, to pass the mental and physical exams and enlist in the Navy as an aviation officer candidate. My dad was a veteran of WWI and my younger brother and I were sons of the American Legion for several years. Patriotic activities were very prevalent during the Great Depression long before WWII and high schools in major metropolitan areas had boys' cadet training.

My first eight months of active duty in the V-5 program educated me in math and the sciences at Dartmouth College so that by the spring of 1944, shortly before the Normandy invasion, I was academically qualified for preflight school. However, like hundreds of others, I was advised that there was a surplus of aviators. The Navy gave us the choice of joining the fleet as enlisted petty officer candidates or continuing training to eventually become surface warfare officers. I chose the latter option and as the war wound down in 1945 served a brief enlisted tour in the Pacific Fleet Ship Repair Command where I was commissioned as an ensign in the supply corps in 1945 right at the end of the war.

POST WWII

I became a member of the business end of the Navy. It was a complete change of pace, but one I liked. After a further brief training period on the east coast I was assigned to the battleship New Jersey (complement 2,200 enlisted including 150 Marines and 150 officers). My orders were to be the disbursing officer with a $2 million federal bank account. We paid everyone aboard in cash every 15 days plus travel TAD etc. The lieutenant that I relieved, like most of the junior officers on board, was returning to civilian life. I had enough points of service to get out also but as a single 19 year old and the challenge before me I stayed on for a long and fruitful career for which I never regretted. After all that training I was truly ready for sea. This is the motto of the Navy Supply Corps. I was more ready than most, because my training involved engineering, seamanship, navigation, gunnery, and business management. Subsequent skippers of the ships I served on, allowed me to use that knowledge to our mutual benefit.

In the fall of 1946, I rather abruptly received orders to report to an assault cargo ship (AKA) to be the supply and disbursing officer. My relief on the New Jersey arrived within 48 hours of my notification, I gave him about $500,000.00 in cash, my safe, a staff of eight men and all the financial records, and I arrived at my new duty 24 hours later. Within 72 hours of reporting to the Rankin (AKA-103), we were under way with a four-ship amphibious task force to China to rescue the 7th Marines from their tenuous position in Peking (Beijing) where they were caught between the Communist and Nationalist forces that went to war with each other when we removed the Japanese forces a year earlier.

My immediate problems on reporting to the AKA was that there was no one to relieve. The officer I was ordered to relieve was in the mental ward at the Navy hospital suffering from severe disorientation. There was no cash to pay the troops and insufficient food and clothing stores to sustain a three week voyage to our first stop in Japan, let alone a further voyage to China. With the immediate help of other Navy ships in San Diego harbor I quickly got the cash by way of the ship's gig. The local supply depot, by message requests and around the clock activity, got enough stores aboard by barge. My report to the skipper, on the day of departure was, "Supply Department Ready for Sea!" A lot of butt-kicking, but we did it.

On return from China, four months later, with the Marines and gear intact, I decided to go back to civilian life and resume pursuit of a degree. The Navy did send me home on terminal leave with regrets because my corps was desperately in need of talent. As a result of extensive discussion with Navy officials in Washington, after 3 weeks, I was returned to active service with a regular Navy commission and a promise of a master's degree if performance warranted the education.

Off to sea again. This time for an 18 month tour on a destroyer. The trials and tribulations of the military in sustaining a viable, well-trained force between WWII and, what we called the Korean flap is not comprehensible unless you served through it. For example, our four-destroyer division departed for Norfolk from Boston with a crew so green the commodore decided to steam only during the day and anchor at night. However because of equipment failure and crew negligence or inexperience only one of us, my ship, made it to Norfolk, 18 days later. Two of the ships had major engine failures and the third dragged anchor and wound up on the beach stern first on Block Island.

My first tour of shore duty after the war was back in the Boston Navy yard, where it all began. The two year tour was relatively uneventful, but in retrospect was extremely beneficial as it involved me in the developing concepts of computers and automated techniques in business and research applications. As assistant comptroller and disbursing officer, the machine room, as it was known in 1948, was under my supervision. Our main applications were production control and payroll/ labor distribution systems as well as inventory control. Timely systems such as these were necessary for the financial management, scheduling, and perfor-

mance of 12,000 employees and the myriad of ships undergoing repair and upgrading. The hands on participation, working with IBM and Rand staff that developed and programmed embryonic computer systems on site was invaluable over my Navy career. Better than any college education.

THE KOREAN WAR

On the 25th of June 1950 I was in the officers' club at the Naval Air Station at Quonset Point, Rhode Island, having lunch, when the national news on TV announced that the agitation between North and South Korea had erupted in war as North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel. Within 90 days I was transferred from Boston to Commander Naval Forces Far East as a junior but experienced logistics officer at Yokosuka, Japan 35 miles south of Tokyo. All of the armed forces were still in dire readiness conditions from the continuing reductions in staffing, training funds and aging equipment post WWII. Yet within a few months, tens of thousands of men recalled to active duty were arriving in the area as we launched major offensive actions by air, land, and sea. My primary personal accomplishment during 18 months in the theater was meeting my future wife of 56 years, a Navy nurse, a country girl from Minnesota. She and 200 other nurses and 50 Navy doctors were sent to the theater to treat the 3,000 Marines evacuated from South Korea the last week of November 1950 in the Chosin Reservoir debacle. After our tours were completed we both arranged to be transferred to the Washington, D.C. area and I was promoted to full lieutenant after two years enlisted service and seven years as a very junior officer. My wife to be, was assigned to the Bethesda Medical Center and I to the hallowed halls of the Pentagon. (Known euphemistically at the time as Disneyland East.) The Korean War was still going strong and we were working six day weeks and long hours. Nevertheless, we managed to waggle a week off, get married, and have a brief honeymoon in the Poconos in the middle of a cold December in 1952. I didn't meet her parents until six months later. At the Pentagon I was deputy director of petroleum logistics in the office of the chief of Naval Operations. I spent most of my waking hours participating in joint service efforts to maximize availability of petroleum products at strategic locations. The execution of these plans resulted in building millions of barrels of storage facilities throughout the world. This effort greatly contributed to our later success in the Cold War in Europe and the Pacific. The jet age had arrived and we were becoming more dependent on the Persian Gulf for fuel.

In late 1953 we had our first child at Bethesda and my Lieutenant, Junior Grade wife under the then existing rules had to resign from the Navy. This effectively reduced our income substantially.

POST-PENTAGON AND THE COLD WAR 1954 - 1962

In 1954 we were transferred to San Diego where I served a two year tour on the USS Essex CVA-9—the most decorated aircraft carrier in WWII. I served as the aviation supply officer responsible for the support of a carrier air group consisting of 85 aircraft including two helos. Jets were being deployed for the first time in numbers approaching 60 per cent of embarked aircraft. The jets consumed enormous amounts of a different fuel than the props and high tech maintenance of electronics/engines was the order of the day for all squadrons and detachments. Three months of training with the Air Group and off we went to the South Pacific on a 6 month deployment that lasted 9 months because we became part of a 5 carrier task force protecting Chinese Nationalist forces departing the mainland and establishing a new government on Formosa (Taiwan). A memorable event occurred during replenishment at sea. During a weapons transfer off the China mainland the transfer line between us and the transferring auxiliary parted and we dropped a nuclear bomb in the water. Fortunately the large container capsule, designed to float, was retrieved by accompanying destroyers a few hours later. On return to the States, and after disembarking the Air Group, the Essex was sent to Bremerton, Washington for conversion to an angled deck, steam catapults (versus hydraulic) and other rearrangements of fuel facilities to handle heavier jet aircraft. Most of these innovations in aircraft carriers were developed by the British and adapted to our carriers in 1954-1958. These improvements saved many lives in subsequent flight operations. When returning from this cruise I got to meet and hold our new daughter for the first time. She was six months old.

In 1956, I was transferred to the staff of the commander of the Naval Air Force Pacific Fleet in San Diego, and points west for four years. In 1957, I was promoted to lieutenant commander.

Between 1957 to 1958, we introduced seven new fighter/bomber jets into the fleets, with the expected varying degrees of success and failure. Always busy trying to improve our national defense posture. Two jet amphibians, a fighter and a patrol type never made it. I watched in awe from my office as they ingested salt water during take-offs.

In 1960, I was ordered to the Philippines to be the supply officer Naval Air Station Cubi Point. This station is very close to Vietnam and there was much interaction in the region as we supported the French in their activities there. By this time we had three girls and family lived on the air station close to my office on the air strip

In 1961, I was ordered to the Navy Postgraduate School in Monterey, California and received a masters degree in management and computer science and was promoted to Commander in 1962.

I moved on to the Navy Aviation Supply Office Philadelphia in 1962 for a two year tour as director of automated systems and advance plans. This office purchases, schedules production, distributes hundreds of thousands of parts and equipment for all Navy and Marine aircraft and their support facilities worldwide. It's a diverse, multibillion dollar operation, staffed by 2,000 civilians and 60 military. There was much turmoil in the military world-wide roles as we confronted several crises in Cuba and as 20,000 troops were sent to Vietnam. President Kennedy was assassinated and the new leadership continued down this path of expanding the war. Our fourth and last daughter arrived in 1962.

WASHINGTON - VIETNAM - RETIREMENT

In 1964, at my request, I was ordered to Naval Air Station in Alameda, California to head up the data processing department at this military/industrial complex which overhauled Navy and Marine aircraft and their major components.

In 1966, I was ordered to Washington, D.C. and promoted to captain, I directed the Office of Management Information Systems Naval Material Command. This task involved the monitoring and attempted control over all Navy business and research computer and related software systems by some 200 plus locations worldwide which were being financed by six different commands and the Office of Naval Research. It was like driving a team of wild horses to an agreed-upon destination with no reins.

The nation was in turmoil because of lack of direction for and violent liberal opposition to the Vietnam War. In addition, domestic turmoil in Washington was exacerbated by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the nationwide civil rights demonstrations that resulted in vandalism, riots, and arson in major cities across the country. My office during this period was on the mall where the Vietnam Memorial Wall now stands. The reflecting pool was surrounded by tents, shacks and hundreds of camping demonstrators for weeks (Resurrection City). We had to evacuate our offices at the height of the disturbance for a weekend. Meanwhile, as the casualty rates climbed in Vietnam and our will to win evaporated, President Nixon was elected in 1968 on a platform that included peace with honor and removal of all U.S. forces as soon as feasible.

This was not easily accomplished with 500,000 troops in country.

In 1969, I was ordered to the staff of ComServPac, the Logistics Command for Surface Warfare for the Pacific Fleet. My job there was to coordinate the supply policies and activities of all Pacific bases including two bases in Vietnam, one in Saigon and one in DaNang. These two bases were in the throes of reducing our presence while minimizing casualties and civil disruption caused by the departure of occupying forces that had been there for years. The DaNang base was occupied at that time by the First Marine Air Wing. They were positioned there for direct support of a Marine division close by in Chu Lai. The air and ground bases were surrounded by Viet Cong and their friends. I flew in to DaNang for a support consultation with senior officers and the commander of the wing in the summer of 1969. My host on the flight was Sir Robert Thompson, a four-star Brit who was the liberator of Singapore and Malaysia from the Communists after WWII and Korea. President Nixon had hired Sir Robert as a consultant to advise on the best approach to an orderly withdrawal. DaNang was the first place that I personally came under hostile fire in three wars. We were in a Marine helicopter, fortunately they missed us.

In 1973, the Democratic congress passed a veto-proof bill prohibiting any further U.S. aid to South Vietnam. This was the end of any potential victory and the South Vietnamese leadership and military disintegrated. DaNang was overrun shortly after we withdrew.

In 1970, I was ordered to Washington and directed the international logistics support division of the Navy Supply Systems Command where I decided to retire in 1971. With a growing family and three getting ready for college we decided to leave after 28 years of active service—a most difficult decision. Being a career officer was very challenging, life-threatening but not financially rewarding. I was and am very proud of my service and would do it again under the same circumstances. However, frequent changes of duty stations and extended absences, which lead to promotion based on performance, are not easily tolerated by the family. And faith and family is what life is all about.

Fortunately, while still a young senior officer on active duty I was recruited by several agencies for a second career. I had enough of the Washington social and political scene in three tours of duty. Therefore, I chose an opportunity in Michigan where I became the chief deputy for social services and retired again as the director of the state Medicaid program 15 years later.

Invasion of Italy during WWII
By James A. Basselman

Drafted

On February 2, 1943. I was drafted at age 20 in Detroit. I had been working at the Hudson Naval Ordinance on Nine-Mile and Mound in the blueprint department. Our company manufactured the 20mm Orlekin machine gun and a 37mm Orlekin model. I reported to the draft board in Detroit for physical assignment. I knew that I was in the Army when they sent me to Camp Custer near Battle Creek.

Camp Custer (Fort Custer)

Camp Custer received all draftees where IQ test and other criteria were considered in deciding where one would become attached. An interesting fact was a decision that I should be held there until they were able to obtain a pair of Army shoes size 10B. That took ten days. When I took my physical I was in one line. At one point I was asked if I had to wear glasses. When I said yes, I learned that I was in a line of those who were 160 pounds and I would have become a Marine. After I finished with my physical and IQ tests, they decided that I should go to Fort Warren in Wyoming in the Quartermaster Corps.

Fort Warren, Wyoming

My first exposure to basic training was at Fort Warren in Cheyenne, Wyoming in the Quartermaster Corps which keeps military records. My address on February 21, 1943 was Company H, 16th Regiment, QMRTC. Most emphasis was on company clerk duties. It was really the best assignment in the Army. In addition to keeping records the Quartermaster Corps was responsible for food, equipment and other special services to maintain an Army–including the most important, K-rations.

Our basic training lasted three months and was similar to infantry basics, including hikes, calisthenics, rifle range, aircraft identification, picking up cigarette butts, marching and drill. Near the end of basics I was informed that my IQ test was high enough that I could apply for OCS (Officer Candidate School). OCS produced “90-day wonders.” In three months one would become a second lieutenant. Becoming an officer seemed to be quite exciting and interesting especially in the quartermaster corps. As one would expect, I went for an interview and I was accepted, however, the officer in charge said that I had a choice. I was also eligible for a new program called ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program). The ASTP was set up to send qualified soldiers to college for two years and then become first lieutenants. It included two choices; medicine or engineering. I chose engineering and went from Wyoming to South Dakota State in Brookings.

South Dakota State (ASTP)

In May 1943, about two hundred soldiers (GIs) were added to the student body in a small college in a small town. Needless to say that made a big impact. We were billeted in the women’s dormitory, Wenona Hall. We wore regular uniforms and attended classes in groups of twenty-five. Captain Solem was in charge. I remember seeing the college campanile, a fifty-foot tower from the midpoint of a twenty-mile hike. That is how flat the topography was. Our classes were regular college courses conducted by civilian instructors. Most classes were serious, but one history class was taught by a lady professor and she could not maintain control. Personally I felt sorry for her. I established many friendships while at SDSC. One friend in particular was Gene Sayet, a Jewish guy from New York. He was a natural comedian who could have become a talk show host if he had the breaks. Outstanding was a show that he produced involving many GIs. He joked good clean fun of our lives at SCSC and ASTP. It was called “Army Sets the Pace” drawing from the acronym ASTP. Our friendship resulted in a visit of Gene and family to Barton City after we got home. Naturally when a softball tournament was organized, I became a third baseman. Our team won the championship. A big change in my Army life came when the ASTP program was closed at the end of one year. Instead of becoming an officer we all were reassigned to the infantry as buck privates. It was a shock! Some of the guys were in the Air Force and would have had their wings had they not joined ASTP. I would have been a second lieutenant in the Quartermaster Corps. I saw many grown men cry.

Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri

Transfer from ASTP to the infantry took me to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Infantry basic training was tougher than what we went through for the QM Corps. More emphasis was made on hand to hand combat and true combat experience. One time we had to crawl through the infiltration course under live fire that was three feet above the ground. With a pack on your back you cuddled close to the ground, believe

me. In the last week of basics, I was carrying a buddy across a stony area and I stepped on a rock and sprained an ankle. Thank goodness we took a long train ride to San Luis Obispo, California for further training. My ankle improved somewhat.

Camp San Luis Obispo, California

The next phase of basic training was Camp San Luis Obispo, California in the 303rd Infantry Division for amphibious training for action in the South Pacific. When we arrived in California there was the opportunity to try out for the baseball team so I didn't really get complete amphibious training. Even though I still had difficulty in walking I wouldn't tell the coach. I went out to third base and cringed every time I moved. When I started batting practice the pitcher was a lefty from a San Diego minor league team who threw the ball which appeared to curve and then come up. I must have closed my eyes because I hit the ball between the outfielders and it must have rolled a half-mile on the flat parade ground. I made the team! My amphibious training was interrupted by being on the team. I would take regular training with the troops and at noon a Jeep would come out to pick me up if I had been on hikes. I was in big company with Jimmy Bloodworth (Tigers), Mel Parnell (Red Sox), and Don Tannehill (White Sox). When it was time to ship out the baseball players did not have enough amphibious training so we stayed in San Luis Obispo until baseball season ended. It was great because we missed going to the South Pacific. However, I had enough training to be put on assignment in Europe.

An interesting incident happened while I was in San Luis Obispo. During a night exercise we were on an infiltration course and I spotted a major who was observing. Just to show him I was on the ball, I got as close as I could before he could see me. As soon as he saw me, I yelled the first part of the password. He must not have remembered it so I shot him with blank ammunition. The next morning I was made PFC. While in California, I was able to visit Hollywood and see the famous "Walk of Fame" where names are engraved in the sidewalk.

England

In September 1944, I was shipped by rail to a replacement depot in Boston, Massachusetts for shipment to Europe. On September 22nd I bravely scaled the gangplank for the luxury liner the USS Mariposa in Boston Harbor. On the eighth day we landed in Weymouth, England. It was ironic that on the lower deck were members of the baseball team. Unbelievably on the upper deck was one of my former QM buddies who chose OCS. He was Bill Bainbridge, by this time a second lieutenant. We traveled to and were stationed at Warminster Barracks in Weymouth, England. I had a chance to see the White Cliffs of Dover en route. We kept busy training and one day I was asked to join a small group and to report to a captain. When I arrived he asked me if I needed glasses. When I responded yes, he told me that I should return to my unit. Because I had fired expert on the rifle range I had been picked to go to sniper school. In the meantime my unit was shipped out. This was the second time that my glasses changed my direction. My unit had been shipped to the mainland and eventually got shot up badly in the Battle of the Bulge.

France

When I finally got assigned to a new unit on October 22, 1944 we rode in LCI #229 across the English Channel to Cherbourg, France. My job was to guard C-rations but I got so seasick I had to lie on my stomach. We landed at Omaha Beach in the footprints and bloodstains of the many comrades who had landed on D-day. We were shuffled together in mud and pup tents for about a week and then we moved to Cherbourg airstrip awaiting flight for the MTO (Mediterranean Theater of Operation). While in Cherbourg, I visited the foxholes on a bluff that the Germans used at the time of our invasion. In one there were some wooden and rubber bullets. I understand these were designed for lateral fire in cases when they shot toward other foxholes. I wish that I could have kept them for souvenirs. The foxholes were near the top of a large bluff that overlooked the beachhead. The Germans had excellent positions for firing at our boys in the invasion, but were soon out-manned.

Italy

On October 30, 1944, we boarded a C-47 and flew to Pisa, Italy. On our way the pilot pointed out the Coliseum and then circled above the Leaning Tower of Pisa. I soon became a member of the 135th Regiment of the 34th Red Bull Division and began 22 months in the good old infantry. I still had my PFC rating but was in no way favored above buck privates. We all joined combat units. Company E of the 135th Regiment of the 34th Infantry, Red Bull Division at Montecatini needed replacements. It was down to

around 30 soldiers. My new platoon had nine and was led by Sergeant Oris Goodey from Utah. Memory tells me that the situation was typical and that we replacements were not filled with pessimism. I can't think of any one of my buddies who thought about the risks and danger. We billeted in an old schoolhouse and waited for our next move. It was fortunate for me that I became attached to a combat unit in the fall because we stayed in defensive positions all winter long. We were relatively safe in comparison to being on the offensive. We would spend long periods of time on the front line and then be relieved for a short period of time in town. Each time we returned to the mountains we would go to a different location.

Our foxholes were located in the mountains south of Bologna in the Po Valley. Our worst danger was when we went on patrols or by stray mortar shells and other artillery. The nine or so of us went on patrols nearly every night but rarely engaged in fighting. Our mission was to defend our position and to be on the alert for enemy activities. A typical patrol would take us as close as we could to the enemy line to listen and observe. Naturally, we drew fire at times. One night we advanced into no-man's land and happened to be where some of our own artillery nearly got us. We immediately scampered to the right and the enemy opened up machine gun fire. I remember hitting the ground and seeing dirt on a bank being hit by bullets about ten feet over my head. We ran from there through an anti-tank minefield. These mines normally were not triggered by the weight of a person. We ran for a barn nearby and just as I was about to enter it, a screaming meemie hit and tore off the corner of the roof. I then ran away from the barn and a white phosphorus shell hit about thirty feet in front of me. All of the white phosphorus blew away from me. I thanked my God for protecting me.

One of our patrols was to check out enemy activity near a small river or creek. This time we had the entire platoon. Our new platoon leader was a recently graduated second lieutenant – a 90-day wonder – just arrived from the states. We reached the river and could hear enemy talking and vehicles running. Our mission was accomplished. However, our new leader, who was still wearing leggings instead of combat boots, decided to lead us across the river to engage the enemy. As soon as he reached the riverbank he was wounded. If any of us would try to rescue him, we would also get shot. Sergeant McGaffin, second in command, asked us to provide cover and he retrieved him. We never saw him again.

One daylight patrol was set up. Three of us were asked to investigate a building near a railroad track. We went to about one hundred yards from the building when a German opened a door and emptied a dishpan. He did not see us and we returned to our company. The building was soon fired upon. The tense position in the line included each shadow transforming into a "Jerry" and jumping out at you from every direction. There were many times when I could have been killed, as explained in the following examples:

One time I was sitting in my foxhole that had sandbags for a top. I heard a thump and a drop of water fell into my hand. A mortar shell was sticking out of the sand. It had not exploded. I thanked some German worker who left the detonator out.

Another time I was between two buddies when a machine gun killed my buddy on my left and hit the one on the right. Both shells hit near their hearts.

When we were on the offense we followed some tanks to take a strong hold. At one point a lieutenant commanded us to spread out and not stay behind the tanks. Soon machine gun fire opened up and my buddy and I saw a ditch so we ran for it. Just as we got in the ditch, a bullet hit a bush and it dropped on my hand. Another time my buddy, Davis Barton from North Carolina and I were in our foxhole. I heard a bullet go just over my head. It just went 'pop'. I threw myself down while Barton laughed and told me I was cracking up. Then he stuck his head up and 'pop', he was down more quickly than I was. We both survived although another of my buddies was not so fortunate. A mortar shell landed in his lap and he died instantly.

Everyday Life

It is interesting how we took showers. We would visit a place on some river where water was heated under a tent. We would enter the tent and throw our shirts in one pile and pants in another, likewise underclothes. We would take a nice shower and on our way out we would pick up a different clean set of clothes, all used. If your shirt was too small, you wore it until the next shower.

On November 14, 1944 I was visiting with a buddy and I mentioned that tomorrow would be opening day for deer season back in Michigan. He asked me where I lived in Michigan and I told him Detroit because I had been drafted from there. He said he was from Hubbard Lake, which is less than ten miles from Barton City.

One day we were moving on foot near a railroad tunnel. It was a nice sunny day and we took a break in the tunnel. Some of us stayed outside and I took off my shoes and socks to get some fresh air. Then a German plane flew by parallel to the tracks about one hundred feet from me. I could see the pilot.

Everybody ran into the tunnel. Being barefooted, I decided walking on crushed stone would be worse than facing the plane. Evidently he did not see us, as he didn't return.

An important service for the military was the USO. I saw Frank Sinatra. I wasn't even excited about seeing him because it appeared as though he was appealing only to bobby-soxers. He performed for two hours and I became a fan. The Andrew Sisters entertained us and a few weeks later my folks received a card from them stating that they saw their son, Jim, in Italy. Of course I gave them my folks address. One of our boys was kissed by Jinx Falkenburg which left a big lipstick mark on his cheek. He didn't wash it until it wore off.

The Front Line

There are many interesting things that I remember while on the front line. One soldier kept putting his foot above the foxhole hoping a shell would land nearby and wound him enough to get a discharge. It didn't happen but when we were on break, he was cleaning his rifle and it went off accidentally shooting him in the foot. In the mountains our drinking water was obtained by filling our canteen from a small flowing stream along a path. We would make it drinkable by putting in a pill. One patrol we were walking up the path and saw where the water was coming down. A dead cow was in the path.

Another incident involved a dead cow. A neighboring Army unit was occupying a barn. A couple of us visited and four or five GIs were playing poker. They were using a frozen dead cow for a table. I found an M-1 rifle where evidently a GI was killed. I carried it back to my foxhole and consequently earned the nickname of "Two-Gun-Jim". Incidentally I did send an Italian rifle home.

Four of us were in an outlook type of foxhole about twenty-feet wide when a German came up to within twenty feet. He wanted to surrender. At the time of his arrival we were comparing weapons. One of us had a Browning automatic rifle and for some reason none of us had our own rifle. I am glad he didn't come shooting. Incidentally, my first prisoner was named Schad. Back in Barton City my neighbor was Otto Schad.

Since I promised my mother when I was eleven that I would not drink or smoke until I was twenty-one, I did not smoke in the service. One day a buddy asked me why I didn't smoke while I was in combat. Evidently, it helped settle his nerves. My response was that it bothered me more when he would light his match under his blanket because the light could be seen at night no matter how hard he tried to hide it. At age eighty-one, I still do not smoke or drink.

Barton and I became foxhole mates. He had a background in North Carolina and did a lot of hunting. Many nights he would go on a patrol on his own after our regular patrol or when we didn't have one. Although I knew that he did it, he never asked me to join him.

Each unit was responsible for their own ammunition. We could not leave ammo or give it to those who relieved us when we went on break. The countryside in Italy has a lot of shells when GIs would empty their rifle clips by throwing shells away to the tune of "she loves me, she loves me not."

When we were on the front line we stayed in foxholes. We had a sleeping bag and used it fully clothed including combat boots. When we were on break, we stayed in large buildings and sometimes schoolhouses. One time we stayed in a barn. When we extinguished our candles, everything was dark and soon we were among a bunch of rats. I felt something get on my sleeping bag by my feet. Soon it came up to my elbow. I flipped it and it came back and I flipped it again. This went on several times just like a game. We couldn't get any sleep until we lit candles. We stayed in a complex once and some civilians were living with us. I remember a bambino about two or three years old. It shocked me to hear her speak fluent Italian. Then I realized that she couldn't speak English.

The quartermaster corps did a great job. We always had C or K-rations everyday, even in combat. My memory fails me in being able to describe what was in the C or K-rations, but we had food, dry or canned, candy, cigarettes and more. I gave my cigarettes away and sometimes even sold them.

End of the War

Early December was spent in extensive training for a major drive scheduled for the last part of December, but it didn't materialize. We had Christmas dinner in Barbarino and on December 27 we were called to Lucca or Pietra Santa to back up the 92nd Division. From there we went back to the front. January 7 to February 11 was extremely rough. At that time I became Monty Wooley Jr. I sent a picture of my beard and me to my family and a few weeks later I received a package of razor blades from my sisters. At this time snow and ice were at its worst. Often the entrance to our foxhole was completely covered with snow.

We spent Easter in Barbarino, which was a little town. It was nice to see a movie and we didn't

even carry a rifle to the movie theatre. Early April found us ready for a push into the Po Valley. We were in reserve until Bologna fell and on April 26th were on the point to make a thrust through Parma to Piacenza. It was a rugged day riding trucks, taking prisoners, routing German defenses and continually going forward despite boys dropping on either side. There were both Americans and Germans lying in eternal slumber on the side of the road and Italian civilians applauding our arrival. While riding in the truck it had to stop unexpectedly for a Pisano pushing a cart. My third finger got caught on the side of the rack and was skinned. Several of my buddies said I should have gotten the Purple Heart. The medic looked at it, put the skin back, put a bandage on it and sent me back to the truck. I couldn't even load my rifle. Never as long as I live do I want to spend another day as horrible as any of those few days. We arrived in Brescia after crossing the Po River at night and the next day we drove to Milan. I was on the first truck into Milan and the 75th German Army Corps surrendered to Major General Charles Bolty, our Commanding General. The war was officially over in Italy on May 2.

By November 5, I was transferred to the 88th Division, 350th Infantry because I did not have enough points to return to the States with the 34th. I remember some of the sites I saw after the war ended. I visited Venice with the water streets, saw a beautiful cathedral in Milan which was dubbed the fruitcake. Took a tour to Switzerland which was a beautiful trip, hitchhiked to Austria where I bought a Luger, flare gun and pistol. Unfortunately these guns were all stolen in later years from our cabin in Barton City. Seeing Benito Mussolini, also known as IL Duce and his girlfriend, Clara Petacci, hanging by their feet at a small gas station in Milan was a sight to behold.

Rank

On November 19, 1945, I became sergeant and on December 20, 1945, I became staff sergeant. My experience with rank was frustrating. My IQ when I first joined the Army was such that I could go to Officer's Candidate School and graduate as a second lieutenant or go with Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) and after two years become a first lieutenant. I chose ASTP, which would give me two years in college. The program closed after one year and we were sent to the infantry.

The very day that I was interviewed for a field commission, the atomic bomb was dropped and there was no need for more officers. In 1945, when I was near discharge, I was offered a commission if I would reenlist. I refused. A friend of mine took it and I was made acting first sergeant until he came back from a furlough. I was discharged as a staff sergeant. When I was acting first sergeant, two officers visited my office one day. They asked me if I knew the 90-day wonder second lieutenant that got shot on his first patrol. The officers were looking for supportive information for a nomination to present the Silver Star to this man for bravery. I could not, with clear conscience, have him rewarded for possibly having his platoon shot up.

Decorations

I earned Battle Star Southern France ETO ribbon, Battle Star North Apennines End of War, Battle Star Po Valley, Combat Infantry Badge, Good Conduct Medal and Victory Ribbon.

Coming Home

On my return home, I boarded a C-47 in Udina on December 15, 1945 and flew to Naples. On December 22, 1945, I boarded an aircraft carrier, the USS Monterey and landed in Newport News, Virginia on December 31, 1945. I was discharged on January 6, 1946 from Camp Atterbury, Indiana. On the USS Monterey flight deck we were able to play basketball and even softball. When the ship would lurch we could miss the net as much as ten feet. The softball was ten inches in diameter. We didn't lose a ball.

On board I was made responsible for the service records for two hundred soldiers. One day a young soldier asked me if I could show him his record. It was interesting. He came from the south to Michigan, walked into Camp Custer and told them he had been transferred. His records didn't arrive, but they let him stay. Soon he was shipped to Europe. After a few engagements in combat, he had enough.

He said, "I don't even belong in your Army." He had to pay back any money he was paid and he was inducted legally into the Army in Italy.

One of the greatest feelings I had about the war was the fact that we literally stole the song "Lili Marlene." I fell in love with the song and then learned that a German wrote it about a German girl waiting for a loved one.

There is always the question, "How did you handle the 'kill or be killed' situation?" I felt that if I didn't provide cover and a buddy got killed, it would be like killing him. Also, we all shot at machine-gun nests or

flashes of fire. It wasn't like shooting at deer because you couldn't go over and see if you hit or missed. I was lucky in that most of my combat was in defensive conditions. On offense, we usually had tanks to wipe out opposition.

There seems to be a better way to resolve international problems than war when soldiers on one side fight against soldiers on the other side. It is told that a person had a dream while sleeping during the Cold War. In his dream the leader of the Soviet Union and the leader of the United States agreed on a plan that each country develops a vicious dog. These dogs would then be put in a ring and the winner would win the war. The Soviet Union developed the most malicious German Shepherd and it was bad. The Americans worked on a Dachshund. When the two were put in the ring, the Dachshund tore the German Shepherd apart. The Americans were asked how they found such a vicious Dachshund. The reply was that it took a lot of disguising to get that alligator to look like a Dachshund!

It took me a long time to write down my military experiences. As I expected it stirred up bad memories and for over a month I would wake up at night thinking about what I could add. It was painful to do, but my son, Bob, wanted me to and I love him so much that I did and I am glad.

FRENCHY
Dean W. Betz

In a muddy, shell-torn orchard in Normandy, I first saw Frenchy. About thirty or forty others, like myself, had been sent to this particular infantry company as replacements. The losses had been heavy in the hedgerows and Company K had not been spared. As I lay in the Norman mud I looked up at the torn and twisted apparition above me which at one time had been a lovely apple tree. Machine gun and rifle fire continued unabated while mortar shells dropped spasmodically around us. Rain dripped from the mangled tree as I examined the deep well-spaced foxholes dug into the hedgerow in front of me. A few grimy haggard spectators watched us as we lay there. I concluded that they were all that was left of the company command post. These spectators, who peered at us, seemed very inquisitive as though we were from a different world. They inquired as to our number and asked what part of the states we were from. They never ventured from their holes, however, but merely stared at us with blank and pitiful expressions on their faces. We were lying in the mud and rain waiting to be assigned to a platoon. Twice, a mud- caked GI came and took about half of our number. Then from a narrow hole in the hedge came a bearded, hunched figure. He approached our group and selected about a dozen of us and introduced himself.

"My name is Frenchy. I'm your platoon sergeant—second platoon. Follow me through this hole in the hedge at a ten-yard interval. Keep low and move fast. As soon as you find an empty hole-hit it and remember to keep low cause Jerry has our whole area covered and knows we're bringing up replacements. After things quiet down, I'll come and talk to each of your personally. Let's go."

I was off on the greatest adventure of my life and followed the man in front of me through the hole in the hedge. I dashed for a vacant hole that was half full of water but it provided a welcomed covering from the fierce firing of the enemy. Later I became better acquainted with Frenchy and from that time on was a keen observer and worshipper of the most courageous and indomitable person I have ever known.

In that first lonely and strange night of combat, I was overwhelmed with nervousness and jitters like most newcomers to the front lines. I had been standing guard behind a thick protective hedgerow for perhaps a half-hour while a steady barrage of shelling continued from both sides. Now and then a German plane droned lazily overhead discharging flares, illuminating the countryside. Up and down the line from me, grenades could be heard exploding while I stood peering into the inky blackness. Then, from behind, I heard someone moving about. It was Frenchy, checking the guard.

He approached me and began talking in a low voice. "Try to relax kid. This is nothing compared to Africa. We had to pull guard duty all night long. We had to dig in out in front of our lines and sit there all night with fixed bayonets. Sometimes we had to pull the pin out of a grenade and sit there and hold it to keep from falling asleep."

He also told me that our outfit would be relieved soon and we would go back to the rear for a few days where we could sleep and eat all we wanted. I found out later that all rookies were given this false information to boost their morale. So you see, Frenchy was not only a master tactician but a psychologist as well. A few minutes later he snuck off to another position and left me standing there behind the hedgerow alone and wondering how, with all the horror around me, Africa could have been worse.

On the second day of the titanic battle for St. Lo, after meeting fanatical enemy resistance, Frenchy was hit. He got hit while clearing out a machine gun position over in the far corner of the hedge. After being knocked down by the blast, he rose to his feet and tried to continue the job. Instead, he collapsed at the feet

of our medic, who hurried over to give him aid. I found out later that shell fragments had torn through both his legs. It was rumored that both legs would have to be amputated. Like hundreds of others that horrible day, he was sent back to the hospital and was never expected to be seen again.

After Frenchy left, legends concerning his adventures began to circulate. In Africa and Sicily, he accompanied the battalion commander on secret patrols at night behind the enemy lines. He walked up in the middle of a street just after D-day firing his Browning automatic rifle and slaughtered a least a dozen of the enemy. He brought about the surrender of an entire German company. After his old comrades had either been killed or wounded, Frenchy fought on.

In November, to everyone's surprise, the invincible Frenchy returned to the outfit. We discovered later that he had escaped from the hospital in England and had somehow made his way back to our division. Was love of war so strong in him that he would deliberately rejoin his outfit where death and destruction awaited him? Was he out of his mind? I came to the conclusion that it was probably the atmosphere of close comradeship and understanding, the mutual aims and unity of effort that drew him back. Something that couldn't be found anywhere else. Whatever it was, he was given a hardy welcome. Once again the company had that extra spark of superb leadership given by Sergeant Frenchy.

By July, however, things had changed. There were new faces and new surroundings. No longer were we in the hedgerows but instead we were now in the wooded and rolling country of the Ardennes near the German town of Munchow in the Siegfried line. One quiet afternoon, I sat and talked with Frenchy about old times. We talked about the big air show at St. Lo, the bombardment and about how terribly hot it was that day. We joked about some of the incidents that happened and then Frenchy began telling me how it felt when he got hit.

Motioning to his legs, he proudly said, "Feel the lead in my legs, here below the knees. They didn't get it all out."

I felt, and sure enough there were hard lumps under the skin of both legs. He told me they were planning on taking it out just before he left the hospital. What was he trying to prove? Why didn't he remain in the hospital and let them take the rest of it out? He might even have been sent home. These were some of the thoughts that ran through my mind as I sat there on the edge of the hole. Then he began to tell me all about his brother who was in high school back in New Jersey. He had sort of a fanatical but remorseful look in his eyes as he talked. His greatest ambition was that his brother would never get mixed up in the war. He was always thinking about someone else and never himself. He was funny that way. He also told me how he despised killing Germans but went on because he could do the job just as well as the next guy.

"Why brush a dirty, lousy job like this off on somebody else when you can do it yourself," he said.

I nodded my head in agreement but at the same time wondered if other people could even begin to realize just what kind of hell some men were going through for them. Here was a man who had been in the thick bitter fighting for two whole years but hadn't given up. Here was a man with almost supernatural courage and strength. Here was the personification of the ideal American soldier. The next day I saw Frenchy for the last time as I was sent back to the hospital. Sometimes I wonder if he lived through the war or if his brother ever got involved in the conflict. Sometimes I close my eyes and think of all the other "Frenchy's" who fought in all parts of the world. Sometimes I wonder where we would all be today without all those "Frenchy's."

SNUFFY

Albert Devinus was a big, good-natured guy, who stood over six feet tall in his khaki-colored GI socks. His weight was evenly distributed throughout his massive big-boned body and nowhere, not even around his mid section, were there any traces of flabby folds or fat. After having a few drinks or being out in the sun most of the day, his round face used to light up like a red-hot stove in a dark room. His straight straw colored hair was thinning on top and caused him considerable worry.

"My wife used to run her fingers through my hair," he'd often say with a tinge of sadness in his crisp, Boston accent, "but when I get back she's going to be mighty disappointed because instead of hair, there will be just this shiny dome."

After supper, he would pull out a cigar from his pocket, light it and take a couple of deep drags and then sit back like a Wall Street broker and say, "There's nothing like a good cigar to top off the evening meal, even if it is lousy Army chow."

He would sometimes smoke two cigars in a row and then pull out a small round box of Copenhagen. He would offer some to anyone nearby, place a small pinch of the stuff under his lower lip, and say, "Ah, just what I needed, sure you won't have some?" I guess this is how he came to be called "Snuffy".

I first met Snuffy in the cathedral city of Amiens, France where we had both been sent to join a military police detachment. He was an old combat man who had landed in Normandy just after D-Day and had

miraculously lived through those first few hellish weeks of fighting in the swamps and hedgerows. Evenings, we would sit around in a crowded smoky café drinking vin blanc, vin rouge, cognac and champagne. We would sit and listen to American tunes played by a three-piece band in the snappy French style. We would talk about wine, women and war.

On one of those nights, Snuffy was in rare form and told us about the exciting things that happened in those first few weeks of combat in Normandy. After two days and nights of bitter fighting, his platoon dug in along a thick, tree covered hedge. Since it rained every night, he covered his hole with a captured Jerry shelter-half for protection against the inclement weather. Not long after he had been relieved from guard, he went back to his hole and fell into an exhausted slumber. The pattering of rain on the shelter awakened him slightly and something seemed to be crawling along outside of the hole. As he raised his arm to lift the covering he felt a body. Immediately he thought of the week before when most of the second platoon was slaughtered in their holes by Krauts who had snuck through the lines. For what seemed like hours of tortuous waiting—but was only seconds—he got up enough courage to throw off the shelter and leap out of the hole. There in the rain he saw a frightened, wet, shaggy dog instead of a Kraut. Snuffy said he was so happy to see the dog that he put the dog inside the hole with him where they slept the rest of the night. Not all of us believed the end of the story but we all agreed that Snuffy was one of the best storytellers in the entire world.

Our outfit got orders to move to a staging area in southern France near the city of Arles. During the trip, which took three days, we sat in the doorway of our boxcars with our feet dangling over the sides. Snuffy stubbed his big toe as we went through a tunnel and for weeks after that did a lot of complaining. The medics told him to soak the injured toe in water as often as possible. Since it was very difficult to obtain water in the company area, we looked for it elsewhere and found a glistening silver lake not more than seven miles away. Every afternoon, Snuffy and I would sneak off from the company area and go swimming. Getting away from the company wasn't too difficult because nothing was done at that time of day due to the severe heat. We were always lucky enough to get a ride in a GI truck. Sometimes we would travel about forty miles southeast to the special GI resort on the Mediterranean. The Red Cross served doughnuts and coffee, cold beef sandwiches, hot dogs and hamburgers all without charge. To Snuffy and me, this spot was paradise. It was a pleasure to swim in the blue waters and lie on the fine white sand after visiting the refreshment stand. Snuffy liked this resort because of the abundance of good food. Even after eating enough food to feed three men, he was always ready to eat some more when we returned to camp around suppertime. Sometimes on particularly hot days, if we could get transportation, we would go to the Mediterranean in the afternoons and the lake in the evenings. Any time we had to do laundry we would take a bar of soap with us to the lake, wash our clothes and hang them to dry on a branch of a tree while we swam or just sat on the rocky shore and talked. There weren't many guys that took advantage of this small lake and not very many went to the Mediterranean. Snuffy and I knew of no better or more enjoyable way to spend the blistering hot summer afternoons even after his toe was as good as new.

What I liked about Snuffy was his simple philosophy of life. More than anything else in the world, he wanted to save up enough money to buy a good dump truck. At night he would talk about dump trucks in his sleep. Some of the guys thought he was nuts but like everyone else, he wanted to get home to his wife. Instead of making a fortune, he just wanted a dump truck of his own. Life had been difficult for him and he had been around enough to realize the world didn't owe him a living. Even though he had killed many of the enemy, he still didn't really know what he was fighting for except for self-preservation. Basically, he didn't believe in war and often told me that he thought people would live together happily and peacefully after the war.

"Surely people could settle their differences in some other manner than killing off thousands of fine men, slaughtering helpless animals, tearing up rich productive farm land, separating wives and husbands and loved ones, spending billions of dollars for war instead of for peace. Why not have the rulers fight it out between themselves instead of mixing everybody up and confusing the whole world," said Snuffy. "Then maybe we wouldn't have wars."

I don't know whether Snuffy got his dump truck or whether he ever got back to the states because I was sent home ahead of him. But, whatever he did, no matter how dirty or how difficult his job, I'll be willing to bet that he was happy because he always found the brighter side of life.

ON PATROL

We had been fighting without rest for three weeks and the company was not up to full strength. Around noon we crossed the French border into Belgium. It was growing late and would be dark in another

two hours. Our long column of dusty men stopped and spread out along the side of the road. Up ahead lay a series of hills and surely the Krauts were up there waiting for us. A deadly silence filled the air. It was a silence that was abnormal, like the proverbial calm before a storm.

Our Lieutenant gave our platoon a signal to move off the road. Five minutes later we were ordered to dig in. I began to dig a hole with Chuck Fry, our assistant squad leader. Chuck was twenty years old and had joined the division the same day as myself. We were the only two men left in our squad after St. Lo and had become very close friends.

We hadn't been digging long when the Lieutenant came over and wanted to know if Fry would lead a three-man patrol into a village up ahead. Fry told him he would and asked me if I would join the party. I told him to count me in and he smiled and told me to get ready while he went to get another man. I sat next to the partially dug hole and talked to the Lieutenant for only a few minutes before Chuck came back with a guy by the name of Hartman who completed our trio.

The Lieutenant told us to proceed up to the village and get as much information as possible concerning German V-1 rocket launching sites believed to be in the vicinity. He also warned us to be on the lookout for the Krauts and to be sure to return before dark.

The village was no more than a mile away. Behind it laid rolling hills and on either side were pine forests. Leading into the village was a narrow winding road and around one of the curves we met a group of people who were sitting along the side. We found out that they were headed toward the village and there was an English-speaking man there. We told them we were in a hurry and started walking while they followed. We had no sooner entered the village with its brown stone buildings when the inhabitants swarmed upon us like bees escaping from a hive. We were completely surrounded by a mob of deliriously happy people who began to hug and kiss us and shake our hands while they shouted 'Viva la Amerique.'

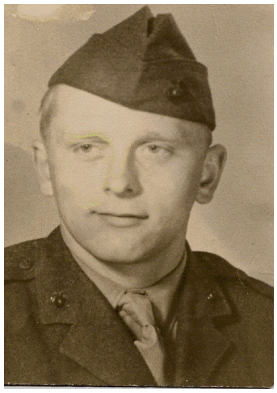
We finally broke loose and raced for one of the nearby houses for protection. After the people quieted down we were able to locate the man who we were told could speak fluent English. He could not speak English any better than the other fellow we had met on the road but he seemed to understand us better than anyone else. He told us that we were the first Americans they had seen in four years and they acted like it.

After drinking many toasts and eating cakes which looked and tasted like cold waffles, some of the people began to leave, but not before we had signed autographs. It was some feeling to be a celebrity and it certainly made me feel good to see these people so happy. Some of them came up and touched us as though they were in a dream and couldn't believe their eyes. One old peasant woman told me that I looked too young to be in the Army. Others came up and lifted my steel helmet, tried it on and groaned at the weight of it. The two men who spoke a little English acted as interpreters and had all they could do to answer and explain questions to the villagers and to the three of us. Once, two women who had been talking in a corner of the room got into a fight and Hartman had to go over and break it up. We told Fry that they were fighting over him. The owner of the house brought three bottles of wine out of the cellar and told us he had saved them especially for the liberation.

After many toasts and after signing what seemed like hundreds of autographs we remembered that we came to find out about rocket sites. We were having such a good time that we had forgotten all about our mission. By this time, it was very dark outside so it made little difference if we stayed there until morning, I thought to myself. Fry, however, had different ideas and decided to go down the street with Hartman and see what they could find. He told me to remain in the house and see if I could uncover some facts about the rockets. A lot of people went with them and I was left with the family who owned the house and a handful of others who wanted to hear about America.

The owner wanted me to spend the night with him and the rest of the family. They had a buxom daughter about my age, three younger boys and a small baby girl. I told them we had to start back and it was impossible to remain with them overnight. It was hard to explain to them but I think they understood even though the old man seemed to be mad at me for not accepting his hospitality. Then I heard one of the boys mention something about the Germans and found out that some Krauts had been seen in the hills behind the village not more than a kilometer away. I began to get worried and sent the boy down the street after Fry and Harman. I was afraid the Krauts might have been attracted by the noise and suddenly realized that we might be in a very dangerous spot. In a short while the boy returned with Hartman and Fry who were obviously drunk. They had flowers draped around their necks like Hawaiian leis and were carrying a bottle of wine and singing at the top of their voices. By shaking each one violently I finally brought them to their sense and both agreed that it was time to return. We bade good night to our hosts and walked off down the road into the darkness leaving the little village and the happy people behind.

No Joke
James E. Corbit



On April 1, 1943, I found myself in a line with many other draftees at Kalamazoo, Michigan. It was my decision what military organization I would serve in. I decided that it would not be the Air Force. I didn't think I could jump out of a burning airplane in a parachute. I didn't want to walk, so that took out the Army or Marines. So I joined the US Navy.

This turned out to be an April Fool's Joke on me, because nine months later, I was attached to the US Marines as a medical corpsman.

After a short one-week leave, I reported to the Great Lakes in Illinois for eight weeks of boot camp. Next, I started medical training school at Great Lakes. For the first course, we attended a movie of medical operations. They showed a leg being amputated, cutting through the leg muscles, then sawing the bone through with a wood saw. The students who didn't pass out were to become medical trainees.

I passed.

After I graduated as a Hospital Apprentice Second Class, I was given a 30-day leave. I took the Grand Trunk Railroad to Cassopolis, Michigan.

When I got home, I found the refrigerator full of frogs' legs, which I dearly love. On July 10, I reported to Great Lakes. They assigned me to the Oakland Naval Hospital. We took a troop train to California—a long, slow trip since our train was assigned to all the inactive railroads. We went west to Colorado and then north to Montana. We only had food for two days, so every time we stopped; we went to a grocery store to buy food. By the time we reached San Francisco, we were very hungry.

At Oakland Naval Hospital, I was assigned to medical ward duty. For liberty I bought roller skates and went skating. I was at Oakland Naval Hospital for about two months and then was assigned to Pleasanton Naval Hospital just South and West of Oakland.

While at Pleasanton Naval Hospital, I put in for dental technician school and was accepted. The school started in February, 1944. I used to go to San Jose on liberty. One evening I was in a YWCA basement gym for a dance when an earthquake hit. Quite scary.

I was at Pleasanton about four weeks when the Master-At-Arms came in one day. "Corbit, pack your bags, you're leaving."

"My school is not for a couple of months." "But the order was for 25 hospital apprentices. There are only 26 here and one is the secretary of the base commander. Tough luck."

"I know, but you're going to the Marines. April Fools." I was to report to Camp Elliott in San Diego, California.

While at San Diego, I visited my Uncle George Corbit, a famous oil painter in the area, who was handicapped after being wounded in Germany in WWI.

I had some interesting experiences at Camp Elliott. Once we had to jump off of a fifty-foot wall with a full battle pack. I hate heights but, like everything else, I managed.

One day, while out at field training, we were in a ravine north of San Diego and we saw lots of smoke ahead of us. We saw trucks moving down the road going the other way. They called us to get on the trucks and hurry, because the forest fire was moving very fast. So we got on and just got out of there five minutes before the fire hit the area.. a close call.

After I graduated from Fleet Marine Field Medical Training, I was assigned to a reserved Marine battalion. We went on a formerly moth-balled troop ship. After a month, we pulled into Nouméa, New Caledonia. We were there for a couple of days but could not go ashore.

We then sailed for Guadalcanal Island to join the Third Marine Division. They had just gotten back from the Bougainville Island Campaign.

Since we got to the Third Battalion, Ninth Marines Third Division after 7 pm, they held the kitchen open for us to eat. We hadn't eaten since breakfast and were very hungry. When we got to the meat section of the chow line, they had the best looking steak. I hadn't had steak since I got in the service. I was licking my chops when the server asked if I wanted some more. I did. He gave me two more pieces. I noticed that he had a smile on his face. I thought he was just being friendly. When I sat down to eat I took a bite of the steak and—wow—it was bad. It turned out to be Australian mutton. It was rank.

I was assigned as corpsman for the heavy weapons platoon of K Company. This means that I was the only Navy man assigned to some 40 Marines, all bigger then me. This platoon had the heavy, water-

cooled machine guns and the 3-inch mortars. It was my job to fix the Marines' medical problems—like sore feet, cuts, or wounds.

Our company commander, Captain Walter K. Crawford hated corpsmen because he couldn't make us work. All we had to do is go with our assigned platoon and take care of their medical problems. This didn't make the captain friendly to us. The only one that could order us to work was the battalion doctor.

The captain had a large Indian as his runner. He didn't like corpsmen because his boss didn't like us. He used to ride me unmercifully. Finally, I couldn't take it anymore, so we tangled in my tent. I got the best of the fight. I got my two fingers in his nose and tore it practically loose from his face. He had boasted I was yellow and wouldn't fight him. From that point on I had no more trouble with any Marine. I expected trouble from the captain but it never came. In fact, I think he had more respect for me.

I played both baseball and basketball—the heat didn't seem to bother me. We had a good battalion baseball team. In fact, we beat Bill Veecks' team, who were later the island champions. He would go on to own the Cleveland Indians. He was in charge of the Pacific southwest baseball championship game. We tried to enter but he said we were too late with our request. We got it in on time but it got pigeonholed.

Sometime in April 1944 we started special training for an invasion.

About May 23 to 27, 1944, we had our final rehearsal on beaches near Cape Esperance, Guadalcanal. On June 1, we were loaded onto LST (Landing Ship Tank) to depart for Kwajalein, the staging area for our next campaign.

Around June 9 to 12, the task force left Kwajalein for the Southern Mariana Islands for Campaign Forager. On June 15, the Second and Fourth Marine Division landed on Saipan Island. On June 16th the Army's 27th Division landed as a reserve division.

At this time, we canceled W-Day for Campaign Stevedore—the invasion of Guam. At this time, they ordered Task Force 58 to engage the approaching Japanese Fleet. This was evidently the reason for temporarily canceling the invasion of Guam. On June 25, the Third Marine Division was released as floating reserved, or backup division, and was directed to Eniwetok. The First Provisional Marine and the Army's 77th Infantry Division were released to proceed to Eniwetok to participate in the invasion of Guam. On July 8, they set the W-Day as July 21st. On July 8, task forces 53 and 58 started intensive preliminary pre-invasion bombardment of Guam. On July 15-17, Task Force 53 departed Eniwetok for Guam.

On July 21, 1944, the Third Marine Division landed on Guam. I was on the second wave. I was lucky. There was a larger hill about 1,000 yards ahead of our landing beach. Just as we hit the beach, the planes dropped their last bombs on this hill. After that, the Japs came out of caves on the far side of the hill. They set up their mortars and started bombing the 4 and 5 waves. They hit many of the landing crafts, threatening to kill or injure everyone in the landing craft.

About a week into the campaign, we moved across the high areas of Guam. One day we progressed so fast they couldn't get food or water to us. We just passed by a hut when we stopped for the night. I remember seeing food and beer in the hut. So I went back and found some Alaskan salmon and some beer. That night it was our supper and breakfast the next morning.

In the next few days we were moving down this trail, we came to a fork in the trail. We had a small tank we were following. A Japanese officer jumped out waving a saber and hollering, "Banzai."

He was swinging his saber trying to cut the cannon off the tank. He just put a lot of nicks in his saber. We later found out the Japs had a party at Agana giving all the troops sake and opium. We discovered, based on the actions of the troops, that they were either doped or drunk.

Near the end of the campaign, I awoke one morning in a foxhole and felt something inside my left thigh. I dropped my pants and saw a tick. I reached down and pulled the tick off.

"You shouldn't have done that," said the Marine in the foxhole with me. "You probably broke his head off and left it in your leg."

Next thing I knew, I felt another pain at the end of my penis. I started to reach for it and the Marine said "I wouldn't do that if I were you." So I didn't and asked him how to get rid of it.

He told me to light a match and touch it.

"No you don't."

"We can light a cigarette and touch its rear end and it will corkscrew out." It worked.

About a week later I ended up in the hospital with dengue fever and my thigh about the size of my waist. I had cellulitis of the leg. The doctor said if I had gone another day, I'd have lost the leg. Good thing I didn't pull the other tick out.

During the campaign I picked up a pistol and holster from a dead Japanese officer. One day a Navy subMariner from the next camp was looking for souvenirs. Some of the Marines told him to see me. I traded

the pistol for 7 quarts of whiskey. I sold the whiskey for $280. I sent it home to purchase a new Chevy, which I never got because I couldn't get a high enough priority after the war.

There were several guys from Cassopolis, Michigan, including one who graduated from high school with me, Bud Heas. Another, Lloyd Parson, was located at the main airfield.

There were 1747 troops killed taking Guam and 6080 wounded.

The United States started bombing Iwo Jima on June 24, 1944. On October 9, Admiral Nimitz told General "Howling Mad" Smith that Iwo Jima will be the Nampa Shoto objective. The Navy started to heavily bombard Iwo Jima.

On February 15 and 16, the Third Marine Division departed Guam for Iwo Jima. On the way to Iwo Jima, the first night out, I slept on the deck of the ship. About midnight, someone dropped their gun on the steel deck and made a loud noise. We were sleeping under an LST (Landing Ship Tank) that was lashed to the deck with steel cables. It woke me up and I started running. I tripped over a cable tearing the skin off my shin. When I awoke on my stomach, I was hanging over the edge of the ship, looking down at the phosphor deflecting off the nose of the ship in the water. If I would have run around at night in combat, someone—probably one of our troops—would have shot me.

On February 19, 1945, the Fourth and Fifth Marine Division invaded Iwo Jima. The Third Marine Division was assigned as a reserve division. On February 21, the 21st Marines of the Third Division landed. The balance of divisions, less the Third Regiment, landed on Iwo Jima D-5 on February 25.

My job was to drive the wounded back to the beach. My trips went from one to three miles. I drove 1800 miles while on Iwo Jima—an island of only 8 square miles. Some days I would drive 16-20 hours. There were a number of land mine fields to go through. They normally cleared a road about 10 feet wide through the field. They put down 3 inch tape to mark the cleared area. The tape was light brown and at night the only way to see the tape was the light from the flares shot off at night. Sometimes you had to stop until more flares were shot in the air.

I drove a Jeep ambulance onto Iwo Jima. Because of the loose volcanic ash I got stuck frequently and could not keep up with the battalion. It was about sunset and the artillery was firing their guns so we couldn't pass through. We were told to crawl into a shell and hold until morning. I was about to fall off to sleep and I heard a roaring sound. It sounded like a freight train going through the air. I looked up and saw a rocket, fire spouting out the rear. It went over Mt. Suribachi out to sea. When it exploded, phosphorus billowed across the sky. We were never told they had rockets. I don't think our people knew. The next morning we caught up with the battalion.

On one of the many trips back from the beach, I was running empty with no one but me in the Jeep. A recon truck was following me and we both went through a couple of large boulders. The recon was loaded with ammunition with about a dozen recruits hanging onto the truck. He struck a buried ship torpedo, blowing the recon into pieces and killing twelve Marines. Evidently, my Jeep wasn't heavy enough to set it off.

Another time I was loading a stretcher into the upper tier of the Jeep. I was holding the rear end of the stretcher and an anti-aircraft shell went off about fifteen feet in the air above me. Shrapnel peppered my jacket. Had it hit twelve inches to the left, it would have hit my spine.

At sunset, typically, the Japanese and our artillery would start shooting at each other. We were moving the front line one evening and we saw one of these rockets being shot off by the Japs. It was heading towards us and I saw it was going to land near our position. I was standing between two 1,000-pound bomb holes. I turned around and went back to the southern one. It landed in the hole up ahead and killed everyone in it.

Yet another time when we were the reserved company off the front lines, I was sitting around talking with several Marines. For some reason, I got up and walked a few feet away. A mortar shell landed in the group killing or wounding everyone in the group.

We were held up on Iwo Jima for a month waiting for the repairs on the ship that was to return us to Guam. We were assigned guard duty of one of the few water holes left on the island. At 2 am, I was sitting on guard duty in a foxhole with two other Marines. A flare went off overhead. I felt someone watching me. Sure enough, there was a Jap in white tennis shoes watching me from 10 feet away. As I reached for my carbine he jumped in the hole chanting in Japanese. All he wanted was water. He hadn't had any water in 2-3 days. He surrendered and was sent to intelligence. A couple of nights before, a Jap had jumped in another hole with a hand grenade, injuring everyone in the hole.

I was put in for a Silver Star. Since we were 30 days late getting back to Guam, the rest of the division already gave out the quota for Silver Stars. We were given Letters of Commendation, so our doctor

told me.

There was one benefit for being late. We got a thirty-day supply of beer at once. We were given two beers every other day, so I had thirty beers coming. I gave most of it away. We bought a pig from the natives of Guam and barbecued it. The greasy pig and two cold beers made me awfully sick. I decided not to become a drinker.

In Iwo Jima we lost 6,326 Americans and 19,217 were wounded. The Japanese had between 12,000 and 14,000 troops. Except for a few who gave up almost all the Japanese were killed. In the eight square miles that was Iwo Jima, some 19,000-20,000 troops were killed.

During the 25 days on Iwo Jima from D-Day through D plus 24, 341 aircraft missions were flown, expending approximately 1,315 tons of bombs, 12,148 rockets and 456 napalm bombs.

Expenditures of Naval ammunition at Iwo Jima was greater then any previous operation in the Pacific. There were 168 howitzers on Iwo Jima and they fired 450,138 rounds of ammunition.

Since the island had the greatest amount of bombs of any invasion, it has been estimated that only 27 Japanese were killed during the pre-invasion bombings. That was because the Japanese went underground when our planes were dropping bombs or ships were firing on them.

There were 24 medals of honor awarded for bravery on Iwo Jima.

I survived a number of near-death experiences. Because of this, I told Jean that God had saved me for her. I'm not sure what her giggle meant.

For our next campaign we were supposed to be the landing force on Japan. Since I only had to serve 18 months with the Marines, I was due for rotation to the states. That coincided with the end of the war, so we didn't have to land on Japan. Our G-2 Officer got to go to Japan and view the landing area. They found about 10,000 one-man suicide torpedoes. They estimated we could shoot 9,000 suicide torpedoes out of the water. They figured we would not have landed any troops in that wave because we probably would not get any ships that close.

Don't tell me that bombing Japan with two atomic bombs wasn't a good idea.

I had to stay on Guam until I got enough points. (We got a point per month of service and needed 30 for discharge.) When I got enough points, I came back on the cruiser. USS St. Louis, which was in on the bombing of both Guam and Iwo Jima. I was discharged on November 25, 1945.

Lost At Sea in WWII
Francis Louis Hartley

Alice (mother seated), Francis Hartley 19 (sailor lost at sea), sister Margaret, father Frank Hartley who was in WWI

Francis Louis Hartley of Vassar, Michigan, son of Reverend and Mrs. Frank Hartley, enlisted in the Navy in January 1943, while a sophomore at Michigan State University. After boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Station, Hartley traveled around the world, aboard the USS Richard M. Johnson, stopping in Panama Melbourne and Port Suez. Hartley was a member of the armed guard crew aboard the SS Maiden Creek on May 17, 1944 when the ship was torpedoed three times and the crew abandoned ship. Hartley was classified as, "missing in action;" then on April 2, 1944, "presumed dead."

Lieutenant, JG, Melvin A Scheadwald wrote to the parents, "Your son served his country under my command with faithful devotion to duty, unflinching courage, and constant morale-lifting humor even in the face of grave danger…"

As a crew member of the USS Richard M. Johnson, Hartley kept a journal and the following is an excerpt provided by his sister, Margaret Hills. Hartley's own father Frank Hartley served in World War I as a Royal Marine and also kept a diary—an excerpt follows this passage.

AUGUST 1, 1943

Today was our second at sea since leaving New Orleans. By the look of things in general we must be headed for Key West. If we do go there we should arrive sometime early tomorrow evening. I think the sea around here is just like the lakes at home, with the same deep color of blue. Of course the weather is

not nearly as warm at home and on Lake Huron you would not expect to see flying fish, sharks and porpoises, all of which. we have seen In the last few hours.

The flying fish are really beautiful little animals to watch. I have stood on the bow and watched them-— perhaps a hundred at a time——leap out of the water and then glide like small swallows for a hundred and fifty or so feet and drop gracefully in the water; like so many stones skimming along the water.

One thing that bothered some of us for awhile today was a well at sea they call it a hurricane—to me it looked like a Michigan twister—a cone about five miles away. It seemed to be heading right towards us and then it turned on our starboard side and headed to the horizon and then just as quickly as it had come, it disappeared.

Aside from the water spout above, which only lasted ten minutes we have had fine weather. The nights are clear and cool and I believe that one couldn't see any more stars than I have seen during the last two nights while on watch.

When Byron wrote,

"Roll on thou deep and dark blue ocean roll,
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain"

He was right for everything is so wonderful but I have yet to see nature at one of her wild moods.

AUGUST 2, 1943

Today has really been a very busy one as sights go. I was on my watch early in the morning and then stood up as standby until nearly 7:00—after that I hit the hay until the hour the bell rang for noon chow.

In the afternoon the first thing the boys on watch reported was a blimp. It was not unusual for us to get the once over from planes but this was the first time we have seen a blimp. A little later on we saw some more sharks, and about dusk we even sighted a whale—not too large but a whale just the same.

I guess the first stop we make will not be in Key West but Guantanamo Bay in Cuba for when I was on watch I was lucky and spotted an island. One of the Merchant Marines told me later it was Dry Tortuga.

The weather continues to he warm and the sea is still quiet. I guess if this keeps up for another week or more we probably won't even get seasick. I hope it works out that way.

Hi Ho Hi Ho
It's off to watch we go
To see a sub…or sight a tub
Hi Ho Hi Ho Hi Ho

I am getting more homesick every day. I don't suppose it will make me too far down in the dumps. One thing though mentally I revise my plans every day for the things I am going to do on my leave. I know that a little brunette in Port Huron is going to have more than one thing to do with these plans.

AUGUST 3, 1943

The weather still continues fine although early this morning we had a slight head wind that drove me from my hammock which I have had lashed on the deck. The spray was too cold and wet for comfort.

When I went on watch this morning the boys pointed out the lights of Havana. We passed Mono Castle Light later on and just as I was going off we spotted another light.

We have been along the coast all day and even at that land seems a long way off. The course was just about due east as it has been since we left New Orleans but towards evening tonight, we turned to the northeast. We must be going above the end of Cuba now. One thing we will probably hit Guantanamo Bay sometime tomorrow.

The generator is not working well so we will have to stay here for repairs—we hope. It seems it takes us a long time to get anywhere but I suppose that is because I am not used to traveling at sea.

AUGUST 4, 1943

When we were on watch this morning my old buddy Graham told me that we were in windward pass with Haiti on the port side and Cuba still on the starboard side. The same old Cuba we have seen for three days now.

Towards the middle of the afternoon the ship pulled in close enough to shore that we could spot the mountains and even the grass in the hills off Cuba but still no real vision of any liberty approaches us.

I guess we will really be a wild bunch of boys when we do hit a port. Nearly everyone is still making

a guess at where we are going. I'm just going along for the ride, myself.

The sea has become a little choppier tonight and I suppose by the time I go an watch again the waves will really be slapping up against the bow. I was standing on the deck and actually got sprayed with salt water once today.

AUGUST 5, 1943

We arrived in Guantanamo Bay today right after I got off my evening watch. What a place! Desolate, deserted and yet it brings the war even closer home.

An air base, refueling station, Naval base and Marine base all rolled up in one harbor. We only had third class liberty. Stood on the ship and watched the harbor. No money, no women, no nothing. It's gruesome as being home on leave in bed.

AUGUST 8, 1943

We finally left Guantanamo Bay today just after dinner. I was glad to leave myself because for some reason or other looking at a shore and not getting on one is terrible.

We hadn't been out more than an hour before we spotted two subs. Lucky for us they were American and not some of Adolf's boys.

The Lieutenant told us in our usual little pep talk that we are now embarking on the most dangerous part of our trip and the next five days would probably be the toughest for awhile. It seems that a convoy that came in the Bay the day after we did had three running attacks with wolf packs (German U-boats) so we are getting out with nearly as many escorts as convoy vessels. It seems sorta like the way the Navy always convoys the girls home.

August 9, 1943

Well, we had our first general alert just before midnight and then the action started working overtime. Flares, rockets, and the old faithful depth charge. They went along all night and even all day today.

I was very tired; we have only slept off and on since we left Guantanamo Bay and with a half moon like tonight, we will probably have only a short spell in our sacks tonight. I am sleeping in my clothes, just in case.

We saw the lights of Jamaica last night and today we saw the island itself. I guess half the subs that the Germans have are here in the Caribbean. Oh well, it's a lovely night to get torpedoed.

August 11, 1943

Yesterday was a bad day for me and as they say on the Copenhagen box, "snuff said."

I guess I must have been very tired when I went on watch this morning because I caught myself napping several times. I hope I don't repeat this process as it might be disastrous not only for me but for the whole crew.

Today has not brought any more excitement. As yesterday—it is a calm day with nothing at all going on.

The Lieutenant said that we were only about 140 miles from Panama and we will get there some time early tomorrow.

Everyone is planning what they want to do. I have my plans, too—sleep, sleep, sleep.

Oh and more sleep.

It won't be long before we go on watch so I think I'll dream awhile……

AUGUST 12, 1943

We arrived on the Atlantic side of the Panama Canal today and we anchored for about three hours and then at 3:15 we started through the "ditch". It was rather a novel experience for some of the fellows but I had seen the locks at the Soo and it was not new enough for me.

When we hit Gatun Lake we were surprised to see so many islands; but of course we had never been thru the canal before. Some of the Marines who came aboard to watch for sabotage are making their 200th time crossing from the Atlantic to the Pacific. I would hate to be them stuck in this hole for two or three years with very little liberty and no leave.

We saw the place that shows where the two men supposedly met, one from the North end and one from the South. After that it was too dark to see much of anything so I went below deck and slept. We finally got to the Pacific side by 11:00 and it has taken us 7 hours to travel about 40 miles.

When we first entered the canal, one of the tropical storms that strike often at this time of the year

came up. We had seen many of these captive balloons in the sky and when the storm came up they went mad like so many little boys' kites cut loose. They would go about a thousand feet in the air and then burst arid then float to earth.

AUGUST 13, 1943

Panama City is quaint if you like that type of place but I'll take anywhere in the United States. The buses are so low that you can't even get in them without bending over and the houses are set right on the sidewalks which even in the main part of town are no wider than about six feet.

There is a hustle and bustle of a big little place; but everything is high and we hadn't been paid so I didn't even buy any souvenirs.

I am very glad we are going out to sea in the morning and although it will probably be a month and a half before we see land I have no regrets.

AUGUST 14, 1943

We left Panama this morning and by the look of things it will be only a short time—thirty or forty days before we reach port again. Incidentally, it was the first time we have started anywhere except on Sunday.

I got my first glimpse of the Pacific about 7:30 this morning. I don't have to worry about It being my last though.

AUGUST 15, 1943

We fired the guns today for the first time. I was somewhat surprised to see the boys on the 3 –inch (guns) do so well. Of course, the fellows from Gulfport were good too. I guess the Lieutenant was pleased—I really don' t know. He seems to have become very disgusted with some of us for not going to quarters as fast as possible.

I only fired 60 rounds on my 20mm but I am glad the little baby worked so well. it makes me proud I am from Michigan where they make those guns.

AUGUST 17, 1943

Today is the big day. We enter King Neptune's domain today and as the official order says "All pollywogs will be duly initiated."

Most of the fellows are worried about the consequences but I don't think it can be anything worse than my freshman initiation at Adrian. I just want to wait until this afternoon and see what happens.

Well I guess we got off easy but according to the old timers things weren't run right.

We were led blindfolded down the passage from the "jail." Needless to say we were stark, staring naked. While going along this passage, various kinds of paddles were applied and finally you reached the court. Your charges were read off and punishment meted out by the king. All the while, you were kneeling in front of the king and queen, various lashes of oil, paint, and wood were applied. Then you were examined by the doctor where your tonsils were always bad and given treatment, Of course the old oyster trick was used, as well as castor oil and soap.

The next step was to climb up three or four steps and then be told you were to jump and as you jumped a bucket of water was thrown at you and I got the sensation that I was going overboard.

Finally the barber got you and most of us were given a hair cut, shampoo, and a special dandruff treatment that was guaranteed to be the best thing in the world. I think it was a fish oil swab with a paint brush.

I say now, as I did this morning, it wasn't as bad as my freshman year at Adrian.

AUGUST 21,1943

Nothing has happened in the last few days except our normal routine. I guess it will be a long time before we really get anywhere although we have made better than 2,000 miles since we left Panama. They are changing the clocks again tonight. It makes the second time since we left. Panama.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1943

We have had some rather stormy weather in the last few days but today the storm finally let down, The weather was not as bad as it could have been but one thing we were really taking water over the bow and stern. I guess if it had gotten much worse we would have lost our deck cargo because some of the sup-

ports have moved and others have been lost.

The wind has made the weather cooler but even so without the wind the weather is growing colder every day. It is down to freezing now.

We have had a few drills but today things happened again. We were cruising along arid Hard Rack spotted a ship's smoke, We immediately changed our course and passed them by. Of course we stood at our stations for awhile but so far nothing else has happened.

SEPTEMBER 18, 1943

We arrived in Melbourne, Australia today. I had a good time my first night. but I shall be glad when we leave again so that we will get started home.

SEPTEMBER 24, 1943

We left Melbourne today.

The journal ends here

Newspaper articles from the era report this fact:

Official word from the Secretary of the Navy was received Monday, April 2 by Rev, and Mrs. Frank Hartley that their son (Francis), nicknamed Curly, who was reported missing on March 17, 1944 is now presumed dead.

He was a member of an armed guard crew aboard the SS Maiden Creek which was torpedoed three times off the coast of Bougie, Algeria. The ship was abandoned after being hit first, after which the crew returned to the ship. After the second and third torpedo hits, the crew abandoned ship by jumping into the water. The area was carefully searched but no trace of Curly could be found.

War-Time Memories
Augustine Leroy Meyer

I was born on a farm eleven miles south of Sabetha, Nemaha County, Kansas on August 28, 1923. I attended eight years of Catholic Grade School at Fidelity, three miles from home. The 42 students were taught by two nuns. I still correspond with Sister Gervase, one of my first teachers, now retired at the Mother House in Atchison, Kansas. I took the state eighth grade examination and placed third in Nemaha County. I entered Fairview High School in September 1937. Agriculture was my main subject. I met Nadine Van Dalsem at the first all school party in September of 1938.

I was only casually aware of the war situation in Europe until December of 1940 when our high school principal showed up at a school assembly in his captain's uniform and announced that his National Guard Unit had been called to active duty. Bernard Rogers, a 1939 graduate of our high school, was appointed to West Point. He later became Commander of NATO Forces in Europe.

I graduated from high school in 1941 and received a $100 Union Pacific scholarship to Kansas State Agriculture College. Dad died June 13, 1941 and mom was left with a farm debt and another son ready to enter high school, so I went to work at the Soil Conservation Office in Seneca, Kansas and registered for the draft when I became eighteen. I met Charlie Hunt, a high school senior, in Seneca. I then went to work September 11, 1942 as an office boy for the Santa Fe Railroad in Topeka, Kansas. While working in Seneca and Topeka, I continued going back to Fairview to see Nadine. We were married at Fidelity on November 26, 1942.

I received my draft notice and reported to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas on March 19, 1943. During the Army physical, I met Norman Looney from southern Missouri. The next day we met again in Kansas City as we had both volunteered for the Navy and left Kansas City on a troop train. The old heavy duty chair cars had leather seats with straight backs that could be swung back and forth so that passengers could always face the front of the car. The first night, we discovered how to take the backs off of the seats and lay them between the seats to make one bed the entire length of the car. We slept head to toe this way until we reached Spokane, Washington on the fifth day. We arrived at Farragut, Idaho and along with Norman Looney, Charlie Hunt and 137 other recruits were assigned to Boot Company 198 as apprentice seaman.

During processing, we shed our civilian clothes and they were shipped home. We lined up for shots between two medics, received a shot in each arm, stepped forward two paces and received two more shots. Everyone received a GI haircut. I could have given a hair cut like this in five minutes. We were then measured for clothes and received a complete outfit of summer and winter clothes, sheets, blankets, mat-

tress pad and stencils with our name and service number. My service number was 865-75-90. Our company was assigned the top deck of a barracks. There were seven other barracks in our camp and five other boot camps at Farragut so there were 11,200 recruits going through ten weeks of boot camp at one time. Everyone had to stencil his name and service number on every piece of his equipment. Our boot company chief put us through all of the requirements but was lenient compared to some other company chiefs who were down right mean.

Since I had some clerical experience, I was assigned the job of company clerk. Luckily we arrived at Farragut in late March as the slush on the grinder (drill field) was only four or five inches deep by then. We learned to salute, march, drill with dummy rifles, go through the gas chamber, make our beds, shoot real rifles and swim – everyone except me. Since I couldn't pass the swim test, I had to report for swimming lessons. As I wasn't making much progress and time was running out, Charlie Hunt reported for my lesson, passed the test and gave my name. He had memorized my service number in case he was asked.

Everyone took the aptitude (GCT) test. It indicated that I should be a yeoman (secretary) or storekeeper (accountant). I chose storekeeper. Upon completion of boot camp, everyone was promoted to seaman second class. After the graduation ceremony, we packed our sea bags and waited at the railroad station for further orders. Some were granted leave before reporting to their new duty station and others went direct to a new duty station. I boarded a truck and went across the street to attend storekeeper's school in the same school area. I graduated third in this class of one hundred thirty-two students behind Ray Kramer, a businessman, and Goodlander, a CPA. The three of us were interviewed for an instructor's job at the school and logically the CPA was selected. The top seven percent of the class was promoted to storekeeper third class, some to seaman first class and others remained seaman second class.

Upon completion of storekeeper's school, I received orders to report to Pleasanton, California in seven days so I spent four days traveling and three days at home before reporting. From the receiving station at Treasure Island, California, I went aboard a troop transport ship. The ship originally started to be built in Belgium as a passenger liner but was diverted to the United States before it was completed and before the Germans conquered Belgium. There were 7,800 troops on board. We were assigned bunks in the sleeping quarter's four decks below the main deck. My bunk was the third from the bottom. That meant that two men were sleeping below me and two above me. Thankfully no one in my tier got seasick. We were fed two meals a day. There wasn't anything to do except watch the waves, get in line to eat, sleep and play cards. There were card games everywhere in the beginning but the number of games became smaller and the stakes became higher each day. One of my storekeeper school classmates sent $3,000.00 home when we reached New Caledonia eighteen days later. Not bad, considering that we were being paid $42.00 a month. Since there were very few people that had previously crossed the equator, the initiation on this trip didn't amount to much as the recruits far outnumbered the Trusty Shellbacks.

On December 3, 1943, Ray Kramer, Norman Looney and I were assigned to Boat Repair Unit 131 located on an island in the harbor of Noumea, New Caledonia. New Caledonia was a French colony located near New Zealand and Australia inhabited by the natives and the descendants of the hardened criminals the French had sent there. It was our unit's job to repair landing craft (boats under 40 feet) for the fleet. We maintained a pool of repaired boats so that when the fleet returned with damaged boats they could exchange them for repaired boats immediately. All the services received their supplies from the Army Supply Depot on the mainland. As storekeepers it was our duty to go to the depot three or four times a day for plywood, engine parts, gasoline—whatever supplies were needed to keep the shops running twenty-four hours a day—as well as our food supply.

A Landing Craft Tank (LCT) served as a ferry across the bay. Four of us storekeepers lived in a tent with a wooden deck surrounded by a two-foot board wall topped with netting and a canvas top. The older storekeeper had a native do his laundry. This native was also a guard at the French prison located on our island and he told us when there was going to be an execution. We drove the supply truck next to the prison wall, stopped, climbed on top of the truck and saw the guillotine blade drop. The wall hid the gory details.

There was a place called the Pink-House along the road to the supply depot and I have seen men lined up a block long waiting to get in. We were told that for $3.00 you could spend three minutes in a room getting undressed, three minutes with a government inspected prostitute and three minutes getting dressed. This didn't sound very appealing to me.

Our unit was not authorized to have a ships store. Our supply officer, a Jewish fellow from New York, ran one at a profit and used the profits to supplement our food supply by buying eggs, fresh vegetables, etc. from merchant ships that had unloaded and were heading back to the States.

Later, as the war moved north, we were assigned to forward another unit's supplies to their new location. One day a crate containing two five gallon cans of 190 proof alcohol arrived. Since the bill of lading read "one crate", we proceeded to remove one end of the crate, saw off the other boards, keep one of the cans, replace the end boards and forward one crate. After trading some alcohol to the officer's steward for some pure coke syrup, we had the makings of several happy hours in our tent.

I didn't mind this duty—especially since I was not in a war zone. Although there were still some Japanese on the mainland, I didn't have to worry about them. Nadine sent me a pocket atlas of the Pacific that had twenty-three pages of detailed maps. She had numbered each area of the maps and kept a duplicate book. Since I had numbered each of my letters to her, I could write the number of my location on the atlas on my next letter and she would know where I was located because the letter number was out of sequence. It was a way of getting around Navy censorship.

After all of this hard work, I was promoted to storekeeper second class on April 1, 1944. Then on May 2, I received orders to report to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. I arrived there June 19, and was assigned to the USS Mount McKinley on June 28. I saw the belly of the USS Arizona sticking out of the water and all the other destruction inflicted on December 7, 1941. The Mount McKinley had been commissioned May 1 in Philadelphia, gone through the Panama Canal and arrived in Pearl Harbor June 27. It was classified as an Amphibious Force Flagship and labeled AGC7. There were eighteen similar ships built during WWII. These ships were designed to handle the temporarily assigned personnel, mostly officers and their staffs, who directed the tri-phibious assault of the combined Navy, Marines and Army amphibious operations. They were equipped with all the advanced electronic communication equipment that compared to today's technology looked like a Model T Ford. The equipment allowed the commanders of the land, sea and air to acquire all the relevant data necessary for them to coordinate the many phases of the landing operation.

Since I was a storekeeper second class, I was assigned a bunk above my desk in the supply office instead of in the sleeping quarters further below deck. We received loads of equipment and supplies, as the ship was not completely outfitted before commissioning. We left Pearl Harbor July 20 and I was placed in charge of the 20MM ammunition supply room for General Quarters (GQ). With two other men, it was our duty to keep the 100-shell magazines loaded and fed to the 20MM gun crews on the top deck. Both of these crews were manned by black steward mates and were considered the best on our ship. Burly Joe was one of the gunners and was also in charge of the officer's mess crew. One day a steward mate pulled a knife on him and with one swing Burly Joe had the steward mate lying on the deck, You can see that the name Burly Joe was appropriate.

On July 26, 1944, we crossed the equator and the International Date Line. The initiation started several days in advance. This included dressing guys like hula girls, dunking people in water tanks, making officers serve as mess cooks on the enlisted men's chow line and roll eggs across the deck with their nose, cutting a path of hair down the middle of their head, etc. Anyone that had been across the equator before was king and everyone else was their subjects. Rate or rank had no privileges here.

Everyone was required to have their head and body covered when they were above deck. This caused a lot of griping because it was a little warm in the South Pacific. After numerous GQ and abandon ship drills, we arrived at Guadalcanal on July 31. While in the Russell Islands, we went ashore and attended the Bob Hope, Jerry Colona and Frances Langford show. There were approximately 15,000 Marines and 400 sailors at the show. I can remember Bob Hope fingering around Colona's long mustache and saying, "This is the most fun I've had since I left home". This drove a batch of service men crazy. It was also about this time that they started broadcasting Tokyo Rose's messages to the United State's servicemen over the ship's loud speaker system for our entertainment. They started practicing abandon ship by jumping off the main deck into the ocean about forty-five feet. I had made up my mind that I wasn't going to do this and reported sick on my assigned day to jump. Before they got around to calling up those who had missed their turn an Army man broke his back when he hit the water so they called off this drill.

After more drills, we loaded the First Marine Division Commander and his staff on board and headed for our first invasion. We arrived at Peleliu, in the Palau Islands, on September 15, 1944. We joined the other ships and planes in shelling the beach and I could not imagine anything being alive on the island. The first wave hit the beach okay; but when the second wave hit, all hell broke loose. The Japs had guns mounted on tracks in caves, came out to shoot and retreated inside. The Marines had planned to secure the island in seventy-two hours but with the gun emplacements in the hills we stayed thirty days. With 1,749 killed and approximately 10,000 wounded or missing, it was debatable whether recapturing this island was worth the terrible cost. Organized resistance on Peleliu officially ended November 24-25 but the last thirty-three Japanese holdouts didn't surrender until April of 1945. This is when it was decided not to invade

every island but to skip to the main islands, isolate the rest and cut off their supply line.

I had cleaned manure out of the cattle barn before but that odor did not prepare me for the stench of human bodies that I encountered when I went ashore on the fifth day. During this time, we encountered numerous air raids that were more aggravation than anything else. Sometimes there was only one plane that stayed out of reach of our anti-aircraft guns. We called him "Washing Machine Charley" because of his sound. A few years ago I was working on the election board and somehow Peleliu was mentioned and one of my co-workers said he was on Peleliu for ten hours. He was in the First Marine Division, landed with the first wave, was injured and rescued within ten hours.

We went to Manus, Admiralty Islands and then to Hollandia, New Guinea to pick up an Army General and his staff for the invasion of Leyte Gulf, Philippines on November 14, 1944. Between then and when we left on December 23, we endured eighty-eight air raids and spent ninety-eight hours at GQ. There were over 1,000 ships in this convoy. It was impossible to see all of them because of the curvature of the earth. The invasion went smoothly with little or no resistance. However, a merchant Marine ship was unloading near the beach with its flood lights on (a no-no) when a Jap plane dived into it causing the sky to light up. One guy on this ship had gone topside with nothing on but his undershorts. He was brought to our ship for treatment and his entire body, except the part covered by his shorts, looked like the skin of a baked ham. Needless to say, the bitching about keeping covered when topside stopped.

Several of us went ashore and saw how the natives lived in huts on stilts. This was the first time I saw a man climb a tree and pick a coconut in such short order. This is also where our Chief Warrant Officer recruited some young Filipinos for steward mates. They came aboard ship without boot camp or knowledge of the English language. One of them stayed in the Navy for thirty years and comes to our ship's reunion each year.

Thanksgiving day we had a big meal with turkey, dressing and all the trimmings. About six o'clock people began having diarrhea. I thought this was funny until about ten o'clock when it hit me. By this time, all the toilet seats were occupied by those needing them or those who were afraid to give up their seat in case they needed them later. Late-comers started using buckets with water in them for a toilet.

We arrived in Manus again on December 28th, picked up a new Army staff and headed for the invasion of Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, Philippines. Except for twenty-one air raids, this trip was pretty quiet. We returned to Leyte Gulf, picked up another staff and invaded Subic Bay, Bataan, Philippines on January 29, 1945. We only stayed three days before heading back to Leyte Gulf.

We stayed there for forty-six days preparing for the invasion of Kerama Retta, Okinawa. While there we received orders to transfer a second class storekeeper back to the states for new construction. Since I had been overseas longer than anyone else, I had the points to be re-assigned. However, I heard that another storekeeper who somehow came into the Navy as a storekeeper second class, was worthless help and was probably a "don't-ask-don't-tell" guy, was being sent to the States. I confronted my Division Officer with the fact that I had more points than him and was told point blank that I was needed here and that he was not. End of story. The only good thing about this was that a short time later our Chief Storekeeper was re-assigned to the States, a first class storekeeper was promoted to Chief and I was promoted to first class storekeeper on April 1, 1945 or two years and thirteen days after entering the Navy.

We arrived at Kerama Reta, about 300 miles south of Japan, on March 26, 1945, (Easter Sunday) and we stayed until May 23, 1945. During this time, we endured 256 air raids that resulted in us being at GQ one hundred and seventy-seven hours in fifty-six days. One air raid lasted seven and one half-hours. Other air raids didn't last very long as many of the raids were by kamikaze (suicide) planes that picked out a ship and dived into it unless we were successful in destroying it before it hit the ship.

Upon our arrival here, my GQ station was changed to a talker on the Captain's bridge. Although this was considered a vulnerable spot, I was glad to get out of the ammunition room that contained thousands of rounds of 20MM shells. Our ship was considered a prime target because we were the flagship of the operation and always had a General and his staff aboard. I don't know if the Japanese knew this or not but one day about 3:00 p.m. we moved. Later more ships came in and one of them anchored in about the location that we had vacated. That night the ship that took our place took a direct hit from a kamikaze plane and suffered serious damage.

This was our fifth invasion and with the frequent air raids, suicide boats and kamikaze attacks, some people did odd things. For instance, the Captain carried a rooster he had appropriated in the Philippines around when he was inspecting the ship. One day the rooster disappeared so there was a special inspection but the rooster was not located. About fifty years later at one of our ship's reunions, one of our machinist mates admitted that the rooster sure tasted good about midnight six levels below the main deck.

Another time, two men showed up at sick bay and were deathly sick. In fact one of them went berserk and never recovered aboard our ship. It was then discovered that they had been drinking moonshine made in their homemade still in the engine room.

Some things that were not so funny were when we saw a Jap plane dive at the ship behind us, drop its torpedo and pull up before it was shot down. The torpedo hit the water and ricocheted over the fantail of the ship like we used to throw rocks across the water. Three of our men on the forward five-inch gun crew received shrapnel in their legs either from enemy fire or from one of our own ships that had followed an enemy plane too low. Anyway, one of the men received a Purple Heart at one of our reunions. One ship that took a direct hit was beached and the disbursing officer, another storekeeper and myself went on board to recover the money from the safe. While there, we also tried to salvage some equipment but when I picked up a headset that still had an ear attached, I had had enough. According to my records, we survived 274 air raids, 352 and ¾ hours of GQ and observed 53 enemy planes shot down. However, our ship was not credited with any of these kills.

While in Pearl Harbor on our way to San Francisco, I went ashore. With a 45 pistol on my waist I carried over $100,000.00 back to the ship so we could pay everyone before we reached Frisco. A few men were married shortly before leaving Philadelphia and their wives started receiving their allowance but the deduction from the men's pay was not recorded. However, a deduction record caught up with us in Pearl Harbor and these men arrived in the States with no money for leave except by borrowing from the Red Cross.

I left on leave June 24, 1945 and arrived home by train on June 27. Shortly after arriving home, Nadine took me upstairs to show me the bedroom suite she had bought. Needless to say that after being gone since October 13, 1943, it wasn't long before we were doing something besides looking at the bedroom suite. My leave was supposed to be for thirty days but I received a telegram to report aboard ship July 18, 1945. Nadine took a leave of absence from the Santa Fe and returned to California with me. We left home July 15 on the Union Pacific at 8:00 p.m. and we had to sit on our suitcases all the way to Denver before we could find a seat. We secured one-half of a Quonset hut; two bedrooms, living room, kitchen and bath on Mare Island for $1.00 a day. These huts were reserved for the ship's company of ships that were in dry dock. We shared the Quonset hut with another couple. This cut our expenses and worked out quite well as we were on opposite liberty parties so we were never off of the ship the same night. One night after doing the town, we barely got off the base bus when Nadine vomited like crazy and then we realized that she was pregnant.

The ship received new radar and twin 40mm guns among other updated equipment and we departed August 24, 1945 for parts unknown. Since the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki August 6 and 8 respectively, the war was declared over after we left Hawaii. While we were in the China Sea, we hit the edge of a typhoon that made for some mighty rough water. It got so bad that the tables in the mess halls were sliding from one side of the ship to the other so they took the tables down and we sat on the deck to eat for several days.

By the way of Saipan, we arrived at Sasebo, Kyushu, Japan on September 22, 1945 and went into the harbor under the same orders we would have followed if the war had not been over. However, I was glad it was over. There were huge gun emplacements on both sides of the harbor. No doubt these would have been bombed and shelled before we arrived but I remember how the beach came alive at Peleliu. We went into the ports of Wakayma. Kure, Tokyo and Yokoauka. I went on liberty in Tokyo, brought a few souvenirs, rode their crowded trains and saw automobiles running off charcoal burners mounted on their rear bumpers. We were also close enough to see the ruins of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This was terrible but I am still convinced that dropping the bombs saved both Japanese and American lives. Several Japanese rifles were brought aboard ship and I was allowed to bring one of them home.

Serving aboard a larger ship like this had its advantages. We had a barbershop, tailor shop, cobbler shop, clothing store, post office and a ship's store with a soft ice cream machine. They made the ice cream ahead of time and I remember when one of our storekeepers bought a gallon of ice cream and devoured all of it himself. We had a Protestant chaplain on board. Our sister AGC ship had a Catholic chaplain. However, our chaplain was very good about arranging to bring a Catholic chaplain on board or sending us to another ship for Mass. I must say that our war activities brought some new people to church. At any rate, I was glad I was aboard ship with a clean bunk and decent food instead of on the beach with the Marines or soldiers.

We arrived in San Diego December 5, 1945. I was allowed off the ship December 20th. This was a little early as the ship was leaving and I would have had enough points for discharge by the time the ship

reached Hawaii. I arrived at Norman, Oklahoma on December 23rd for discharge. The processing crew quit working at 4:00 o'clock on December 24, Even though we weren't supposed to leave the base, I caught the bus for home. Due to the heavy snow, I ended up in Lawrence instead of Topeka. I hitchhiked to Topeka and was waiting under the Christmas tree when Nadine came home from Mass. I caught the train back to Norman that night and after one hour of processing left on the train at 11:45 am on December 26, 1945 wearing my uniform with the Good Conduct, Asiatic Pacific Campaign with five starts, World War II Victory, Navy Occupation Service-Asia, Navy Unit Commendation, Philippine Liberation and American Defense service medals.

I arrived in Topeka at 10:30 p.m. on December 26, 1945 as a civilian and returned to work January 16, 1945 as a payroll clerk for the Santa Fe Railroad.

I have attended all seven of the USS Mount McKinley Association reunions. It is always enjoyable to renew old acquaintances and develop new friendships. However, each year fewer of the crew from 1944 and 1945 are able to attend. Since the ship was on active duty for thirty-seven years, there are thousands of eligible members and these younger veterans will have to carry on the memories of the "Mighty Mac".

Pacific Theatre
Herbert Reimers

WWII TIME LINE

December 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor bombed

December 10 Japanese invade Philippines

December 22 Wake Island falls to Japan

Jan. 2, 1942 Japan invades Manila

Feb. 3 Herbert Reimers, age 19, sworn into US Army

March 17 General MacArthur retreats on PT boat after the fall of Bataan and travels to Australia where on March 20th he pronounces "I shall return."

April 10 Bataan Death March

May 4-8 US Naval victory – Coral Sea

June 4-6 US Naval victory – Midway

August 7 US Marines invade Guadalcanal

March 2-4, 1943 US victory – Bismark Sea

August 28 US invades New Georgia

April 22, 1944 US invades New Guinea

October 23-26 US successful landing Leyte Gulf, MacArthur proclaims "I have returned".

April 12,1945 President Roosevelt dies.

June 21, 1945 Japanese surrender Okinawa

July 5 General MacArthur reports liberation of Philippines, 10 months after Leyte landing. 400,000 Japanese killed, 12,000 US troops lost.

August 6 First Atomic bomb dropped on Japan.

AUGUST 14 JAPANESE SURRENDER

On November 13, 1942, I turned 19 years of age. I was with my dad and Uncle Henry Peters in an old log cabin in Iron River, northern Michigan deer hunting. I told my dad when I got home I would probably have my induction notice from the U. S. Army. When I returned home I found out I was right. My mother handed it to me, it said "Report February 3rd at Kalamazoo, Michigan for a pre-induction physical and then to be sworn in to the Army.

Later I found that I had to report to the Benton Harbor Railroad station on February 10th to ship out for Camp Grant, Illinois. Upon arrival at Camp Grant I received my shots and government- issue clothing. We stayed there 4 days and then shipped out to Camp Howe, Texas.

At Camp Howe I had12 weeks of basic training. A notice appeared on the bulletin board asking if anyone was interested in coming out for boxing. If they fought and won they would get a two day pass, if they lost they would get a one and one half day pass. I used to box at home so I went for it. I had a total of four fights which wasn't many but I got my passes and went to town. The nearest big town was Dallas, Texas. Also, in Denton there was a college for women and that is where I visited the most.

Those weeks I stayed home because I was in our Army choir. We sang every Sunday, it was a lot of fun, very enjoyable. The best part of singing was that the Company Commander said I didn't have to stand retreat every night because I was either training for boxing or practicing with the choir. Man, did I have it made! In addition, I didn't lose a fight and he really liked that.

After basic training I was promoted to buck Sergeant, 3 stripes and best of all, I received a 6 day pass to spend time at home with my family. That was the last time I saw home and my mother and father until the war was over. I arrived home December 17, 1945, in time for Christmas. I never thought I would miss my family as much as I did!

After my 6 day furlough was over, I went back to Camp Howe to begin advance combat training. A week after I began advance training an order came down for two non-commissioned officers for overseas duty. I volunteered to go and in five days I was on my way to San Francisco, California. There I boarded a large ship called Lorraine and headed for Oahu, Hawaii. Once we arrived, we were trucked to a large training field. All together there were about 3,000 troops. When my name was called I met my First Sergeant. We gave him the nick name "Hard Rock" because he was tough. I was assigned to Cannon Company. I told him my training was as a rifleman and I had no experience with cannons.

He said, "You will."

And I did. It was a 75 millimeter howitzer on rubber wheels.

Training lasted 3 months. During that period we saw Pearl Harbor and all the damage, it was not a pretty sight. We also saw many pineapple fields as well as sugar cane fields. We had a chance to chew the sugar cane stalks, they were pretty good.

On December 24, we boarded a ship headed to Guadalcanal, one day before Christmas. The ship was so packed some troops did not have any place to sleep. About 100 of us went outside and slept on the deck.

On January 5 we landed at Guadalcanal. It was a real mess, we finally found a spot near a river about 100 yards from the ocean. Our first job was to clean the area and to do whatever it took to make it look like a camp. My section went to the supply tent and drew enough food and ammo for one week. Our first job was to find a missing plane that went down in the countryside. An Australian joined us because he spoke the native language and could translate for us. Our hope was to find the pilot, but with no success. After 7 days we were ready to find our way out of the hills and woods and return to camp.

During our mission we came across a small village of native pygmies. We hired two of them to help us, they were about 4 ½ feet tall and had very large bellies. The Australian guide told us their stomachs were so large because of the lack of food. For some reason they liked our cigarettes more than the food. When we returned to camp there were 6 tanks standing in the camp. They were M-7 tanks equipped with a 105 millimeter guns. That gun turned out to be really good as we engaged in warfare.

Training with the tanks took two more months. We had to learn everything there was to know about the M-7 tank. One day while jungle training a wild pig ran in front of our tank. I grabbed my rifle and told my tank crew that we were going to have pork for supper. I loaded my rifle and went after the pig. I hadn't gone 200 yards and I came to a small ditch where 2 Japanese soldiers were lying dead, fully dressed in uniform with their rusty rifles beside them. All of the meat on their legs and feet were gone, they must have been

there for months.

After standing there viewing the dead soldiers for a few minutes I said to myself, “It looks like we won’t be having pork for dinner after all” and I returned to my tank. Those were the only Japanese I saw at Guadalcanal.

The next few weeks we packed in preparation for our mission. One day we were notified that there was to be church that night and communion was being offered. So I went to church to find only 5 soldiers showed up. The pastor was surprised more troops did not attend, especially out of a regiment of men. Anyway, we listened to the sermon and took communion.

To this day that impressed me more than anything else. The next invasion was called off for some reason. We never did find out why.

Within a week we were on our way to another island called New Britain. After arrival we set up camp and spent seven months waiting for orders. We did some training and played a lot of ball on our off time. New Britain was a large island, we held one end of it and the Japanese held the other side. They controlled Rabal, a large port where they could receive supplies. Our planes constantly bombed the port to keep the Japanese from being re-supplied.

Finally we loaded up to participate in the invasion of Luzon at Lingayen. All HELL broke loose on January 6—invasion day. The battleships Missouri and California started firing and then came the Japanese airplanes. The sky was lit up with tracer bullets. It was hard to believe that there was four times more lead flying then we could see. As far as I can remember only one Japanese plane made it through that wall of bullets. While convoying in the Mindoro Straits on the way to the invasion site the Japanese planes would try to blow up our convoy. One plane got through and plunged into one of our baby flattops. The ship was hit so hard that it couldn’t be used so they sank it. As we approached Luzon we maneuvered into battle order. We were about the fifth wave. We landed in about five feet of water and our tank made the beach OK. When we hit the beach we were surprised to find out the Japanese had pulled back. We crossed the airport runway and saw our soldiers on both sides of us. It was a good sight. That night we were about five miles inland digging in for the night when a Japanese plane flew over our head no more than two hundred feet above us. He didn’t know it but there were two of our planes waiting for him. It wasn’t much of a dog fight; finishing with the Japanese plane diving straight into the ground. We saw the burst of smoke come from the one plane that did the firing. It was great to watch. The Japanese plane landed about 300 yards in front of my tank. I would have liked to see the hole it made.

That night was the worst night I ever had. All night long there was a machine gunner firing his weapon and keeping us awake. I hate to admit it but I shook all night in my foxhole. I kept talking to myself because I was in charge and didn’t want the men to know I was just as scared as them.

I was sitting up in my foxhole because it was my turn to be on watch. After two hours I woke up George Shaley to take over watch. His foxhole was next to mine. I couldn’t wake him so I crawled over to his hole and started to shake him. When he woke up it was pitch black and he thought I was a Japanese soldier. He fought me and we were in and out of his foxhole. He finally realized it was me. What a fight I had with him.

By morning I had overcome my shakes and we were on our way to Clark Field. Two days later the Japanese blew up a small bridge so we had to go through a creek and a muddy swamp to get across. I followed the other five tanks which only made it worse. When we got to the road my tank got stuck. I had an M-5 tank back up and give me a tow. He was able to pull me out and while we were unhooking the tow cable, General MacArthur passed through. That was the only time I saw him in person.

We continued across the island, meeting little resistance. Until we hit a little town called Bom Bom. It was very close to Clark Field. From that time on it was different. If the infantry got pinned down they called for our tanks to come up and help them. I was very fortunate to have a great crew—all very intelligent. They were: L. A. Dillinnardo, Rockford, Illinois; Charles Gaines, St. Louis, Missouri; Dale Edwards, Ionia, Michigan; Tom Gormen, Lakewood, Ohio; Robert Hess, California; Chopper Preal, California; and myself, Herb Reimers, Benton Harbor, Michigan. Tony Garmon was one of my gunners, the other was Robert Hess; both had two years of college.

My 50 caliber machine gunner knew his job too. The tank driver was Dale Edwards, a big rawboned farmer and very strong. The other members loaded the cannon. They also were cross trained to perform all the other tasks in the tank. I was the youngest at 20, but that turned out not to be a problem, they all respected my rank and everything went smoothly. My lieutenant was Alfred Jones and he really knew what he was doing. We have kept in contact all these years and talk at least twice a year. As far as I know he is the only one living from our platoon besides me.

One day he put us at the top of a hill where we could observe the enemy. That day we had numerous missions and completed them all. At one point the Japanese laid in on us with mortars and artillery. One shell landed about 10 feet in front of me. The gust of wind and blast almost knocked me down, but I was not hit. Later that day we had a runner who wanted us to knock out a machine gun that was holding down their company. He jumped on our tank and we went looking for the machine gun nest. He spotted it for us so we fired 4 rounds of 105 millimeter shells into the machine gun nest and silenced the gun. The following day we spotted our tank among some trees on the backside of a hill waiting for orders. Unfortunately the Japanese also knew we were there and they kept firing hoping to knock us out. Fortunately they did not hit us, but they did hit our Lieutenant's Jeep driver with a hunk of shrapnel in his shoulder. The wound was not life threatening, he was bandaged and sent back to duty.

That night we were sent back about a mile and camped along side the 143rd Field Artillery. There we were able to have a warm meal thanks to their cook. The following morning before breakfast we were called out for a fire mission to assist the Third platoon. They did not know our number 5 tank had motor trouble and could not travel. So, that left my tank for the mission. There was no time for breakfast so we loaded up with ammo and took off for the front lines. When we arrived I was told to fall in behind the 2 tanks of the 2nd platoon. So, that made me the third tank in line which made me feel good. Our mission was to clear and destroy the foxholes that were holding up the 3rd battalion infantry.

We moved out in a row as we passed our lines. We did this so we could fire broadside on the hill as we moved forward. A Japanese, we thought, jumped up, held his arms up and said, "Don't shoot I am Korean." The first tank stopped and made him take off all his clothes except his shorts then called for a Jeep to come and get him. In the mean time the second tank kept going about 200 yards past the first prisoner, then another jumped up and tied up the second tank. I sat there for a minute and was told to move my tank up to the number one position. When we arrived at our meeting place there was a second lieutenant waiting for me. He climbed on the tank and we could see all the foxholes we were here to neutralize. The infantry company we were here to help rolled down the hill and displayed a red banner. Everything to the left of the banner was the enemy. So we started firing on each and every hole until we covered the whole hill side. We then moved forward about 100 feet to a creek about a foot deep and a rock bottom. We entered the creek and followed it up stream. As we went around a bend we encountered a Japanese truck stuck in the middle of the creek. We fired two rounds and blew it out of commission. A little further up the creek we found a brown 1949 Buick. We did not fire on it and found out later that the company commander drove it.

We finally drove out of the creek followed by the infantry and they took the hill without firing a shot. But we used up all of our ammo, a total of over 100 rounds of 105 millimeter shells. We don't know how many we killed that day but it had to be 50 to 100 Japanese. THE BEST DAY WE EVER HAD.

It was getting late, about an hour before dark, and we hadn't had anything to eat all day. When we got back to camp the men from the other tanks were all up waiting for us. It was a good sight to see them. I had given the tank commander my billfold before we left and when he handed it back, he said he didn't want to write mom and dad with bad news. I told him that what we did today we knew we were all going to make it home okay.

The cook was waiting for us and we had a very good warm meal. They knew we had a bad day and they felt good being able to feed us a warm meal. That was the day our platoon sergeant couldn't take the pressure and our Lieutenant relieved him of his rank making a private out of him.

The next day we were put on a hill that had a command view of the hills and valleys in front of us. We could see several caves with Japanese soldiers standing guard by them. We sat there for five days picking off the soldiers that were standing guard at the caves. Every day they would be in the same place guarding the caves. So, all I had to do is give my gunners the coordinates. Fire when ready, always a direct hit and a few less Japanese to fight us. That hill was called Hand Grenade Hill. The hill was wooded, but after all the hand-grenade fighting it became barren.

Five days later we moved to a small creek on the reverse side of a hill. We set up a battery of six tanks all facing in one direction. We spent a week here firing on targets that our forward observers would send to our fire direction center. Then, the fire direction center would radio the coordinates to each tank. One night we were able to stop a banzai attack. The next morning we counted 60 dead Japanese soldiers in a very small area.

In the same area we spent five nights firing on the enemy. Every 15 minutes we would change our target. We fired six rounds a tank per target. Firing all night kept us from sleeping so we would try to catch up on our sleep in the daytime. Finally we were relieved by the Sixth Infantry Division. They sent us back to regroup. On the way back we passed a Japanese Zero airplane tucked in the side of an old dirt road next

to Clark Field. It looked to be in good condition. I still don't know why we didn't run over it with our tank. Another mistake.

One of the lieutenants gave me an order to do something that I was not going to carry out. It was a bad order and I asked him not to give it, but he demanded I do it. We discussed it again and I said NO. In fact, I jumped off my tank and was going for him, but he turned and went back to his area of command. Two hours later a messenger came and said the lieutenant wanted to see me. I went to his post and he advised me that he could break me and send me to an infantry unit. My answer was, "Don't ever give me an order like that again."

He said, "If you ever do that again, I will break you!"

Nothing happened, we won the war and 40 years later we made a trip to Arizona and looked him up. I apologized to him because he was right. Anytime an officer gives a soldier an order regardless of what it is, the soldier must obey. After I apologized to him he became very friendly and said I didn't have to apologize. That made me feel a lot better, from that time on we would write to one another and got along very well. Four years ago he died and now there are only 2 of us left, Lt. Jones and myself.

After we arrived at the regrouping area they disbanded the 108th Regiment and placed them with our 160th and the 185th resulting in the 40th Infantry Division being made up of only two regiments. It took 10 to 15 days to accomplish the merger so three of us, all sergeants and one of our lieutenants took a Jeep and went to Manila. There was fighting on the other side of the river so we stayed on the side that had no fighting. Here we found a large brewery. When we told them who we were they let us drink all the beer we wanted. That we did, making up for all the days we went without.

In a few days we were told to go on another invasion. The island was also in the Philippine Islands, it was called Negros. There was no opposition during the landing and we didn't see any combat until we hit Dolan Hill. Dolan Hill was named after Lieutenant Dolan who was killed on that hill.

One afternoon we stationed ourselves in a mortar company. We stayed there all afternoon firing on targets. Late in the day they set up around the company perimeter and installed a string of Bouncing Betties (antipersonnel mines). Just in case a Japanese soldier would try to infiltrate. If so, the mine would bounce up and kill anything within 20 feet of it. We needed to return to our company so I asked the sergeant if we could pass through the line. He said to wait until he had cleared a path through the mines for us. While he was doing that Lt. Porter's Jeep driver walked right in front of our tank and accidentally set one off. It almost cut him in two, another mistake.

Later one afternoon, we were coming back from a mission and traveling through a low bushy ravine when we threw a track. After looking over the situation we decided to leave the tank and leave quickly before we received enemy fire. We made it back OK and we knew the next morning we had to return and fix the track. That night the enemy tried to blow up our abandoned tank, but the blast didn't hurt the tank enough to put it out of commission. We picked up a squad of infantry the next morning and returned to the tank. We were able to get the track back on the tank.

The first thing we had to do after the repair was to drive to the creek and wash it down because it was covered with picric acid powder from the blast attempt to destroy the tank. While washing it down, two Jeeps approached us and stopped. One of the Jeeps was carrying Joe E. Brown, the comedian. We were really embarrassed because none of us had any clothes on.

When we finished cleaning the tank we returned to Dolan Hill and set up for indirect firing. We stayed in this location for many days firing every day. On April 12, 1945, the day President Roosevelt died, my tank caught fire. Three of us were able to put the fire out before it blew up.

Not to many days later I came down with yellow jaundice and spent the next ten days in the hospital. While I was there Lieutenant Jones was wounded and ended up in the same hospital. He returned after one month in the hospital.

Looks like another invasion so we started loading up. This one was about 20 miles across to the Island of Panay. When we hit the beach we found no resistance, thank God. We followed our lieutenant and his driver and our two tanks. We entered the town of Iloilo, a town that was needed because it had a channel that our PT boats could use. It was a natural channel and, once secured, was used daily. When we entered the town we heard hand grenades exploding ahead of us. The commotion was coming from about 12 foxholes full of Japanese trying to stop us from entering the town. When they saw our tanks each one placed a hand grenade next to their head and pulled the pin. I stopped my tank, grabbed my Tommy gun, and checked each and every hole. The sight I saw was terrible, Their eyes were hanging out of the sockets. Parts of their jaws were gone and there was blood splattered all over. Some of the heads looked oblong like a football. Something I will never forget.

We proceeded toward the town not knowing what is ahead. When we were close to the buildings we stopped, everyone was at the ready, loaded and on hair triggers. Suddenly a door opened and an arm stuck out of the door waving a white rag. We motioned for him to come out and walk towards us. When he was close to the tanks he said the Japanese left two hours ago. We did not know for sure if he was telling the truth. Within the next half hour about 200 people surrounded our tanks. We felt they had to be right about the Japanese. We started bargaining with them for booze or anything else we could drink. They were happy to see us and we were happy because we didn't have to fight. I hate to say this but we were really spent and the Japanese might have had an easy time taking us over.

So we secured the town and were sent back to Negros because they needed our tanks. However, my tank was losing power. I asked if we could have it repaired because should we get into a tight spot we might have to back out because of the power problem. They said yes so we took it to the motor pool and asked the mechanics to take their time so we could get some rest. They looked at me and said we understand. So, ten days later the tank was ready. He installed a new engine that was meant to go into a B-51 bomber. The engine was the same as the one we had in our tank except the tank engine did not have the super charger.

We returned to Dolan Hill and began firing on different targets. One of the targets was a Japanese officer holding binoculars about 200 yards in front of a bamboo thicket kneeling down looking at us. The sun was reflecting off his binoculars so I loaded up a 105 millimeter shell and fired at his midsection. A perfect hit, it completely blew him apart.

The Japanese began bombing the top of Dolan Hill. One plane after another flew over, it was like watching TV with a broad screen. After the bombing they sent us to an LSM, Landing Ship Medium. They were sending us back to Panay to set up camp. We began training for the invasion of Japan. One day aboard the LSM around 10 PM 4 of us were sitting around talking when one of the Navy radio operators came and said the war was over; that the Japanese were ready to surrender. It was hard to believe, we were elated.

After the surrender documents were signed and the world settled down my 1st Sergeant told me to take seven men, a tent, our Army cots and set up a road block. When the Japanese infantry came marching in to surrender I was told to hold them until trucks could be sent to bring them to a compound so they could be processed and sent back to Japan. We stayed at this post for 1 week; it was about a mile from our camp. The men that were with me were all replacements and had seen no action. Our orders were to take the enemies arms and ammo and wait for the trucks to pick them up.

When we finally returned to camp we cleaned our weapons and went back to close order drills. Sgt. Tommy Dunham and I were able to get a day off and went back to Iloilo. There we boarded a PT boat and had a chance to look around. We talked to their officers and they gave us permission to stay aboard overnight. The PT boats and crews were on 24 hour duty so that night we had a chance to take a ride to a big ship outside of port. We picked up a movie to take back. It was quite a ride. The next day we went out into the ocean and practiced fire runs, that was new for us. The commander and I visited and I found out he had commanded a PT boat that was built in Benton Harbor. It truly is a small world.

KOREA

We returned to camp after that and we were all wondering when we would be shipped home. The next day we found out we were heading to Korea. That was a real disappointment.

We soon shipped to Korea. About half way there one of the engines on the transport broke down so we had to be towed the rest of the way. They towed us to Inchon and tied us up next to a large ship tender. The tender had about 1200 men aboard capable of fixing anything. When we tied up to the tender several sailors had an interest in our tank. We were about eye level to their railing. One of the sailors, a Chief Bosons Mate, engaged me in conversation. He noticed all the damage to our tank from the time the Japanese tried to blow it up. He also asked when we had last had a bath, I couldn't remember, it must have been a month or so. He must have felt sorry for me because he said grab some clean clothes and come with him. I didn't have any clean clothes but I went with him anyway. He took me to his quarters and showed me where I could take a fresh-water bath. The rest of our guys also took baths. What a good feeling to be clean again.

That night we went to a free movie, plus they fed us all the time we were there. When the show was over my sailor friend took me by the mess hall where there were five or six sailors standing around talking. They ask me a lot of questions about what we did in combat. One story I told them was how our tank slid back down a hill into a big washout. The ground was wet and we couldn't get any traction. I looked over

the side and our tracks were locked and the washout was coming up fast. I quickly told the men to jump off the tank, all did except the tank driver. He didn't have time so he hung on tight and rode the tank down the hill. Luckily it did not tip over. The tank did throw a track but we had it fixed the same day. The next day the hillside had dried out and we were able to get to the top from which we had a command view of the enemy.

Later that day two pilots from Clark Field joined us. They wanted to see the war from ground view. They came and sat on our tank and told us many stories about their adventures. They asked if we had any war souvenirs of which we did not, but there were five dead Japanese soldiers lying about 30 feet in front of our tank. So I took my machete and the pilots joined me to try to recover some souvenirs. I warned them not to touch the bodies because they might be booby trapped. I picked up everything I could from guns to helmets. I asked if they wanted any gold teeth so I took my machete and chopped open a dead soldier's mouth and started to knock out some teeth. They quickly said no and turned away. I still am sorry I did that, I was just showing off for those pilots.

When we returned to camp we stopped at the mess hall. One of the sailors had gone into the kitchen and brought me a steak on two slices of home made bread. They wanted to hear more war stories after I finished the sandwich. I was willing to talk all night and would come back the next night if they wanted.

One story I told them was the time we kept firing into a large cave and the enemy just kept firing back. So, we tried something new, we fired into the cave with a smoke shell. It wasn't too long and out they came but didn't go far and we had them killed. There was a total of 12 Japanese, one tried to escape up the hill. We watched him until he was near the top, then it was time for him to die. We loaded another shell. About that time the ground seemed to open up and someone began to pull him into a hole. I told the men to fire quickly, it was a perfect shot, we hit the hole. We fired two more shells to be sure, and killed two more of the enemy. From that time on, we always fired smoke bombs into caves, I am sure it paid off.

One story they especially liked was when we had a mayor and an officer from the Air Corps standing alongside our tank. He started to send an order to a squadron of planes where to drop napalm bombs. I said, let us fire a smoke-round up and you can direct the planes from it. We did, it was great to see plane after plane come in and drop their load. It is hard to put that feeling into words, just like a movie, but real life.

Jungle rot was our worst scourge; the curse of the natives; the headache of the medics. One fellow was discharged when the doctor could not stop his hair from falling out like the leaves in the fall.

The story I didn't like and still bothers me to this day is when we were near Clark Field and L Company was trying to take a large hill. Our soldiers were all spread out approaching the top of the hill when the enemy started shelling them with mortars, rifles and machine guns. It was really taking a toll on our troops. Many of them were waiting for medics to come to their aid. I watched a soldier get to the top and was leaning on a large rock firing one clip after another. Suddenly he stopped. They had shot him in the head and he never moved. Finally an order for our two tanks to lay down fire on the top of the hill because when we start to fire all our soldiers were to run down the hill and retreat. That was one of the toughest things we had to do, all that fire power and we had to avoid hitting our own men. Then came the cleanup. They laid Paul Gillion next to our tank. I jumped off the tank and held a bottle of blood plasma for a medic. Paul's leg was half blown off and he was white as a sheet from lack of blood. However, he was responsive so they put him on a stretcher so they could move him. There was another sergeant that was hit. I talked to him. He had a hole in his back just below his shoulder blade that would have fit a softball. I could see his insides. As injured as he was he was still trying to give orders. There were many more we could not help.

Afterwards, my men didn't have much to say. We all knew how lucky we were because we were in the protection of our tank. My hat is always off to the foot soldiers. They are the ones that are the real heroes. I told the sailors at the mess hall that was all I could tell for that night. The shook my hand and thanked me for relating my experiences to them. I did not go back the next night.

It took a few more days to get our repairs completed after which we were shipped to Pusan to process Japanese soldiers located between the 38th parallel and Pusan. At Pusan we lined up prisoners of war and searched them for knifes, ammo, watches and all flags, fire arms and even money. They could take back money, but there was a limit on the amount. The rest we turned over to headquarters. One day three of our men were playing around with their rifles. Unfortunately one was not on safety and one of our guys was shot in the stomach. We took him to the hospital where two doctors operated on him. This poor guy had a rare blood type and none could be found, he died 5 days later. He was a replacement and was put under my command. It was the only soldier killed in our company and it had to be under my command. The poor kid was only 19, a Jewish boy from South Bend, the only son in the family.

After processing, the Japanese were put on a ship and sent back to Japan. In Japan a load of

Koreans were put on board and shipped back to Korea. This went on for days; the Japanese had used the Koreans as laborers.

Good news! The Division was sending soldiers home on points and it wasn't long my number came up, I had 69 points. I was told to pack my bags and be ready on two hours notice. What a wonderful feeling to me that I was going home. I boarded a ship with my bags loaded with souvenirs. a Japanese rifle, sword and pistol. We celebrated Thanksgiving on the ship, turkey and all the trimmings. Was it good!

On our way home several sailors wanted to see some of my souvenirs. I showed them everything I had and now they wanted to buy them. I sold them the pistol and sword for $100 each, another mistake on my part. I ended up with just the rifle. Then they wanted to hear some of my war stories. I told them how the Philippine natives would cut off the heads of the Japanese and bring them on parade in front of our tank to show off. They would do this time and time again.

Another story was about a Jeep with 2 of our soldiers on stretchers that were tied down approached us. They were burnt stone black and in bad shape. The smell was so bad you could hardly stand it. They stopped by our tank so I asked what happened to them. The driver reported the two soldiers were carrying back-mounted flame throwers when a sniper hit the tank and it exploded. That ended my story-telling, the sailors thanked us and left.

Finally, we could see landfall, the US of A. We came into Puget Sound and spent most of the day topside just happy to see America again. Two hours before we docked, a small boat pulled along side our transport. It was carrying a small band and about 10 cheerleaders dancing and putting on a nice show. Most of the soldiers on the ship ran to the side the entertainers were on and the ship began to list to that side until we tied up at the dock. When we walked off the ship several ladies were waiting for us with donuts and milk. Then we loaded up on to trucks and were driven to Fort Lawton in Seattle.

The quarters we used were very nice. After getting a bunk we reported to the mess hall where we were given steaks, potatoes and the works. They treated us great while we were there. Everyone received a physical examination; they checked us over pretty good. That night I called home and talked to mom and dad. Their voices had changed since I left. I told them I was coming home with tears in my eyes.

Our next transportation was by train to Fort Sheridan, Illinois. Upon arrival we reported in, received check in information, were given a talk, thanked for our service in the armed forces and handed our discharge papers. I found a phone and called home asking mom and dad to pick me up in Michigan City at the South Shore Station. We pulled in to Michigan City about 8 PM and not only were my mother there, but my sister and her husband too. My brother had arrived home from military duty ahead of me; he was in the China/Burma theatre. Dad could not come because he was home with an illness. I can't express my joy of being home. We stayed up all night talking. Well, the war was over, but I had one more thing to do. I had to travel to South Bend and visit with the mother and father of the young man that was killed in Korea and was in my squad.

It took about two months before I had the courage to face them. I took my girlfriend with me, who later became my wife. She did not want to go into the home so she waited for me in the car. It took about half an hour to tell them about their son. I told them he was a good soldier, they took it very hard. It brought tears to all of us. They thanked me for stopping; I left with a very sad feeling in my heart. I now felt my mission was over and felt very relieved.

Reflecting back, I was in the service almost three years and was overseas for two years, two months and ten days. I made platoon sergeant. In those days it was called a tech sergeant. I earned the Bronze Star for putting out the fire in my tank. That happened on April 12, 1945, the day FDR died. The Bronze Star was sent to me on September 11, 1984. You might say they were a little slow in presenting that medal to me.

I am now 83 years old and I still think back on all the things that happened to me over the years. My blessings are many. Number one is I married a very beautiful young lady by the name of Irene, we call her Curly. We have been married 60 years and the fire is still there. We have three wonderful children, Sue, Randy and Sandy. I have ten grandchildren and four great grandchildren. All are good Christians, how many families can brag about that!

In closing, I would like to say I have cancer. Not real bad, my biological clock is ticking and I don't know how much more time I will have on this earth. When I depart this world and enter the Golden Gates I hope God will forgive me for all those people we destroyed in wartime. They were humans and had a lot of love in their hearts too. But like me they had a duty to fulfill, my only wish is that the Lord blesses them too, AMEN.

My honest wish is that no member of my family ever has to suffer through what I went through. I

have one grandson, Brett Van Wieren who went through a similar situation and made it home okay. I am very proud of him for the Lord blessed him too. He was stationed in Saudi Arabia and served in Desert Storm. I know he did an excellent job.

The only soldier I know that is still alive from our company is Alfred Jones, our Lieutenant. He is now 86 and his wife died two years ago. He is very lonesome and misses his wife very much. He was one of the best officers the U. S. Army ever had. He too has found the Lord. Another member that was in my tank group was George Shanely, a medic. He called me last year in the spring of 2006 and asked me if I knew how many people I thought we killed that one big day we had. I told him I did not know, but we counted 23 dead. After our discussion we hung up and 30 days later his wife told me it bothered him so much he killed himself by stabbing himself in the heart. The war is still on for some of us and it's hard to forget what happened. My only hope is the Lord is with him and took him home.

I will never forget when the number 5 tank was ahead of us and they lost power and did not have enough power to get over a railroad track. My tank was in trouble because we were right behind number 5 and could not move. The Japanese were firing mortar shells that landed within 20 feet of where we were, plus a machine gun on a far hill put a burst over our heads that was very close but missed us. When that happened I told my tank driver to ram him hard and push him over the track. It worked and we both got the heck out of there. That was a close call.

We were on our way to the front lines when we came across a Jeep and driver. We stopped our tank to talk to him; then we could see that his right front tire and rim had been blown off and he was looking for the wheel that blew off. What happened was he ran over a land mine and blew the rim and tire so far we couldn't find it. While we were still there we checked the path and there was another mine. It was protruding about 1 inch above the road. It was a good thing we stopped or we would have probably hit the darn thing. We lucked out again.

I look back on all the times we had those close calls and we all knew it, those that were in my tank crew. I thank God many times over for bringing us home safely.

Another event that I almost forgot about was when I took a Japanese flag away from one prisoner in Pusan and returned it to the owner—40 years later. My daughter Sandy, and her husband, were stationed in the town of Tague, Korea where her husband was in charge of 20 jet planes, which our government had sold to the Koreans. He worked for Pratt and Whitney. If something went wrong with any of the engines he was the liaison officer who solved the problem.

Now, the return of the flag, the Japanese soldier was named Humano and lived in Osaka, Japan. We had a mission church in Tokyo and my pastor at the time, Ron Frier, made arrangements for Humano and Sandy, my daughter, to meet at our mission church to present the flag. Pictures were taken of the event including some movies that turned out great. This was a big event in my life as well as Sandy's. I wish I could have been there to experience it first hand. Later, Humano's grandson come to spend a week with us. We have been writing to each other ever since.

Here are a couple of stories that I have heard from fellow veterans.

One other story I would like to relate. A battle was going on in Okinawa, a large island that was occupied by the Japanese. The battle was fierce, a lot of rifle fire and mortar shells going off with dirt and dust flying everywhere. One of our medics found a small girl, about 10 years old, who was very badly wounded. The medic picked her up and took her to a nearby cave away from the dust and dirt. He laid her down and started to treat her wounds, when from the back of the cave came two Japanese officers. They had been hiding in the cave and they now came forward to kill the medic.

He said, "Let me wrap up the wounds, and then kill me."

When he was done he got up and told them what to do for her when she becomes conscious, then said, "If you are going to kill me go ahead, I am finished."

The two officers looked at each other and one could speak English so they discussed his fate in Japanese. Finally, one said, "You can go, you are free. We know you are not here to kill anyone, only to help the wounded."

The medic thanked them and left the cave. Many years later the medic found out their names and made contact with them. One of the officers had died but the other was still alive and they have been communicating with each other ever since.

Another story: One day we sat in an area overlooking our battalion commanding officer. He was sitting about 20 feet in front of my tank. We were his protection because our soldiers were pushing the Japanese back and were about to engage in hand to hand combat. An officer from the Philippines guerilla Army came up to my tank and asked me if I could help him. He said on the other side of the hill in front of

us was his home and all of his family including mother, wife and two kids were there all with their heads cut off. I felt really sorry for him so I told him to talk to the commander. My job was to protect him because he was in charge of the assault on the Japanese. He told me he could not leave his post and was sorry. It was a sad moment for all of us.

That evening my lieutenant told me they ran across a group of Japanese women and children, about 60 in total that were all shot and bayoneted. Each woman was bayoneted under each woman's breast. All were dead except for four women and a child about ten years old. Medics were there and brought them to our field hospital. Our tanks were stationed at the field hospital protecting the wounded. One woman died within the first hour. The little girl sat on a stretcher about four feet off the ground. She did not have a shirt on her body and I could see where the bayonet went into her stomach and came out her back. Believe it or not, it did not look serious enough that I thought she was going to die. She finally stopped crying when she found out we were not going to hurt her. I never did find out what happened to her.

Probably the worst thing I heard from my lieutenant was that there was a pregnant women who was shot by her own soldiers. Then they took a bayonet and cut her open so they could bayonet her unborn baby. It was a very bad scene. What could have caused the Japanese to do such a violent thing is beyond me. Our troops were on their heels and the women and children were probably slowing them down so they eliminated the problem. It is hard to believe a human being could do that to another human being. I feel that they had no real religion in their lives.

My final story: one night we were all sitting around talking about the world events when two Filipinos went by us and stepped back because they were looking at a Japanese soldier coming into town and was heading directly toward us. The Japanese soldier didn't stop but for a second and then he bolted past us. We didn't realize he was a Japanese soldier at the time. He must have been hungry, coming into town looking for food or something. The next day the Filipinos caught one of the Japanese. They tied his hands and feet, ran a pole through his legs and chopped his head off. Before that they took all his clothes off so that the blood didn't hurt the clothes. Then they marched him around showing off what they do to Japanese soldiers. All this happened on the island of Panay. It is hard to forget events like this. I think that is why even today I experience fears that cause me to jump when a sound around me happens. It's one of those things in life you learn to live with.

This is my story and all the events I can remember during my days in the service of our country. My mission is now complete and I have returned to normal life.

Army Medical Corps
Velma Bundy Ripsco

"I am a woman and a veteran. I say this with great pride."

Pearl Harbor… 7 December 1941… a wrinkle in history that changed the course of my life. The bombing of Pearl Harbor had a great impact on my life; in fact, it totally changed the person I was to become. In December 1941 I was only a senior in high school… but that fateful day my classmates along with myself heard a radio announcement that shocked us to the very core of our souls and at that moment it seemed like our world stood still. Everyone was painfully quiet and extremely stunned at the news… yet, with the ways the minds of the young work, some of us actually asked, "Where is Pearl Harbor?" Little did we know that our tiny neck in the woods was soon to become larger than we ever imagined it could be.

On Monday morning we returned to our high school as usual but the first announcement we heard that day was for all classrooms "to report to the student assembly room… you will hear a speech from the president of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt." The shocking announcement was that the Japanese had, with premeditation and seemingly no provocation, attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands. This unimaginable attack on our nation was beyond comprehension. I, along with my classmates, had a difficult time even trying to comprehend the gravity of the situation and just how life, as we had known it, was about to be changed forever.

The message President Roosevelt most eloquently seared into our minds that morning was one I never forgot. He expounded, "December 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy… no matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their wake, righteous might, win through to absolute victory."

Little did I know that he was to become MY personal commander and chief!

My high school graduation took place on 21 May 1942. Immediately after this landmark event in my life, I moved with my family from Arkansas to the twin cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, Michigan where my father had taken a new job.

I also began a new job, as an employee at Auto Specialties, in Benton Harbor one of our nation's defense plants. I faithfully worked the night shift and went to school during the day at Twin Cities Business College in Benton Harbor. I wasn't sure what direction my life was going to take.

Since our country was at war, it seemed that all the young men we knew were being drafted. The first fall-out of the war that personally affected me was when one of my high school classmates, who had chosen early graduation to enlist in the armed forces, was killed during the Pearl Harbor attack. He had been stationed on a ship docked in the harbor that fateful Sunday. I would catalogue this event in my memories as Tragedy #1.

I finished business college and took a job, working for a friend as a waitress, at the Airline Café in downtown Benton Harbor. My good friend and fellow waitress and I found ourselves frequently checking out the Army recruiting office at the Benton Harbor Post Office.

In May 1942 the government established the Women's Army Auxiliary Corp. (WAAC), which was to be a type of trial run at seeing how the country's population of women could be assimilated into the armed forces. The program must have shown some success. In 1943 the WAAC was replaced with the Women's Army Corps (WAC), and women from all walks of life began to join their military brothers. The WAC program set the stage for military women today who can be found fighting side by side with male counterparts, a concept totally foreign in the 1940s. Becoming a WAC and part of a bigger scheme was a new and radical idea for young women in the 1940s, but it was an idea that would be embraced by 350,000 females by the close of the military conflict in 1945.

So for us, the prospect of becoming one of the newly established WACs and seeing the world coupled with our strong sense of patriotism made the thought of joining the Army seem most appealing. We schemed together, plotting a future for ourselves that was not popular for young women at that time. We made the daring decision to enlist in the Army and secretly began the process of taking exams and filling out forms, all the while hoping we could stay together wherever this new life was going to take us.

My friend had a child less than one year of age and according to Army rules at that time in history she would not be allowed to enlist. I however, was deemed acceptable in the Army's eyes and I decided to continue forward with my plans even though I was now traveling solo. After completing all the paperwork I was informed that I would receive notification as to when to report to Detroit, Michigan for further exams and swearing in for service in the United States Army. I was exhilarated and totally wracked with nerves… I had no idea what I had gotten myself into.

I did not inform my parents that I had enlisted in the Army—probably not one of my smartest moves. They became aware of my commitment when my orders to report to Detroit arrived in the mail. I would not say they were actually angry when my shenanigans were discovered… more like wonderfully cross. My big brother and four sisters, on the other hand, weren't concerned in any way.

I traveled by bus to Detroit to finish the enlistment process. Once in the Motor City I took several more written tests then received a physical exam. I was surprisingly told, "You are four pounds underweight. You will have to sign a waiver before swearing in." So I signed on the dotted line then spent the rest of the day, clad only in a scanty robe, going from room to room with the other female recruits, preparing for Army life.

I returned to my home the next day and the waiting began. I tediously marked time awaiting orders on when I should report for duty. I was anxious to begin my life's big adventure. I had no idea just how much my life was going to actually change. I wasn't sure if I was prepared for it, either.

I finally received my orders along with a train ticket. I was slated to depart Detroit and travel to Des Moines, Iowa. When we arrived at our destination two drivers met us. These seasoned soldiers drove us out to an old Calvary Post that had been used for training in World War I. The aged buildings whispered secrets left behind by those who had come before me.

I remember my thoughts being, "I wonder how many warriors trained here and who were they?" These queries were not to be answered however as the Army's plans were to keep us recruits far too busy to wonder about history.

I do not recall how many women arrived that afternoon, but I do recall that we were informed we were in for a treat. That treat turned out to be nothing I had experienced before, but was a precursor of what my new life was going to be like.

First, we were taken to a building for our first G.I. issue of clothing. Each girl soldier received a wool overcoat–6 sizes too large and ankle length. We also were issued official wool stocking caps and wool gloves.

Each girl, inexperienced and wide-eyed with wonder, arrived at Fort Des Moines dressed in the fashion of the day. All wore some kind of dress or suit with silk stockings and high heel dress shoes. Some even wore hats. We were all ordered to cover our civilian clothing with the Army overcoats we had been issued then we were shuffled off to the Mess Hall for our first taste of Army cuisine.

There were no official photographs taken of us recruits in our new Army garb but a snapshot is permanently etched in my memories and in my opinion we looked pretty sad sack to say the least. Apparently my concept of fashion was also going to be challenged as I began my new life.

We were taken to our barracks. I suddenly realized this was going to be our home for the next six weeks. We were told after a bit of paperwork and some shots (lots of shots!) we would be fitted for our uniforms. We were also assigned our beds and lockers. There was not much privacy in the barracks; a little bit in the bathroom. However, showering was a community affair with six to 12 girls "washing-up" at the same time. It was a lot to take in and I felt overwhelmed as my first day as a girl soldier came to an end.

The second day of Army life was spent standing in line for fittings. I hadn't anticipated that a uniform had so many components or that it could take an entire day to outfit one girl recruit. We were fitted for a raincoat; a topcoat; two wool jackets (one was a tropical summer jacket); two cotton shirts; a wool shirt; two wool skirts; a tropical dress (I liked this one; it was very classy); a seersucker dress that was to be used for exercising; three pairs of rayon stockings; three pairs of khaki panties; three khaki slips; two pairs of blue and white striped flannel pajamas; three pairs of brown shoes (they were flat heeled boot-like shoes nicknamed Little Abners); one pair of two-inch heel dress shoes and one pair of one-inch heel dress shoes.

As soon as the fittings were done we were told to send our civvies home, since we wouldn't be needing them anymore. Each recruit's uniform was specifically altered to fit and we were told that we were to wear our uniform each and every day and that the uniform of the day would be posted. I never knew there could be so many rules about one's attire, but I was learning fast.

One point of reference that I remember particularly was that every recruit's skirt measured exactly 19 inches from the floor. No longer and no shorter. This way, when the troops were marching all skirt lengths were exactly the same. I quickly learned the Army was definitely a stickler for detail.

Basic training is the transition from civilian life to that of being a soldier or in Army jargon "From silk to khakis". I realized I was soon to find out exactly what that mantra meant as our orientation began. We were up and at it at 5:00 a.m. each morning, first doing strenuous calisthenics then marching on to breakfast.

The reality of Army life began to take hold as the rules were drummed into our heads: "You are in the Army … you are a lady first and a soldier second!" Bed check was at 10:00 p.m. sharp and boy, you had better be in your bunk at lights out. We were allowed to go to the PX for a bit of entertainment. However, we were reminded that in civilian life you may have indulged by enjoying two beers; now you were only allowed one but even more importantly, you were frequently reminded, "Ladies do not smoke!" The most crucial of all the rules however was, "No one leaves the post". My mind was spinning with all of the do's and don'ts to the point that I felt dizzy and totally overwhelmed.

If I thought Army rules were mind boggling I was in for an even ruder awakening when I started classroom work and attending lectures. It seemed as if a lifetime of information was being crammed into six weeks of basic education. We were expected to learn basic survival skills, how to use a gas mask, how to read maps, and how to perform basic marching skills, which included marching in step. We were taught an entire lexicon of commands including: at ease, attention, when to salute an officer, and what each soldier's rank meant. By the end of the day I was so exhausted I was totally ready for a shower and to hit the hay. I slept well at night but reveille' seemed to come terribly early and the nights never seemed to be long enough.

At some point we were given an I.Q. Test that was designed to test our aptitude toward certain jobs offered by the Army. My choice was dentistry in the Army Medical Corp. and I was more than thrilled when my wish was granted. I received orders to report to dental school at Fitzsimmons General Hospital in Denver Colorado for an intense three month training program in the dental field. We were told this three month course was the equivalent to a three year course of study in the civilian sector. I felt I was up for the challenge, after all, I had conquered basic training and at this point in time I was feeling on top of the world and capable of just about anything.

I did make an observation while at Basic that I filed in my memories to be examined later in my

life. After being on the base for a few days I realized the military was segregated. I observed a large group of women of color but realized they were sequestered at the other end of the base. We did not share the same mess hall, PX, barracks or anything else, for that matter. Occasionally we would see the ladies in a parade, but again they were separate from us.

One day as I was walking on the Post I approached a Gentleman of Color who had the rank of major. As we passed each other I saluted him, which was proper Army protocol. He returned my salute and gratefully remarked, "Thank You." I would never forget this incident. There were others that happened during my Army experience, but this was the first.

After basic training, dental school seemed like summer camp. I attended classes and lab work six days a week beginning at a leisurely 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Studies consisted of chair assisting, learning how to administer x-rays, and working in the dental lab making partial or full sets of dentures.

Upon completing lab training I was sent to the dental clinic, which was on the 5th floor of the general hospital. I worked in the clinic for one month assisting Major Moore, chair side. Here I learned the finer aspects of dental work. My patients were returning combat troops who had served in the Pacific Theater. I found that I not only used all of the skills I was learning while treating these special patients, I also learned compassion and empathy. Many of these soldiers touched my heart in ways that stayed with me my entire life. I have never forgotten them. My experiences at the dental school proved to be of utmost importance to me and have benefited me for a lifetime.

My world was to be shaken up yet again when on 12 April 1945 the President of the United States and my Commander-in-Chief, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died at Warm Springs, GA. In accordance with the United States Constitution he was succeeded by Vice President Harry S. Truman. History will record that Hitler, true to his diabolical nature, drank to the new President's health with champagne.

A special memorial service was held at the Chapel on our post and all officers in attendance wore black armbands. We felt as if a personal friend had passed away. Our emotions were raw.

During this time some of the bloodiest battles of the war, at Okinawa and Iwo Jima in the South Pacific, were taking place. There were times when I arrived for duty at the hospital that the hallways on the 5th floor where I worked would be lined with stretchers bearing wounded troops from these South Pacific battles. The stretchers lined the hallway as far as I could see; the wounded were waiting in silent agony for some kind of relief from their misery.

I am reminded what many people have said, War is Hell; at this point and this time it became clear to me that War IS Hell! I heard it, I smelled it, I saw it, I felt it… it is an image of war that was burned into my mind forever…. Something that I never forgot.

The most difficult case I remember dealing with at the Colorado hospital was when a patient came in for a full mouth extraction and my commander, Major Moore, suggested we do this case in two appointments instead of all at one time. The patient had other ideas however and informed the attending dentist, "You take them all at once or not at all, I will not go through this a second time." The soldier was told if we do all at one time, "you will not walk out of here. You will need a wheelchair because of the shock and loss of blood."

So the procedure was done in one setting according to the patient's wishes… every tooth was extracted and that left me in shock! That was the most blood I had ever seen. Needless to say, as predicted, the soldier left in a wheelchair!

Things in Colorado were not all work and no play. I had the opportunity to enjoy fishing in the trout streams in the Rocky Mountains, going to Estes Park, visiting Buffalo Bill's grave and witnessing a herd of real buffalo for the first time!

Eventually my time at Fitzsimmons General Hospital and the beautiful state of Colorado came to an end and I graduated with a promotion to Corporal!! I was so excited, after all I had shipped in as a Private and, surprisingly, skipped totally over the rank of Private First Class (PFC), I was truly making my mark in this new life I was forging. Then I received the best news ever, before going on to my next assignment I was being allowed a 10-day furlough home to Michigan. I couldn't wait for my family and friends to meet the new Corporal Vel Bundy.

I was extremely excited to be going home. It seemed like a lifetime since I headed off to Detroit so many months ago. I found out soon enough however that the Army continued to dictate how I was to conduct myself even though I was on furlough. The Army's mandates even extended to what I was to wear while I vacationed with my family and friends. This wasn't all bad as everyone I ran into recognized my new station in life because I was always in full dress uniform. The dignity, patriotism and dedication to my country that was in my heart were evident to everyone daily as I donned the uniform of the United States Army. I

was proud to be known as a girl soldier.

I truly enjoyed my time at home as I visited with my family and friends and relished some of the amenities the great state of Michigan had to offer. I had a great time playing the part of tourist. I hopped aboard the USS Grand Rapids and cruised on Lake Michigan for an evening of complete relaxation, totally immersed in the beauty of my home state, and I enjoyed perch fishing on the North Pier in St. Joseph.

My most memorable moment I recall from my visit home was when I took my three-year-old sister to Silver Beach. We had enjoyed a few carnival rides and then decided to take a stroll down the boardwalk. During our walk we encountered a soldier and his lady friend who were also enjoying the beautiful day. I nearly burst with pride when my little sis looked up at me with utmost pride and announced to the couple, "I have a soldier too!"

The ten-day furlough swept by me in a blur and before I knew it time had come to get back to business. My orders were to report to DeWitt General Hospital in Auburn, California. My family accompanied me to the train station in Benton Harbor and tearfully waved good-bye as I headed out to Chicago and then on to somewhere in Northern California! My adventure continued and I was almost giddy with anticipation.

I boarded a troop train at a Chicago terminal and began the trip to California traveling at a snail's pace. After three days and two nights of tedious travel we arrived at a small, deserted town. It was late at night and I was a bit confused as to what to do. A call was finally put into the post proclaiming that I was to separate from the other troops I had been traveling with and get ready to report for duty. So I disembarked from the train, a tiny bit terrified at being alone in a new place. After what seemed like an eternity, a staff car arrived to pick me up. Surprisingly, the chauffer was a full Colonel.

Colonel Smith was very polite but offered no explanation as to why he personally came to retrieve me, which was most unusual. I was extremely tired and a tad bit intimidated so I didn't even bother to ask "Why".

The next morning I discovered an explanation as I read in the Post newspaper. A horrific plane crash into a nearby mountain range had taken place the previous day causing all personnel at the post to report for Emergency Duty. This emergency status made Col. Smith, the post commander, responsible for me the night before. I must admit, this revelation did deflate my ego just a bit.

I was assigned to the 83rd WAC Hospital Company at DeWitt General Hospital in Auburn, California. I would be working at the dental clinic, which consisted of several dental offices that included, dental technicians, a receptionist, a supply clerk, one civilian secretary, several dental assistants and an x-ray technician.

My first assignment was that of receptionist for the clinic. I did my job with pride but anxiously waited for an opportunity to put my skills as a certified dental technician to work. My opportunity came soon enough and I found myself working as a chair assistant to Colonel Burr and I received a promotion to Sergeant!

We worked side-by-side everyday performing exams for officers and NCOs reenlisting for another tour of duty. Our most challenging work involved exams performed on POW's returning from prison camps in Japan. The men we met not only challenged all of our skills but also evoked the utmost compassion and empathy from us for their experience. Many of their stories became permanently etched into my own heart.

I was also called on for emergency medical help at the hospital after-hours and on weekends. The most memorable emergency event happened on a seemingly quiet Sunday evening and involved a C47 Transport plane that had crashed into the side of a mountain near our facility. The plane was carrying 20-25 Army personnel returning from the Pacific theater of war. The troops were to be discharged once they had reached their destination. Unfortunately the happy plans of the soldiers took a horrible turn.

Lt. Col. Brady ordered all personnel, including doctors, nurses, technicians, WACs and administrative officers to stand-by and help with the crisis. I worked all through the night right along side my colleagues until every injured soldier had been treated. It was the longest night of my life but afterwards I felt exhilarated when I realized I had been instrumental in saving so many lives.

There were a few moments when we were off-duty and able to enjoy some of the beauty of California. I enjoyed taking a scenic tour of fabulous Lake Tahoe and getting an up close and personal look at an abandoned gold mine in Grass Valley.

Near the end of one week, as I was looking for a fun activity to occupy me over the weekend, when I noticed an interesting poster on the door of the hospital's recreation center, put up by the American Red Cross. The sign read "Dance Saturday Night"… then in large bold letters underneath it read "MEN ONLY". The Red Cross, for whatever reason, thought it fit to ban WACs from the dances and then bring in women from other places. My WAC friends and myself had a good laugh over this faux pas and made sinister plans

to get even.

We went to the paraplegic ward and invited many of the war casualties to accompany us on a night out to the movies. We took the gentlemen, who were most anxious for a diversion from their trials at recovery, down to the hospital community room and enjoyed a pleasant evening of conversation and movie watching. Then we took the guys back to their ward and helped settle them for the night.

The entire evening was most rewarding and we felt a sense of contentment knowing we had put some sunshine into the lives of those who needed it and also, that we had secretly gotten back at the organizers of the event and struck a blow for WACs, and women's, independence and recognition! I felt good when I crawled into my bed that night.

One weekend my best friend, Josephine Farrell, and I went to Sacramento to visit a USO center. While there we made acquaintance with a lady civilian, named Helen Eager, whose husband was serving overseas. She invited us to her home and entertained us for the entire weekend. We developed a lasting friendship with her that continued until her death many years later.

My friendship with Josephine also lasted a lifetime. We kept in touch via letters; phone calls and, of course, visits until she passed away in January 2009. The friendships forged during my war experience were invaluable and most precious to me. These were special gifts given to me during a most tumultuous time in our nation's history and I am most grateful for them.

On 2 September 1945 the surrender of Japan to the allies was signed onboard the battleship Missouri while anchored in Tokyo Bay. So came about the end of the greatest conflict in history. It had lasted five horrific years and cost the precious lives of 55 million people. This historic event also marked the close of a part of my life that I shall never forget.

At this turn of events, things started to wind down concerning the war effort. Hospitals used for military purposes began to close and I was given the choice of going onto another post or going home. I chose to go home. I was discharged in 13 December 1945. I am most grateful for the experience and I value the woman I became because of it.

Today, I still carry the mantle of patriotism with me and I continue to serve my country as a civilian by being an active member of The North Berrien Military Rites Team, serving all veterans of Berrien County as part of the funeral detail. This I do with the utmost pride and respect for my country and for those who gave their all for our freedom!

I pray that we never forget the 400,000 men who gave their lives for our freedom. Let the younger generation know, that the women who wore the uniform in World War II also helped to secure our country's freedom!

American Commander of Dachau Concentration Camp, June – July, 1945
by Paul Roy, Jr.

Paul Roy, Sr. was in the Army from 1 July 1926 when he entered West Point as a cadet, until he retired on August 1, 1960. Upon graduation from West Point, he entered the Coast Artillery Corps and was assigned to a number of different coastal anti-aircraft units. After WWII started, he was assigned to 5th Army Headquarters and helped plan the invasions of Sicily, Anzio, and Southern France. He then commanded the 505th AAA (Army Anti-Aircraft) Group in Italy.

At the time he was assigned to Dachau, he had been commanding the 34th AAA Group, which supported the 15th Field Corps when it cracked the Siegfried Line and crossed the Rhine River. After the war, he held a number of staff positions, and designed a shorter training program when the Korean War started. He developed training plans with G-3 at the Pentagon, and served as Military Attaché to Belgium and Luxembourg. When he retired, he was involved with reserve and ROTC training at the 12th Field Corps in Atlanta, Georgia.

Interview with Colonel Paul Roy, Dachau , July 22, 1945, by Bill Bradley, aired on the Voice of America :

Bradley: This is Bill Bradley, of the Voice of America, speaking to you from Dachau. I am in the office of Colonel Paul Roy, commander of the Dachau Post, and also of the old Seventh Army Hospital Plant Number One. Colonel Roy is with me in this room, which, little more than three months ago, was the private office of the S. S. Obersturmbannführer, the man in charge of two thousand S. S. men and their 32,000

victims in Dachau Concentration Camp. Around us are the large and comfortable buildings which housed the S. S. men of Dachau ; and a few hundred yards across the quadrangle outside are the huts where the victims were incarcerated.

Colonel Roy, you have wound up the immense job of cleaning out this torture and murder factory after the American Seventh Army liberated it. Could you tell us a little of the conditions here when this place was liberated by the Americans?

Roy: As you probably know from the stories that were published when the Americans first arrived, Dachau was a horror of filth almost impossible to describe. Thirty-two thousand victims were penned up in huts which according to American standards, were adequate for 5,600 people, and according to German standards, could accommodate 12,250 people. Eight thousand people needed hospitalization; but only 4,000, after the German fashion, had it. There were 550 known cases of typhus, and 1,200 cases of active tuberculosis. There were thousands of unburied bodies. That will give you a rough idea of what was found.

Bradley: Who was in charge then, Colonel Roy?

Roy: Dachau was liberated by elements of the 45th Division of the United States Seventh Army, the Seventh Army Surgeon. A few days later General Paul Dewitt Adams of the 45th Division was responsible for starting the clean-ups here at Dachau. However, in the first part of June, the 45th was to move, so I was assigned to the task of finishing the job.

Bradley: And how did you go about it? What were the principles that you used as a guide in cleaning up Dachau ?

Roy: I tackled this as a humanitarian job. We had on our hands more than 32,000 human beings who for years had been treated worse than animals. Our first job was their welfare. We had to nurse them back to health; and to rehabilitate them mentally. Many of them had been so completely starved that the fatty tissues surrounding their nerves had been used up, producing a kind of nervous short-circuit. They couldn't think consecutively, some of them had lost their memories, and their mental reactions were very slow and childish. They were human wrecks who had to be salvaged.

Bradley: Well, would you say that the job has been done, today, less than three months after Dachau was liberated?

Roy: Yes, in large part the job has been done. The answer was food, the best food we could get, and all of it that they could eat. We fed them a tolerance diet, all they could take. They got three eggs a day, a liter and a quarter of milk a day and cheese and fats in addition to their ordinary rations. For a while they were being fed up to 4,200 calories a day, and eating it all, too. When we examined the garbage from the hospital, we found that they ate every scrap of food we gave them, except the egg-shells.

Bradley: And that's what did the job? extra food and good treatment?

Roy: Yes, that did it, plus the utmost patience of all concerned. In the first three months of this year, while Dachau was under the Germans, 10,600 inmates died of a host of causes. Since we arrived, we have been able to rehabilitate most of the survivors. Many thousands more would certainly have died if the Germans continued to hold this area. None of the Americans exposed to this filthy mess have gotten sick.

Bradley: And what has become of the thousands of former inmates who were nursed back to health by the American authorities?

Roy: By far the greatest number, those who could be repatriated, have been sent home. The others have been sent to other allied operated camps for displaced persons in Germany. At present, there are about 1,900 people still here – some 600 of whom are working for pay helping to run our utilities. Most of the others will be sent back home soon.

Bradley: And what about the camp itself – the physical plant that the Germans built here to house 2,000 SS men and 30,000 prisoners?

Roy: In that respect, our first job was to clean out the filth, probably the biggest spring cleaning that was ever undertaken. In a single three week period, at a time when the post was already considered two-thirds clean, we dumped 1,033 extra truck-loads of filth on the post dump. In addition, to clean up the three to four-feet layer of filth in the S. S. sports area, we used three bull-dozers, working as a team. Five fire-engines were used to drain the SS swimming-pool, so it could be cleaned up. I used Wehrmacht prisoners of war working at task speed – at top-speed, on other words. In eight days they finished a 25-day job, and Dachau can now be considered fit to be used as a military post again.

Bradley: Used in what way Colonel?

Roy: In the most fitting way possible—as a prison camp for the S. S. Today the men who considered themselves the cream of the master race, Himmler's Schutzstaffal, are living in the same huts that once housed the victims of Dachau. There are 8,675 SS men here, among them a number of war criminals who will be turned over to the proper authorities when they are asked for. My job is done here at Dachau , and in a few days I am leaving. The fact that SS men are living where their victims once lived, and see the former sick inmates with a new lease on life, gives me the satisfaction of knowing that the job I came to do is finished.

Background on Dachau

Dachau was the first concentration camp in Nazi Germany. It was built in 1933, shortly after Hitler seized power, to house political opponents of the Third Reich: This included Jews, communists, social democrats, resistance fighters, real criminals, priests, ministers, trade union leaders, anyone who criticized the government of the Third Reich, and therefore was considered an "enemy of the state."

At first, the Nazi's claimed it was a re-education camp, and the prisoners would be released, as soon as they were reformed. Many Germans actually were released from Dachau. This camp was not one of the death camps built for the Holocaust, although many died there, including many Jews. Estimates are that from 1934 to 1945, 200,000 prisoners from more than 30 countries were housed in Dachau at one time or another, of whom two-thirds were political prisoners and nearly one-third were Jews. At least 25,613 prisoners are believed to have died in the camp and almost another 10,000 in its slave labor sub camps, primarily from disease and malnutrition. When the camp was liberated in 1945, there were 32,145 survivors. The records were burned by the fleeing SS guards, so the true numbers will never be known.

Censorship in Germany was tight, little news about the camps got out. The official word was that the concentration camps were "clean," and visits by officials were staged to give positive press reports on them. The German public accepted to believe the official story. If they knew better, and said anything, they could end up there themselves. Most communities in Germany had had people sent there. A typical response of a German asked about the camps after the war was, I did not know what was going on there, and I was afraid to do anything about it. So some knew, but were afraid.

The camps, including Dachau , were operated by the SS, who guarded the prisoners and oversaw their work details. The Schutzstaffel, German for "Protective Echelon" (SS- or), was a major Nazi organization under Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. The SS grew from a small paramilitary unit that served as the Fuehrer's personal guard, to an Army fielding over a million men, both on the front lines and as political police. They were the elite of the German war machine. The SS was a complex political and military organization, built upon Nazi racial ideology. They operated as a secret society. At Dachau , the SS lived in a very comfortable, luxuriously appointed set of buildings outside the main post. They had a well appointed officer's club, and a beer cellar and a service club for the enlisted men. The SS also had a large sports area, with tennis courts and a swimming pool.

The Dachau Camp Commandant's office was very well furnished. The heating and cooling system was instantaneous. If you changed the temperature on the thermostat, the temperature in the room changed to the new setting within seconds. Nothing was spared for the comfort of the SS officers who ran the camp. In the Commandant's office, there were lampshades made out of human skin. There were gloves, also made from human skin.

After WW II started, other camps were built for the Holocaust for the specific purpose of killing people. Dachau remained at first a political detention camp, and was expanded to include Russian POW's, political prisoners and Jews from captured nations such as France. The former French Prime Minister, Leon

Blum, both a Jew and a popular politician, was a typical victim. As the war went on, more and more victims were sent there. The camps had satellite work camps for the stronger prisoners, who provided slave labor for the war industries, such as the underground Messerschmitt fighter aircraft factory near Dachau.

Slave labor at Dachau was used to make porcelain knick-knacks, snow sleds for the winter war against Russia , insignia, caps, fezzes, flags, banners, and uniforms. Free slave labor was provided to a private firm which made screws, nuts, bolts, rivets, and other steel turned objects. There was an extensive agricultural experimental station. There was also an Angora Rabbit farm that was Himmler's pet project. This farm had 8,000 rabbits, but just before the camp was liberated, the prisoners ate 7000 of them, leaving 1000 rabbits. Slave labor was also provided to nearby farms.

The Liberation of Dachau

When the advancing Allied Troops liberated Dachau , they were shocked and filled with revulsion at what they found. Corpses, starving prisoners, gas chambers, crematoriums. Boxcars full of rotting, starved corpses lined the road into the camp. Everyone knew the Nazi regime was bad, but no one guessed how bad, not even the German public, until they saw the camps.

At first there was confusion, and many SS guards were killed. Order was restored, and the task of cleaning up the camp was begun. Dachau was so big, it was actually liberated by two different American units who were unaware of each other, entering from different directions.

As soon as it was liberated, the Dachau Camp was quarantined due to a typhus epidemic. For the first months, all of the 32,125 surviving prisoners had to stay. Doctors and medical personnel worked to save as many lives as possible, fighting typhus, starvation, tuberculosis, and other illnesses.

When the Americans took over Dachau , they had to build up their own food procurement system, including a large dairy, a slaughterhouse, a staple and grain warehouse, and a refrigeration plant. A bakery capable of producing 50,000 pounds of bread per day was already in operation.

Job Looked Hopeless.

When the liberating troops were reassigned two months later, Colonel Paul Roy, who had commanded an anti-aircraft unit which was no longer needed, was made the American Commander of the Dachau Camp. At first, the job looked hopeless. There were 500 cases of typhus. All the other survivors were in various advanced stages of malnutrition. They were living in indescribable filth. Many had lost their minds. They were crazy with hunger, but they could not eat. Their stomachs had shrunken from long starvation so that there was no room in them for food. There were many cases of total amnesia. Men and women crawled around in a strange dream state. They could not tell their names or their homes. They knew only Dachau now.

The death rate, almost entirely from starvation, was 200 a day. Some could be fed only by human blood transfusions. Others, not quite so far gone, could stand glucose injections in their veins. It was possible to nurse even a few of these people back to the point where they could take sips of warm milk every hour or so. The death curve begin to drop. First it went down to 150 a day, then to 125. Those who had died were so far gone that their cases were hopeless from the start. Then the deaths dropped to 25 a day. The curve hung suspended there for a time. Finally it was brought down to three or four a day, and at last there was the first death free day.

Used German Staff.

A titanic job was cleaning up the filth. Wehrmacht prisoners of war were used for this. The Wehrmacht was the regular German Army, different from the political SS. They were put on a task system, with rewards for finishing certain jobs in a minimum time. In this way, work of the filthiest sort imaginable, which had been estimated to require 25 days, was finished in eight. The former German soldiers wanted to get out of the filth as rapidly as possible. After the cleanup, Dachau seemed as clean as any American Army post.

Many Dachau prisoners did survive and were sent home, or at least to where their home had been. It was a good feeling to know that some had survived years in the camps and could now start their lives over again. This was a small victory, set against the Holocaust, the horrors of the camps, the millions who died during the war years.

Yes, there was a Holocaust, atrocities, death. In the words of George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." We must remember the past, the Holocaust, the Nazi regime, the camps, and make remembrance of them a part of our future.

German Occupation of Russia and escape from East Germany
Maria Warwell

I was born in 1925 of German parents in the little village of Alexandrowka, Russia. There were many German nationals living in Russia at that time. They had come at the invitation of the German princess, Katherine the Great, who married the nephew of Peter the Great, ruler of Russia. We owned our house and the land around it, which we farmed.

In 1930, Russia was under communist rule with Stalin as dictator. My family, which then consisted of my parents, two grandmothers, two sisters, myself and my brother, who was one and a half years old, were thrown out of the house and our land and all other possession were confiscated!

My father moved our family, now composed of eight members, to Odessa on the Black Sea about 50 miles away. He worked there as a book keeper and we lived in two small rooms. I remember to this day how hungry I was most of the time. My mouth would water when I saw all the food displayed in shop windows. It was all too expensive for us to buy.

In 1938, my father, aged forty-five, and all other able-bodied German men were sent to labor camps in Siberia. We never heard from my father again, though after the war we learned from the Red Cross in Germany that all the men were killed. Both grandmothers in the family had died previously.

The German Army invaded Russia and in 1941 after a two-month siege, captured Odessa. Our family fared better under the Germans, who returned our land and possessions, even the piano. My mother moved back to our farm in Alexandrowka, but my sister and I stayed in Odessa. Food was more plentiful and the Germans allowed us better accommodations. I celebrated my eighteenth birthday there. When my sister got married, I moved to the farm with my mother. We lived in Odessa for a total of twelve years.

It was in Odessa that we witnessed the terrible plight of the Jewish people. We saw them marching in long lines through town on their way to the gas chambers. On one occasion we saw an old couple struggling to keep up with the line which was led by SS officers. The couple was obviously exhausted and fell behind. SS officer hit the old man on the head with the butt of his gun, and when his wife ran to help him, she was forced back into line. The old man died there on the street. These sights were not uncommon. Jews were hung on street corners and streetcar drivers often had to clear the tracks of Jewish bodies in order to continue. I remember a little Jewish girl, whose parents had already been killed, running up to us and begging us to hide her There was nothing we could do but cry. My aunt lived in a neighborhood where she could smell the terrible odor emanating from the bodies.

By this time, the German Army was beginning to lose ground on many fronts. We were moved out of our farm in Alexandrowka into Poland. The trip was a terrible ordeal. We spent many hours crowded into box cars, and in covered horse wagons led by an SS officer through the very mountainous territories of Bessarabia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Czechoslovakia We stayed over night and were fed in many countries. I remember going to a dance in Bulgaria in borrowed clothes. In Prague, we were put on box cars and arrived in Schwarzau, Poland where we stayed eight months. I worked as a salesperson there.

As the German Army retreated, we had to be moved out of their way. We were driven to Kalisch, where we were put on a train headed for Leipzig in East Germany. The train was carrying wounded from the battlefield. We could hear their cries. My sister carried her nine day old infant on that trip. It was very cold but we tried our best to keep the baby warm.

At one point we thought the baby had died, but she survived. Food and water were scarce but we shared what we had with the wounded soldiers. We spent one week on the train and then we were put out on the street. It was not a pleasant trip.

In Leipzig, we were housed in a schoolhouse, where we slept on mattresses on the floor The principal of that school took pity on us and gave us a place to stay in his home and shared his food with us. He later had a heart attack and died.

In the post-war period, Leipzig was occupied by the Russian Army. The Russians came with guns. They wanted to move us back to Russia, promising to return our land and possessions.

My mother said this is not true. But my cousin took her mother and my aunt (my mother's sister) to the camp set up by the Russians.

In Erfurt I worked as a translator/interpreter, for the chief of police and commandant of the city. I asked him if it was safe to go

In May 1945, we heard via radio that Germany had fallen. We all cried. It had been a long, hard, struggle during which time we had traveled many miles, a lot of it on foot. We had lost many of our loved ones and most of our possessions. We had witnessed horrible acts of cruelty perpetrated by humans against other humans. We had been bombed by the Germans, the Russians and the Americans.

back to Russia. He said,

"No child, it is safer for you to stay here! But do not tell anyone I said this."

Parents had reported cases of rape and many who did go back wound up in Siberia. In Erfurt, we stayed two months. We wanted to get to West Germany, where we would be safer, but crossing the border would be extremely difficult. It would be very hard to purchase five tickets in the first place. We came up with a plan. I went to a Russian soldier and asked him in Russian to tell the ticket seller to sell me a ticket. He asked me where I was going and I said I was going to visit my sister. I got one ticket. My sister went to another Russian soldier with the same story and got one ticket. And so each family member got a ticket. My mother was already in the train with our suitcases. She was praying.

Finally the train moved out of the station and we were on our way. At the end of the day we got out of the train and were moved into a large room with many wounded soldiers and their nurses. Many of the wounded had lost limbs in the war. We slept on the floor. The soldiers slept on cots. The air was so odorous we couldn't s1eep. Next day we got to the border. Russian guards were standing there. My mother cautioned us not to say one word in Russian. She answered all the questions in German. Finally, they opened the gates and we could walk through. We thought we were in heaven, finally on the American side. There was nothing there but fields, so we paid a passing farmer to take us to the refugee camp. We stayed there a week. We thought we could go to visit my sister's husband, who had been wounded and was recovering in a hospital in southern West Germany, but were told we couldn't go there. My mother said anywhere would do. We finally settled in the little town of Gronau near the border of the Netherlands. It was there I joined the First Church of God, and met and married my husband, Kurt. We spent eighteen years total in Gronau. We had been married five years when we left for Australia. The trip took five and a half weeks by boat with stops at Malta, Port Said, Aden and Cairo. We were glad to be back on solid ground again. We spent two years in Australia, where we saw kangaroos and koala bears in the bush.

After receiving a letter of sponsorship from the Pastor of Washington Avenue First Church of God, St. Joseph, we set sail for America! The trip took three weeks with stops in New Zeeland, Fiji Islands, and Hawaii. We arrived here in February, 1964.

We had a new house which we sold to purchase forty acres of farmland. We gradually purchased more land until we had 302 acres where we grew apples, plums, peaches and cherries. We sold 100 acres to pay for five weddings. We lost the farm after twenty seven years. The farm equipment and machinery were ours, so we sold it.

I spent eighteen years at the Gerber factory sewing baby clothes, eight of those years as a supervisor. I was hired by the Whirlpool Corporation to teach German to engineers who were scheduled to go to Germany. I taught thirty seven engineers in three classes. I also taught Russian at night classes at Lake Michigan College for over eight years.

My husband and I had five children; three were born in Germany, one in Australia, and one in the United States. We are all Americans! The children are now married and scattered across the country. We thank God for his love and guidance in all our situations and that he brought us safely to America, the best country!

When the Russians in East German said that everybody has to go back and that they will get their houses and land back, my mother said this is not true.

My cousin took her mother and my aunt (my mother's sister) and went to a camp where all the Germans from Russia were housed. My girlfriend, some other cousins and friends were also there.

The day came and the Russians told them the truth. They put them in a boxcar and sent them to Siberia.

When they stopped in Poland, my girlfriend and cousins gave letters to the Polish people to mail for them. I still have the letters and cards from my girlfriend and friends. They are so sad.

We were packing the same night and in the morning we went to the train station.

When Stalin was dead, my cousin came to the USA from Novosibizsk to visit. After ten years in Siberia they could move to Novosibizsk. I lived here in Michigan. She told me the story from the first 10 years. She said the people in Siberia had to saw big trees in the woods with a hand saw. And whoever doesn't work would not get the little bread and cabbage soup. So my aunt and my cousin's mother were too old to do such a job. There were nine women who gave them a little of their food. It was not enough for anybody. One day they came home from work, wet and cold. In their barracks it was too, too cold. They found my aunt dead. My cousin had to take a shovel and dig a hole in the woods. She put my aunt in a potato sack and put her in the hole and closed it with the soil. Nine women were standing around and crying. One week later, my cousin's mother was dead. They did the same thing and cried more. The funeral was over.

When my cousin told me this story, she was crying so bad and said, “Don’t ask me anything more.” She had a nephew with a family in Pontiac and visited them also. After that she went back to Novosibizsk. I bought her a suit, yarn and a wig.

Later the Germans from Russia could go back to Germany. So my cousin took her sister Katja and went to Germany. Katja’s husband had been waiting for 20 years for his wife to come back. They hardly recognized each other, since they were so young when they married. He stayed in West Germany after the war; but she did not know that. Once in a while he would receive a letter from her.

When I visited my mother in Germany, I talked on the phone with all my cousins. When I visited, I would give them some money and they built themselves a nice house.

My mother was 95 when she died. She was a widow for 50 years. I have a brother in Florida who is a pastor of the First Church of God. Two of my sisters are in Germany. My cousins get so mixed up in their heads from the trauma of the war and Siberia. It was terrible what they went through. Even I think too much of the past.

KOREA

Airman 1st Class
Priscilla Kramer Artz

My name is Priscilla (Kris) Elaine Kramer Artz, AA8509397 and I enlisted in the Air Force Mar 8, 1954 and was discharged March 7, 1957, rank Airman 1st class. I was not in the Korean War during the actual fighting. The Armistice was signed July 23, 1953 but the conflict did not end until January 31, 1955.

I was born on a farm and we moved to Burlington, Iowa when I was four years old. After graduating from high school I worked in the office of a grocery store on a 2900 NCR bookkeeping machine. My friend Alice, who was a cashier at the store, and I talked of joining the Air Force but she did not. I felt I would have a better future by enlisting. The recruiter had answered all the questions I had and I was prepared when I had to get my mom and dad to sign for me. To join the Air Force a woman had to be twenty one years old or have the signatures of her parents. My mother was not happy; but I was determined to join and said I’d join when I was twenty one anyway. Reluctantly she signed the paper, my dad signed without saying anything.

A question I have been asked is ‘Why did you join’? In my teen years I read a lot of career books and the ones on the Air Force interested me. The recruiter gave me a lot to think about and I felt the need to serve my country. There were many fields that needed women and I felt it was a good opportunity to help shape my life. To this day I feel it was the best decision I had ever made.

Another question often asked, ’What did you do in the military if you are not a nurse’? Just think of the paper work involved for each man and woman in the military. That is where I landed, in an office—auditing reports

There were four of us from southeastern Iowa who left Burlington for Des Moines where we were sworn in. On the train to Lackland Air Force Base, I met Ellie Driscoll and we have been friends ever since. We went through basic training, technical school and two permanent party bases together.

In the mess hall, we had metal trays to eat off of which didn’t look too clean so I had the soup. I think it was shrimp soup, at least tomato and I became very ill during the night. It could have been nerves or motion sickness from riding the trains. We were awakened early the next morning by a very cheerful airman with a huge grin on her face saying “Rise and shine”.

That was the beginning of our eleven weeks of basic training at Lackland. If you have ever lived in Texas you know how changeable the weather is. We had to dress the same so at roll call we voted on wearing a jacket or no jacket for the day. During those weeks we took aptitude tests to see where they would place us. I wanted to be a stewardess but that field was closed.

The first thing we learned was to get dressed fast! We had seven minutes to get out of bed, dress and put lipstick on to fall out for roll call. We never knew if we’d go directly to the chow hall or back into the barracks. If you didn’t have lipstick on or had your hair in rollers, you received a demerit.

If you exceeded the number allowed you were restricted to the base on the weekends and couldn’t go into San Antonio. That first week one of the rumors was we were going to have a GI party on Friday night. No one told us it was cleaning the barracks and getting it ready for inspection on Saturday. This

happened every Friday night. We represented the Air Force and when in uniform we always had to wear lipstick and wear a hat when outside. We were not allowed to chew gum while in public. If you wanted a candy bar or have a smoke you had to ask the Tactical Instructor's (TI) permission. On very hot days we all had to line up and take salt pills.

There were signs posted saying 'Profanity is the sign of poor vocabulary'. That has stayed with me all my life. Also in one of our classes the TI told us that "Tact is telling someone to go to hell and enjoy the trip getting there". That too is something I still try to use.

The first time we had a special detail the TI would ask for volunteers. Thinking it was a good thing to volunteer I raised my hand. We were sent to some building on the other side of the field. Our detail was clean the men's latrine. It was the dirtiest bathroom I had ever seen. From then on I did not volunteer. If no one volunteered the TI would randomly appoint someone to the detail. To this day you will hear veterans and service personnel say they will not volunteer.

The following Sunday they took us to church. Whether we continued to attend was our choice but it was the Air Force's responsibility to show us the church. When several of us went into San Antonio we attended a huge Baptist service with a congregation of eight thousand, the largest church I have ever attended. They even had a person signing for the deaf and I believe three services. Afterward we all were invited to a fellowship hall for lunch. There was a large map on the wall where you could place a pin on your home town. Everyone was so friendly and really made you feel welcomed.

We attended a lot of classes, marching, taking tests and working our details. We all would be tired and if you were falling asleep during class you had to go to the back of the room and stand at ease. My friend Ellie thought for sure I'd fall on my face as I was falling asleep standing back there.

We also learned how to march. There was a girl in our flight who grew up in Germany during WWII. One time while we were marching a plane flew over very low, she hit the ground! While in formation we could not fall out unless we had permission. Considering the circumstance she was not reprimanded. We marched to all of our classes as a group. I had a problem remembering to start off with my left foot. I ended up carrying a stone in my left hand to help me remember. Once we marched in a seven mile parade in San Antonio. By the time we finished our hands were so swollen from the heat that it was difficult pulling off our gloves. There were 55 of us girls in one barracks with a tactical instructor and an assistant tactical instructor in charge. It was amazing the friendships we made in those eleven weeks, stronger than friendships we'd formed attending school for twelve years. Texas was okay but decided then I would never want to live there.

You may wonder how I got through basic training. As I mentioned we had to eat off of those trays. I didn't think I was a finicky eater but those trays turned me off. There was always a huge jar of apple butter on the tables in the mess hall. Let's just say I ate a lot of apple butter bread! For another thing we were kept so busy so you didn't have a lot of time to think about home. We had one girl who could not adjust as she missed her family so much and was honorably discharged. One time we had been so busy that we were behind in our laundry (we did our own) and it was mandatory to go to a boxing match in San Antonio. They had so many seats reserved for the military and we needed to show up. Our TI got permission so we wouldn't get demerits for having too many dirty clothes in our laundry bag that was tied to the foot of our beds.

Mail call was the best time of the day but disappointing if you didn't receive a letter from home. Also pay day. We would line up in order to get our pay. We were paid in cash-$78.00 a month plus clothing allowance. We purchased our own lingerie. You had to state your name rank and serial number. If you could not give your serial number, you did not get paid. I think that is why to this day I remember my serial number. Most important of all were the friendships we made. Some you never forget even if you aren't in contact with them. They all help shape us into who we are.

Next stop was Denver, Colorado. I qualified for Statistical Specialist School at Lowry Field. Our first week of school was KP and then six weeks of classes. We also had to learn how to make a white collar bed. We had white sheets and Navy blankets. The cuff had to have four inches of white showing over the blue blanket and sheets and blanket had to be taut so a coin could bounce when flipped on the bed. We lived in an open bay in a two story barracks and 25 to 30 beds. We were up at 0400, made our areas ready for inspection, went to the chow hall at 0445 and were in class at 0600 until 1200. We were assigned details after class and once we finished them our time was our own. We could go off base and had no curfew, unless we were failing in our studies.

Denver was a great place to live. For one thing, in Texas we hung our clothes inside to dry as it was so humid that it would take forever to dry outside. We dried them in the barracks. At Lowry Air Force

Base, after hanging one load of hand wash out to dry and getting the next load ready, the clothes would be dry and it didn't take long for them to be bright and white again. Often we would take the bus into Denver, pick up a bag of caramel corn at a shop near the theater and go to the movies

After graduation I was sent to March Air Force Base, 87th Headquarters, a Strategic Air Force Base in Riverside California. I extracted data daily from morning reports from the entire base, prepared monthly reports and furnished statistical data to various offices. For example: average strength, AWOL rates, etc. The final reports were then sent to Headquarters Strategic Air Command (SAC) at Offutt AFB, Omaha, Nebraska.

We marched a lot, had parades and exercised. We had one training session with tear gas. It truly made your eyes tear. For fun the mountains were nice there but I liked the Colorado mountains better. We would also go to the ocean and picnic on the beach. The first time I saw the Pacific Ocean was impressive, the waves were really beating the pier, something like the scene in Hawaii 5-O. While at March AFB I also taught Sunday school, first graders. I was stationed there from Sept 1954 until March 1955.

I transferred to Headquarters SAC, Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Nebraska and was there for 19 months before being discharged. We received all the reports from all SAC bases, key punch operators entered the data, we audited the computer reports, sent them back for corrections and audited them again before sending them to the Pentagon. We always had deadlines to meet after the end of each month and often worked as long as needed to get the reports out. Sometimes we worked around the clock. We did receive compensation time and could take time off later in the month. Our office had civilian and military personnel. While at Offutt they built a new office building on a smaller scale but similar to the Pentagon. Our office was located three floors underground. I missed having windows.

We had wonderful food in the chow hall. We ate off of china plates and for breakfast you could order your eggs anyway you wanted. Our rooms were nice too. We had matching drapes and bedspreads. We had laundry rooms with clothes lines, washers and dryers. General Curtis LeMay was commander of our base and it was said his wife didn't want to see women's laundry hanging outside. We also had a common room on each floor with a full kitchen. They were three story buildings and I lived on the third floor.

I was one of two Iowa women sent to Grinnell College in Grinnell Iowa, near Des Moines, for an Armed Forces Celebration to recruit female students for the WAF, OCS and Air Force ROTC. We stayed in the dorm to be available for the girls' questions. We also marched in a parade to the cadence of a school band—a lot different than a military band!

On my own time while at Offutt, I taught Sunday school to 4 and 5 year olds. For Christmas all the classes would perform a Christmas show for their parents and friends. After the show the parents of my favorite student asked me if I was the one who taught the lesson about heaven. I said I wasn't and asked why. They said the teacher had made Heaven sound so beautiful that their daughter and her friend had left the next day to find heaven. The Air Police (AP) had picked them up and called their parents. I wondered how I would have taught that lesson. One thing we learned in training to teach Sunday school was that children think literally.

I also sang in the choir. We had a wonderful choir director, Sergeant McMullen. The most memorable performance we gave was singing Mendel's Messiah with a choir from the Bellevue churches, once at a church in Bellevue and once on the base. Anyone wanting to sing could join us, Catholic, Protestant and civilians. It was a wonderful experience and I felt honored to be part of the choir.

There were two Protestant groups on base. PAL was the men's and Pi Chi Sigma (Protestant Chapel Society) was the women's. The Catholics had a group also but at that time I was a protestant. In 1954 Chaplain Lieutenant Colonel Roy M. Terry was interested in the relationship of WAFS to the Protestant Chaplain program and thus was the beginning of Pi Chi Sigma.

Being accustomed to going to church and fellowship meetings I joined the Pi Chi Sigma shortly after being assigned to the base. We had a luncheon once a month at the officer's club, scheduled meetings and published a newsletter. After Sunday evening services we hosted fellowship hour. The PALs would attend too. Often there was group singing with Noel at the piano. He didn't read music but he could play anything if you could hum the tune. One of our most rewarding activities was a Christmas party for the children of the Lighthouse Mission of Omaha. We collected slightly used toys and the Chaplain bought hats and mittens to give to each child after serving a special Christmas lunch. We also collected clothing throughout the year to give to the mission.

We planned outings each month. The most memorable was a three day religious retreat in Estes Park. We had studies in the mornings, (our class studied the book of Job), and the afternoons were free time. In the evenings there were dances and socializing. Our main goal was to establish the first chapter

group for the Chapel. We designed a crest for our society, making it into a pin and finalized the bylaws manual with our crest on the front cover. Once we had this accomplished we, the Pi Chi Sigma officers, flew to March AFB in Riverside CA in June of 1956 for the national conference for all bases and filed for membership. By the end of 1956 three other bases had set up chapters. We had our pinning and candlelight service in Dec of 1956.

I had often wondered if Pi Chi Sigma was still active, so I called Offutt AFB and spoke with Chaplain Swanson. He said "We were the pioneers of the group that is now known as Protestant Women of the Chapel International". I

In 1955 Europe PWOC established speakers, workshops to train delegates and offer spiritual enrichment throughout the military. In 1960 all chapters USAF Europe united to become USAREUR Council. It wasn't until 1989 that the USA chapels became interested. By 1991 PWOC.USA was indorsed by the Armed Forces Chaplain's board. In 2006 the PWOC-Europe and PWOC-USA transformed into one organization, 'Protestant Women of the Chapel International'. I believe he told me we are now in eleven countries. The west wall of SAC Memorial Chapel has four windows with stained glass replicas of 72 crests and Pi Chi Sigma's crest is there. Chaplain Swanson emailed pictures of the crests and the west wall of the chapel.

There was a lot of paper work to getting discharged. You also had to have a physical examination or the government wouldn't be responsible if you had a health problem later. I moved back to my parent's home to look for a job. My boss from the grocery store I had worked in was now living in Chicago working at Illinois Masonic Hospital. The girl running the bookkeeping machine was going on a pregnancy leave and they needed a replacement. I applied for the job, was hired and moved to Chicago. My statistical training was an asset to my job. A woman I worked with at Illinois Masonic introduced me to Ray Artz, by phone. We were married six months later. Six years later we had our son, Bill, who lives in Chicago and works at Northwestern University. We retired in 1987 and moved to Michigan. After 45 years of marriage, Ray passed away in August of 2003.

There are things I still do that I learned in service; the way we store our clothes, hangers going the same direction, towels folded in thirds so no raw edges show and getting dressed fast. I think the most important is the connection we have with other veterans. I have a friend who served in WWII that I met through a mutual friend. We seemed to have a bond that no other phase of my life reflects.

I enjoyed my work, the people I worked with and the ever lasting friendships while serving my country. It has been an honor to have served my country.

CHOSIN FEW
William L. Gobert

I was born in Tarentum, Pennsylvania, a town 35 miles north of Pittsburgh, along the Allegheny River on March 23, 1930—a depression baby.

Four of us, from the 1948 class of Tarentum High School enlisted in the Marine Corps—myself, my cousin Harold Harrison, 11th Marines, Bill Brown, Air Wing and Don Bartoli, Air Wing. Three of us came back. Bartoli was killed near Pusan. We were in Platoon 203 at Parris Island.

We went through the rigors of boot camp.

This is my rifle, this is my gun, This is to shoot from, this is for fun.

Gobert, you, march like you come from Pittsburgh.

All I want to see are assholes and elbows

You people are lower than whale shit and that's on the bottom of the ocean.

One night I was in the shower with a couple boots, when all of a sudden, the Drill Instructors (DIs) came in and started shouting fire drill. I ran to my bunk, grabbed my rifle, my bucket and since I did not have time to dress— my blanket. I had to stand in formation with the blanket wrapped around me holding my rifle and bucket. I wish I had a picture of that.

Another time, I believe, I forgot to close the bolt of my rifle. The DIs made me get out in front of the platoon, get down on my knees with the butt of the rifle sitting on the ground.

Then they told me to open the bolt using my nose. So, I put my nose on the handle of the bolt and pushed as hard as I could. The bolt started to open, I kept pushing, and, I thought I heard the bolt snap open. I started to raise my head and all at once the bolt snapped forward and hit my nose. Blood flew everywhere. The DIs took me into the barracks, stopped the bleeding and put a bandage on my nose.

They asked me if I wanted to go to the dispensary. I said no. I was afraid to say, yes. My nose was sore for weeks. It may have been broken as far as I know. I still have a bump there.

When my cousin and I arrived at Camp Lejeune, he signed up with the 10th Marines and I signed up with Recon Company in November, 1948. I made 11 cruises on 9 different ships. Seven of them were with Recon. Co. We went to Vieques, Labrador, Gitmo Bay, San Juan, Columbia, and Little Creek, Virginia.

There were many good times shared during the 24 months we were stationed at Camp Lejeune. We would go on liberty into Jacksonville or to one of the many beaches along the coast. I remember one weekend, along with Stetter, Sefick and Iacopino, I went to Carolina Beach near Wilmington, North Carolina. We only had a few dollars each, so we could not afford a motel room. So, we borrowed some blankets from a clothesline and slept on the beach for several nights. That year there was a song called "The Boy with the Green Hair." We ran into a bunch of high school kids who had dyed their hair green. Of course, any one could tell who we were with the short crew cuts. Talking about haircuts, one-day Stetter and I were walking up the sidewalk along Holcomb Boulevard on our way to the barbershop, when an officer came walking out of a building to our left. He must has been 50 yards away and we had passed the sidewalk he was on. We felt he was way out of saluting distance so, we did not salute him. He shouted for us to stop and caught up to us and really chewed our ass out for not saluting.

In that same area, we would get sent to the headquarter's battalion shop for a day of work—cut grass, police the area, etc. There was an old gunny sergeant who would chew out anybody he saw walking on his grass. He would shout, "Get off that grass. There are only two people who can walk on it, me and the commandant you are not me and I know damn well your are not the commandant."

We spent many hours and days paddling rubber boats out at Onslow beach. I remember trying to catch the porpoises swimming along the shore. They would surface and we would row after them. They would resurface many yards away and sort of flip their tails at us. The thing I remember the most was trying to knock Chet Usakiewic off the overturned boat. He was 6 foot 6 inches, weighed 250 and had been an all state athlete in everything in the state of Connecticut. He was the king of the hill. Chet died in 2000.

In 1949, I made the headquarters' baseball team. We were playing for the base championship. In the ninth inning. the score was zero to zero. Big Chet was on the mound. Their batter laid down a bunt. Chet fielded it and threw it over the first baseman's head. It rolled far down the right field line and by the time it was fielded, the man scored and we lost the game 1 to 0.

Like all Marine units, we had loads of inspections. One day after we had been on a training mission, we fell out for a rifle inspection. It had rained that day and Frank Stetter forgot to clean the bore of his M-1 rifle. Lieutenant Black Jack Wickman grabbed Stetter's rifle, looked down the barrel and said in a loud voice, "Stetter, this barrel looks like a sewer pipe." Gunny Maxwell put Stetter on report.

One of the most squared-away Marines was Leroy Seri from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He had two sets of everything. When we had an inspection, he would have the required items in storage; therefore, they always looked brand new and fresh. We even accused him of sanding his tent pegs to make them look good. Leroy died in 2000. Glenn Kasdorf, Joe Gatz and I attended his funeral. He was buried in the Wisconsin Veterans' Memorial Cemetery in Union Grove.

In the late 1990s, Leroy, Stetter, and Gatz had come over to Michigan to fish in the St. Joseph River for steelhead, salmon and rainbow trout. We went with my neighbor Russ Clark in the Seahawk, a river boat. We had a great time, caught some nice salmon. Joe caught one that probably weighed 20 pounds, and measured over 30 inches. The main reason for mentioning this is that whenever we went on a cruise, Seri would become seasick. As soon as he boarded, he would disappear and we would not see him until we docked. However, he did okay on these fishing trips.

Vince Iacopino and Tom Lewis joined us several times. One time, we went north to the Kalamazoo River. And while we were fishing it started to snow. By the time we started back to Stevensville, it had snowed 8 inches.

Talking about getting seasick, another recon Marine, Spider Martin was almost as bad as Seri. Spider became the historian of the Korean War Recon Marines. He had a fantastic memory. Spider died in 2001. He lived on Marine Boulevard in Brooklyn, New York.

We made several trips to Little Creek, Virginia—the home of the underwater teams 2 and 4 of the US Navy. They are now known as the Navy Seals. On one of the trips, we were off Virginia Beach when a big storm hit. We were using our 10 man rubber boats. As we approached the beach, the waves were at least 12 feet high. All at once, the life boat flipped over and our gear went flying. So did we. No one was hurt, but we lost most of the gear. They had to send Navy trucks out to pick us up.

Frank Stetter and I thumbed home from Little Creek to Tarentum for a weekend leave. We crossed

over into Delaware and picked up a ride with a truck. We were headed for Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We got three-quarters of the way, when the driver decided to stop for the night. We continued walking until the sun came out. We got a ride to Philly. Then by luck, we caught a ride on the Pennsylvania turnpike by another trucker that took us clear to exit 5 on the Allegheny River—10 miles below Tarentum. We took a bus home.

We went to the YMCA dance on Saturday night in our dress blues, Some of my so called buddies made fun of us. I never wore them again on leave. I sold them when I was discharged in 1952 for $50.00. My dad took us by car to the Breezewood exit on the turnpike. We then thumbed our way back to Little Creek.

On another weekend pass, Tom Lewis, John Kirby and I (who were in the same platoon on Parris Island) rode to Pittsburgh with Sergeant Sacky Havers. On the way back we hit heavy fog somewhere in Virginia. We almost hit a big pig crossing the road in front of us. We were several hours AWOL and received office hours before the headquarters battalion commander. We received 10 hours of extra police duty. Sgt. Havers was in charge of this duty. That was the only blemish I had on my record. However, I did receive the good conduct medal.

We had an exciting experience happen to us at Vieques similar to the one at Little Creek. We were on the sub, USS Sealion. We again were on our way into shore in a 10 man rubber boat when we hit a coral reef and cut a big hole in the bottom of the boat. We were able to radio the sub and another boat was sent in to pick us up.

On one of our trips to Vieques, I was assigned to a recon team to land by rubber boat, advance to an airfield, and spy on the air traffic used. We landed our 7-man boat, hid it in the underbrush along the beach and took off for the airfield. We positioned ourselves on top of a hill overlooking the airfield. When a plane landed or took off, we recorded it. We must have stayed there a couple of days. I remember, an enemy US Puerto Rican Army patrol passed within several feet of where were in the underbrush. They never saw us. We went back to our rubber boat and paddled back to the USS Sealion. A lot of this action was done at night.

While, we were doing this, another patrol was observing an enemy motor pool from the same outfit. They were able to enter the compound and put sand in the carburetors of some of the vehicles to make them unusable. It ended up, they were caught and our CO, Lieutenant Kraience was chewed out for letting this happen. We had a Puerto Rican who was able to speak the language which allowed them to enter the compound. He borrowed a shirt from me and I never got it back.

Another time-the whole company was on a patrol when all at once some enemy tanks came driving down the road. We took cover but several umpires ruled that Recon Co. did not have the fire power to combat these tanks; therefore, we were disqualified for further participation in these maneuvers. We went back to the beach and set up our tents. I remember we saw another outfit that was set up down the beach. Some of us took a hike to explore. It turned out to be Seabees from the US Navy. They gave us some ice cream they had made.

On the first maneuver to Vieques, we went to Columbia, South America on liberty. We had a ball. One day we went to a bullfight and started rooting for the bull. Pretty soon the MPs came through the crowd and told us to stop. This was a no-no. At these events, some of the local military personnel at the port we were docked challenged us to a baseball game. Since we had a team back at Camp Lejeune, we had no problem fielding one. I can't remember who won.

Now that my mother just passed away (on June 11, 2006 at the age of 98), I can tell this story. A group of us went to a house of ill-repute. They all went and had a ball. I just sat there in the lobby and waited for them. Pretty soon a young gal came up to me and did a dance right in front of my nose. That Sunday school I attended at the Tarentum Methodist church prevailed—believe it or not.

We also stopped at Gitmo Bay. They would not let us go on liberty in Havana, Cuba. Some US serviceman had peed on their famous monument similar to our Washington Monument, so we were restricted to base. Tom Lewis and I went into the PX and he ran into an old girl friend from Pittsburgh. She invited us to dinner at her parents' home, which was a Quonset hut. Her father worked for the US government. A British ship was there at the same time. Their sailors wore shorts. We made fun of them, but, were soon told to stop by the MPs.

On one of the maneuvers, we stopped in San Juan, Puerto Rico. One night, Dick Reed, and I were out on the town. We had been drinking some rum and coca cola. We were walking down the street when an MP Jeep pulled up along the curb. We ran down an alley and soon found ourselves trapped in a courtyard. We lay down on the bricks up against a wall. They shined their flashlights but did not see us. They left. We

took off our dress shoes with the metal cleats on the soles so no one could hear us walking. Later we found out they were just notifying all the troops to report back to their ships.

One evening, along with Frank Setter, Bill Hanegan, and several others, I went to a hotel in San Juan. We were drinking beers-I believe it was Iron City Beer, which was hard to find only around Pittsburgh-and staking the cans on a ledge of a wall that surrounded the patio we were sitting on. There was a table of several couples sitting near us. We were drinking and laughing and having a good time. One of the ladies started talking to me.

She asked me where I was from and I said, "I'm from a small town north of Pittsburgh."

She replied, "Could it be Tarentum?"

I almost fell off the patio. Of all the small towns there are, she named the correct one. She was from Cheswick where my uncle Vic and Aunt Peg lived. I asked her not to tell them how much beer we had consumed. Another one in a million incident. Bill Hanegan still reminds me of this coincidence at our reunions.

We went to Labrador in the fall of 1949 aboard the USS Sealion. We were a part of the 41 Marine regiment out of Camp Lejeune on cold weather maneuver. I remember on one occasion when we were allowed to go topside and saw these huge swells where the other ships would be high on top of the swell and the subMarine would be at the bottom. It reminded you of a ship sitting on top of a mountain and you at the bottom of the mountain. You have to watch what you call a ship or a boat. We were told early in the cruise by the chief petty officer that a subMarine is a boat not a ship.

We boarded our 10 man rubber boats and made an amphibious landing. Sgt. Hutch Twhoey was our platoon sergeant. We lived in tents and ate c-rations. However I remember some one making a hook from a safety pin and tying it to a piece of string and catching some small trout in the stream. I believe we cooked them and ate them. The weather was cold—below freezing. We had fancy cold weather gear to wear; but, I always said that there should have been a congressional investigation of what happened to that gear since the only piece that we had at the Chosin Reservoir was the sleeping bag. I still have mine. I sent it home when we got back to the Brooklyn Naval Yard. I had to sign a statement that it was lost at sea when we reboarded the subMarine. That was the only time in my military career that I lied.

Speaking about Sgt Twhoey, he was our squad leader and later became our platoon Sgt. He was as gung ho as they come. A lot of the other Marines did not like him. I seemed to get along with him very well. Our platoon soon got the name of Twhoey's raiders. Later in Korea, Staff Sgt Twhoey became our platoon sergeant and was an outstanding leader. He received a silver star at the battle of Sudong-ni. He climbed up on a tank and dropped a grenade down the hatch. Forty years later several recon Marines claimed it was not Twhoey, it was Walter Cole. I saw this action hiding behind a large rock. I still think Twhoey was involved

We were stationed at the Navy yard for about a week. We were able to go on liberty every night. So we saw quite a bit of New York City. One night, Frank Stetter, and I went up to Broadway and saw a show with Lena Horne and Skitch Henderson and his band entertained. We also went ice skating at the outside rink at Times Square. There was a song out at that time that you could hear being played all over town. It went like this; "I've got a lovely bunch of coconuts, see them standing in a row, big ones, small ones, some as big as your head…"

One night another recon Marine and I met two gals from Brooklyn and we bought them some drinks in a bar that seemed to run from one street to another, just like an alley. It was not much wider, either, Anyway, we agreed to escort them home. We took several subways, walked a few blocks, and finally came to their apartment. It was a typical, Brooklyn apartment, sitting side by side for a block with a set of steps leading up to a door. We walked them up to the door and of course expected to be invited in. It did not happen. So we walked back to the Navy yard.

Every morning when we fell out for roll call we would line up in company formation. The Second Marine Division was housed across Holcomb Boulevard from us. The band would fall out and march up to building to raise the colors, then they would return, marching and playing military music. But, when they hit the wooden bridge, they would play Dixie. The yanks would shout, "All rebels, attention!" Marines like Bermont Senn, Julius Blume, Moose Gaskin, and Bill Hanegan would snap to.

KOREAN WAR—1950-53

I was home on leave when the Korean War began. I was in bed and my mother woke me up and informed me that the North Koreans had attacked the South Koreans. What does that mean? I said, "Oh shit." I knew damn well we would be shipping out when I got back to recon.

I was one of a few that was left behind. I wanted to go with my old buddies of the last two years.

Orders came in two weeks for the rest of us to catch up with the company. It took us a week to get to Camp Pendleton. In fact it took us almost 2 days to get across Texas. Saw many, many jack rabbits along the railroad tracks. We shipped out with the 7th Marines who were mostly reserves, many of them had never fired their M-1 rifles, so they practiced off the fantail of the ship. When we left San Diego, the Marine band was playing, "Over There." All at once 1,700 Marines began singing, "Good Night Irene" as we left pier 13.

I took the top sack in a stack of 20. One night I was sitting there and Corporal William Gaffney was cleaning his colt 45. He put in the clip, cocked the revolver and squeezed the trigger. Boom—a round went bouncing around the bulkhead. No one was hurt, but, some brass came down to investigate the incident.

One day, one of the recon Marines told me that there was a Marine wearing a dungaree jacket with the name Gobert written on it. I began searching for him. I finally found him. Sure enough the name Rock Gobert was printed on the jacket. He was an American Indian, but, did not know where his name came from. I never saw him again. We docked at Kobe, Japan, but, never left the ship. We did leave our sea bags.

We arrived at Inchon on September 22. When we were climbing down the nets, someone stepped on PFC Ford's hands and he fell some 15 feet to the bottom of the landing craft. Thank God, his pack padded his fall. He was not injured. Unfortunately, he was killed in action on November 4, 1950 at Sudong-ni.

As we came ashore, we were greeted by a burned-out tank with a body hanging out one of the portholes and it was still smoking. I was ready to go home. I was assigned to the 3rd platoon. Lt. Pucket, Gunny Sgt. Maxwell and Staff Sgt. Twohey were our leaders. The first day I was there, we went on a foot patrol and they gave me the point. I was scared shitless. We went on many such patrols on our way into Seoul. One of them was with the whole company. `We were moving into this small town in the outskirts of Seoul. Houses were burning, bodies lying around, and all at once, word came back, "Fix bayonets." We got up to this bridge over a small stream and I thought we were making a John Wayne movie. We had to run across this bridge one Marine at a time. Snipers would fire at each one of us. We had over 100 Marines. I was hoping they would run out of ammo when it came my turn. I believe no one was hit.

There were two other incidents I would like to mention. One being the burned out train station where several thousand North Koreans decided to make a stand. Flame throwing tanks came up and burned them out. We saw the aftermath. Then again, on a company patrol, we moved into a hill somewhere around Seoul, for the night. The 3rd Platoon was near the bottom of the hill. We paired off and dug our fox holes. PFC. Reed was my roommate that night (He also was my roommate at Penn State 4 years later). I dug my side of the hole at least 2 feet deeper. That night a line company moved in front of us for some reason. At dawn, the shit hit the fan the North Koreans made a bonsai attack and rounds were flying all around us. Pretty soon, Reed had dug down to my level. Our squadron leader Corporal Crites was wounded. Again, the Lord was with us.

After 2 weeks of floating around the harbor of Wonson while the Navy cleared out the mines, we made a typical Marine Corps amphibious landing only to run into a large sign that said, "Bob Hope was here." While we were floating around the harbor getting seasick, the ROKs captured Wonson. In the next month and a half, recon made many patrols. Some company size and platoon size. There were several that we will always remember. The company patrol to Huksu-ri. We went by Jeeps some 35 miles into enemy territory. The first night, Seri and I were in a fox hole together. Some time during the night, Seri lost the pin of his hand grenade. We could not light a match to look for it, so, Seri sat there and held the grenade in his hand until morning. He found the pin, but he told me to keep my mouth shut. He passed away several years ago, so, I now tell this story—forgive me, Roy.

We made platoon size patrols every day for several weeks up this stream. It must have been 4 or 5 miles each way. 1st Platoon—then 2nd Platoon—then 3rd Platoon. No contact made. Then one day the 5th Marines went in our place and got ambushed. Saved again. We had colored panels on one of the Jeeps so our air observer could spot us. I am sure the North Koreans knew this and left us alone in fear of an air strike.

Up to this time, we were still fighting the North Koreans. Unknown to us, there were rumors that if the United Nations (U.N.) forces continued north, the Chinese would enter the war. The Supreme Commander General MacArthur said otherwise. But, the 1st Marine Division Recon Company proved him wrong. Sgt. Decker, of the 2nd platoon was born in China. His parents were missionaries. They had a church in a small community. We captured an enemy solider. Decker could speak Chinese and found out he was Chinese. Get this— he found out that this soldier had attended his parents' church. He was a farmer and while working in a rice paddy, the Communist forced him to join the Army. They force-marched him from China to Manchuria, then across the Yula River. When he found out he was fighting Americans,

he surrendered. Of, course, this info was sent back to Japan.

That leads us to November 1950: we are assigned to the 7th Marines. All 3 platoons saw heavy action for several days. The patrol that I will never forget was late afternoon on November 4. I told General Ray Davis at a Chosin Few reunion that he almost got me killed that day. The platoon was ordered to make a Jeep patrol on the road just north of Chinhung-ni some 2,000 yards into Fun-Chilin Pass near hills 987 and 891. I was in the last Jeep of the patrol of five Jeeps. As the two front Jeeps rounded a sharp curve, all hell broke loose. Three Marines were killed: PFCs Moickie and Ford and Cpl. Moody; four were wounded.

Tipton was awarded a silver star for his cover-fire with his BAR while suffering a serious wound. I never saw Willie again. Meanwhile PFC Sefick and I rolled under the Jeep for protection. The vehicle was riddled with machine gun fire and gasoline started to drip on us; so I shouted to Sefick that we better move, now. He took off in one direction and I the other. As I ran across a rice paddle towards a small stream, I could hear bullets zipping past me. I made it to the stream and dove behind a large rock. It seems every time I moved the rock became smaller by gunfire,

Meanwhile Lt. Pucket called in an air strike from his radio Jeep. Three corsairs answered the call. The first strike was machine gun and rocket fire. The second strike was the 500 pound bombs. The third strike was napalm. I asked the Lord to make sure they dropped that high on the hill and I also promised him that I would go to church every Sunday. And I do.

I could feel the heat from the napalm. All of a sudden this Chinese soldier started running right at me. I had made expert the last time I qualified with my M-1, so, I aimed and squeezed one off—he kept coming; so I aimed and I squeezed off another round. Nothing happened. Then Glasser shot him. I was walking down the road with my rifle slung on my shoulder when Spider Martin said, “Gobert, what’s wrong with your rifle?”

I looked and the barrel was split. When I dove into the stream, mud must have got into the barrel and when I fired it split the barrel. I had to part with my old rifle for one lying in a pile along the road. I also had to find a new canteen since there was a hole in mine and water was leaking out. A piece of lead was rattling in it. That’s a day I will never forget. The Lord must have had a purpose for me.

That night, we dug in along a hill with trees all around. We had only one wristwatch, so, we tied a rope from one hole to the next so that we could wake each other up for watch. Sefick fell asleep and the system fell apart. We did not get attacked; but we did get shelled. The rounds hit the trees and the branches fell all around us. I will never forget that noise.

We went back to the school house where we stayed. It was starting to get below freezing. As a Jeep driver for our fire team of four Marines, I had to drain the radiator every night and then refill it the next morning. The company was ordered to join 7th Marines at Yudum-ni. We were delayed several days until the anti-freeze arrived.

CHOSIN RESERVOIR

Then off to the Chosin Reservoir. We got to Koto-ri. We went to point Task Force Drysdale and were lined up in our Jeeps, when, orders came that the royal Marines took our place. You know the rest of the story the convoy was ambushed in Hell Fire Valley.

162 Missing in Action

159 Wounded

75 vehicles lost

As we sat along the road watching the vehicles pass, I waved at Sgt. Morris Estess, who was in recon for two years, Sgt. Kirby, who was in my platoon in boot camp and from Pittsburgh. They were captured and became POWs. Estess has a great book about his life as a prisoner. After the war, Harrison, Brown, and I walked in to Bill Greens’ nightclub just south of Pittsburgh on New Years Eve 1953; and there was John Kirby. I have not seen him since. This event was one of at least 6, where Recon Co. could have been wiped out if something had not prevented us from proceeding with the plans. They say our orders were to advance to the 7th Marines at Yudam-ni and patrol the Main Supply Route (MSR) some 40 miles to meet an Army patrol who would come 40 miles from the IX Corps. We were in the X Corps under the command of General Almond of the US Army. There is a long story about that general. Some good and some bad.

KOTO-RI

They placed recon, on a hill above LTC Chesty Puller’s tent. We dug in. Sefick and I were in the same fox hole he had a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) and I was his assistant. We would be on 100% watch. But, how lucky we were. When things were quiet, we, were allowed to go to a warming tent. The

brave Marines on the outposts did not have this luxury. I will never forget the day that Sefick said, “I have had enough of this crap. I am going down to the first sergeant and put in for a transfer.”

The last night at Koto-ri, there were close to 10,000 troops camped in that small village. We were ordered to test-fire our weapons, since everyone expected an all out attack by the Chinese. When Sefeck tried to fire his BAR it would not function. We never did get it to fire. Thank God the Chinese were in worse condition then we were.

I took communion kneeling in a circle as a sniper was shooting at us. The chaplain would put a wafer on our tongue and off we ran for our foxhole. My cousin, Harrison, was in the 11th Marines. His tent was at the bottom of the hill. I would go down and visit during the day hours. He would feed me and we talked about old times. He told me years later that his sergeant told them that if recon up on the hill retreated, they were to shoot them. My cousin said, “Bullshit. My cousin is up there. He was later wounded when his truck was ambushed at the bottom of the pass. Several of his buddies were killed. The scene I will never forget was when they dug a big hole in the frozen ground and buried 117 bodies in a mass grave. I cried and the teardrops froze on my face. Parts of the bodies were frozen in different positions.

TOOTSIE ROLLS

Of course I would be remiss if I did not tell the Tootsie Roll story. At Koto-ri, our fox holes were several thousand yards above Colonel Chesty Puller’s tent. The fighting became intense and ammo became scarce. The word was passed down the line, “Ammo, Ammo.”

When the word got to Col. Puller, he ordered that a message be radioed back to headquarters that we have an immediate airdrop. Of course, we were surrounded and all supplies had to be air-dropped. In those days every message had a code name. This one happened to be tootsie roll. Well, who ever received the message thought we actually wanted Tootsie Rolls. So, low and behold, the US Air Force with their flying box cars, the C-19s, dropped us Tootsie Rolls. Later, they also dropped us ammo. We got most of them, but, the Chinese received some also. One of the chutes hit one of our Jeeps and destroyed it. They say, one hit a tent full of officers having a meeting, no one was killed. Actually, the Tootsie Rolls were just as critical for our survival since they were used as food. They had high sugar content and they melted in our mouths in a few minutes. They also were used to plug bullet holes in the radiators of our vehicles. This story has become very famous. The Chosin Few—a veteran’s organization sent a plaque to the owners of the Tootsie Roll company honoring their product. At the 50th anniversary held in San Diego, the company presented over 1500 veterans with a large re-usable bank filled with Tootsie Rolls.

Maggie Higgins, a war correspondent was part of this story. I never got the opportunity to see her, but, I heard a story how she became a pain in the ass for the Marine commander. She wanted to be with the troops on the so-called retreat hell. We were fighting in the opposite direction. They flew her out of Hagaru-ri to Hungnam. She later was sent to Vietnam, were she contracted a virus that took her life. There is a good book out that she wrote about her experiences.

Then on December 10, elements of the 1st Marine Division and attached units began their withdrawal from Koto-ri. Recon Co. was chosen to bring up the rear. I am sure that Marines like Glenn Kasdorf and George Amyotte have sent in their experiences of that night. I remember the 9 tanks that made up the rear guard. The 1st Platoon had the rear guard. Lt. Hargett was in charge. One of the tanks track froze and it could not move. Hargett requested that they push it over the side of 1000 ft cliff. A captain refused. Meanwhile the Chinese were driving thousands of refugees down the MSR and using them as shields. I can remember the noise sounded like a herd of cattle.

The last tank fired at the column. Soon the Chinese broke ranks and headed for the hills surrounding the road. Since the captain of the tankers would not move; in fact if I remember he climbed into his tank and may still be there. The 1st platoon placed two of its wounded Marines under one of the tanks and they too may still be there. One of them was Ferko from Pittsburgh and Page from Michigan. Like I just mentioned, there are many individual stories that occurred that night.

Several hours later, when the company reached the tread way bridge where the engineers were waiting patiently to blow it up, the 3rd platoon was ordered to bring up the rear. At this point, I would like to name the fire team and other members of the platoon who made up the last organized group down MSR: PFCs Gobert, Reed, Seri, Sefick, Corporals Crites and Novak, and Staff Sgt. Thwoey. It was so cold Sefick would keep falling asleep and even would fall to the ground. I would pick him up and get him moving. Hell, I should have received a medal. Fred died back in the 70s. When we got down to the bottom of the pass, elements of the 3rd Infantry Division had a roadblock and let us through. We did not sing the Marine Corps hymn like the 7th Marines did at Hagaru. We were too cold, tired and sleepy to do anything.

I got my Jeep back I don't remember who drove it down the pass. We loaded up and started for the ocean. We got down the MSR a few miles when we came to a bend. I tried to turn the steering wheel, but we kept going straight. Next thing we know, we are in the ditch and the Jeep is upside down and Sefic is under it. Oh no, we make it out of the frozen Chosin, now Gobert has killed his foxhole buddy. I crawled down to where he was pinned, I, could hear him moaning. I shouted, "Are you hurt?" And I even put my arms around him. He looked up and started to smile. I dropped him and said, "You son of a bitch." He was fine. The heavy parka we wore had shielded him and prevented any injury. We went aboard ship, took our first shower in months, and our feet swelled so much we could not tie our boon dockers for days. All of us had frostbite. It took 40 years before the Veterans Administration and US government would even recognize frostbite as a disability. Many of us now get 100% disability.

I would be remiss, if I did not mention the refugees that were evacuated from Hungnam, North Korea. There were close to 100,000. They carried them on the decks of any ship that had room. Several years ago, when I attended a function put on by the Michiana Korean Association. I met a South Korean whose parents were part of that event. (See Henry Seo's story in this book.) Sometime in December, the harbor was demolished by the Seabees.

The company was set up in a building near headquarters. I remember I had guard duty around General O. P. Smith's house on Christmas Eve. A group of Marines came and sang carols and he came out on the balcony and talked to them. A Marine from my high school class, PFC Daum, came out and sat with me while I was on duty. He was in the USMC band and survived even more combat than we did. He volunteered to be a cook in headquarters company. We ate very well that Christmas.

PART 2 SPRING, SUMMER, AND FALL 1951

It did not take long before Recon Co. was back on patrols. We made long Jeep patrols in what was called the Pohang Guerrilla Hunt. In fact, we participated in Operation House Burner where a fire team would go in on a helicopter, which would hover over a Korean house or hut and we would drop white phosphorus grenades on the straw roofs and burned them to the ground. On one flight, we came upon several huts. The copter landed, we, got out and were ready to burn them, when, several geisha girls came running out. Immediately, an Army weapons carrier came driving up. This officer asked me what we were doing. I marched him over to the phone on the outside of the copter and let him talk with the Marine pilot. About a month later, Green and I were witnesses at a court martial. These girls were house maids for the officers of an ammo dump. They even had taken an Army ambulance and made an RV to transport their lovers. I don't know what the results of the trial ever were.

One of the most gung ho patrols we made was into a village called Hoengsong. The company rode tanks about five miles to this village. We searched each house. Found nothing. Then we started to take small arms fire from a range of hills in front of us. I remember the tanks firing their 90mm guns at the bunkers on the hill pretty soon the firing stopped. We went back up the road to our front lines.

It was still cold when we went on these patrols. We were still carrying our sleeping bags. I remember we were getting ready to dig in for the night, when PFC Reed stepped into a honey pot (human waste). I made him dig his own fox hole that night. I remember him looking for a new bag the next day.

In April 1951, we were out on a road patrol when 5 or 6 new, clean Jeeps came driving up behind us. They tooted their horns and we pulled off the road. We noticed an officer on the 50 cal. machine gun on the lead Jeep. We knew some one of high rank must be in the column. Yes there was, in, the middle Jeep smoking his corn cob pipe was the famous commander in chief of the U.N.forces General Douglas MacArthur. We got our asses chewed out for not saluting. He was relieved of his command a short time later by President Truman.

On another road patrol, the entire company was involved. Enemy troops were spotted on the side of a mountain. The 3rd Platoon was ordered to reconnoiter that area and find out the enemy's whereabouts and size. As the platoon, crawled up the hill, the Chinese opened fire and Vincent "Ike" Iacopino—known as the judge—was hit in the shoulder. Corpsman Mike Jurkash crawled up to assist him and was hit; I believe in the cheek. They were both evacuated by Jeep ambulances. They both survived and attend our reunions. That was Ike's second purple heart so he was sent back to the states. I was a Jeep driver; so, I had to stay down on the road with the vehicle, I could hear all this firing but see very little.

I'll never forget, Gunny Zohn, of the 2nd platoon, came crawling down, took out a small mortar and started firing. He only had a few rounds and soon ran out. I believe an air strike was called in and wiped out the enemy. Ike became a judge after law school at Georgetown and now lives in New Hampshire. We get together annually and he has traveled here to fish in Lake Michigan. A good friend.

On another foot patrol, we came to this stream. We had walked all day in the hot sun and many of us were getting thirsty. We had pills with us to make the water safe to use, but it took hours before you could drink it. I remember taking my canteen cup and scooping some water out of the stream and drinking it. About a half-mile up the stream, we found some dead horses that must have been killed by our planes. I am still here.

On another 3rd Platoon patrol with Lt. Hunt in command we got lost in front of the Marine sector. I was now a Corporal Squadron leader doing a sergeant's job. The government owes Corporals Reed and Seri back pay for at least 6 months. We got lost. We were standing on top of this mountain and noticed that the lieutenant was reading the map in the wrong direction. Corporal Seri called his attention to it. I was not one of his favorites. My dad had sent me a pair of the 3 buckle boots that he wore on his job. They were great for the mud of Korea. I got caught wearing them on a patrol and he threatened to put me on report for being out of uniform. I hid them and gave them to Corporal Green when he took over the squadron upon our rotation to the states.

We were lost for 24 hours after the map incident. We became low on rations and water. When we came to a small village a farmer was cooking an oxen. Our South Korean interpreter asked him if he had some meat that we could eat. All he had was some tripe. Corporal Reed and I knew what that was from our youth in Pennsylvania. We ate until we were full. We finally got our bearings and headed in the right direction. It was now dark we did not know the new password. I was not on point when we finally made contact with an Army unit. We were told we had just walked through land mines. We had followed a small stream and that must have kept us out of harm's way. When we got back to the company, chow was being served. We sure took a ribbing from the rest of the troops. We found out that all the units in our area, including the Air Force was put on alert for our lost patrol. Hunt was relieved of his command. He was diagnosed as an alcoholic.

HISTORY-MAKING HELICOPTER RIDE

We had many more incidents that I could mention. The one that I call our finest hour was Operation Summit. In September 1951, Recon Co., some engineers, and a heavy machine gun section from the 7th Marines—224 in total—were air-lifted from a non-combat area to a combat area by HMR-161 helicopters. We hovered over a cleared-out area and climbed down knotted ropes. Enemy mortars were being received. The landing was successful. We replaced an ROK Regiment, until, the 1st Marines climbed hill 884 and relieved us. Our fox holes were about 50 yards apart. There was barbed wire in front of our positions. The first night Sgt. Saunders and I threw a case of grenades at noises and ghosts. I am still alive today. We had a Navy forward observer attached to us. We were using his binoculars when we spotted some Chinese playing volleyball far across the river valley. He called in gun fire from the USS New Jersey. We could hear the boom, boom, and then the ZZZZZ of the 16 inch shells passing over our heads. That soon broke up the volleyball game.

We spent two nights and three days on hill 884, until relieved. They flew us back out. We did not lose a Marine. We did not know it, but, congratulations poured in from all sides. General Shepherd complimented HMR-161 on a bright new chapter in the employment of helicopters by Marines. General Byers, commanding officer of the X Corps, said, "Your imaginative experiment with this kind of transportation is certainly to be of lasting value to all services. Several years ago, at Camp Lejeune, I mentioned to Oliver North that he should put us on War Stories. I never heard from him. The best compliment was from General Thomas, new commanding officer of the 1st Marine Division. He said, "Operation Summit, the first helicopter-born landing of a combat unit in history, was an outstanding success. To all who took part, well done."

They should have given us all a medal.

On the last night in Korea, Corporal Gobert and his squad—9 Marines—were sent up on an outpost by the punch bowl, I was setting up a trip grenade when the pin was pulled from it by the tension of the wire stretched across the trail. Thank God I had my hand on the spoon, or, I would not be telling these war stories. I reset the trip wire and grenade.

Also, that night PFC Sweet Meat Armstrong went to sleep on watch. I put my rifle barrel, no mud this time—up under his chin and told him, "If I catch you sleeping again I'll shoot you." The next day 17 of us were sent home. Armstrong has never attended a Korean War Recon reunion.

I spent my last 6 months as a guard at the Naval prison in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It was the worst duty I believe a Marine could ask for. Most of the prisoners were there because they had been AWOL. They did not want to go to Korea. There were over 600 prisoners. They had to be counted 3 to 4 times a day. The prison was located on an island at the Naval base.

I am a member of the Korean War veterans of southwest Michigan and a member of the national Chosin Few and the Michigan Chosin Few. I am also a member of the Korean War Recon Marines. We still have a reunion every year. A book written by Jerry Ravino called Elite: USMC First Reconnaissance Company Of The Korean War 1950-1953 is a history of the Recon Co. during the Korean war.

In May 1994, the local newspaper, The Herald Palladium, ran a list of Memorial Day activities and invited all the veterans from the Civil War to Desert Storm, but, never even mentioned the Korean War. So, five Korean war veterans who belonged to the Chosin Few met in Marvin Showalter's kitchen and formed a committee to raise money and build a memorial honoring the Korean War veterans of Berrien County We raised $25,000 by car washes, a pancake breakfast, and donations. Most of the donations came from the average citizen in small amounts—just like the little old lady in the Bible who gave her last coins. Our struggle was not over. The parks committee and the city council of St. Joseph, Michigan would not allow us to use a site on the bluff where all the other memorials are located. So, we asked permission to build it at Look-out Park along Red Arrow Highway, south of the city. On Veterans Day, 1994, we dedicated the memorial before a huge crowd. From this, the Korean War Veterans of Southwest Michigan was formed.

A Short History of Korean War Service
A. B. Rosinski

Preface

I believe that every book contains a section which may be safely overlooked without jeopardizing the reader's understanding of the importance of the story. This preface may indeed be in that category. Read on if you are curious by nature or move on to Episode 1 if you are easily bored.

Perhaps an explanation of how the author created this book is in order here. First and foremost, the personal recollections of the author form the basis of the content. Other resource materials have been interwoven into the story line and these need to be noted and acknowledged.

When I was drafted into the Army I wrote to my parents on a weekly basis. For my 14 months of stateside military service I was able to write open and upbeat letters to my parents and friends. After my assignment to the Far East I changed the ground rules regarding the letters I sent to one of my friends.

The letters to my parents remained cheerful concentrating on weather and geography. I began to write to one of my close friends about my experiences in a combat unit. The understanding was that in the event of my death, he, Frank Sadowski, would share these letters with my father. In this way I hoped to show my intention to refuse to "go quietly into the night".

My mother however was a different case. My mother, with her only two sons in the service, didn't need such information regarding combat and I didn't intend for her to see it.

Upon my release from the Army, I was surprised when Frank Sadowski handed me a packet containing all the letters that I had sent to him. I was pleased that Frank had so faithfully taken to heart my request, but now that I had safely returned home they were not needed. I placed the packet in storage for several decades before I next felt a need to re-read them.

One of my fellow members of the 1st Platoon, 73rd Tank Battalion read an early version of my work and with a critical eye constructively evaluated the book. Bruce A. Whithouse and I both joined the 1st Platoon in July 1952. He wrote home to his parents who saved his letters. Bruce gave me access to many of the letters to be used in constructing an accurate timeline of events that we had experienced. Bruce also gave me a very fine photo that he took during the battle at Whitehorse Mountain.

Another helpful resource to me was an informal history of the operations of the 73rd Tank Battalion. I have no knowledge that the history was even released as an offical Army document. My recollection is the the copy was given to me by my second Platoon Leader, 1Lt Butler.

My first Platoon Leader, 1LT Verble Parrish also provided me with several photos that he took.

So, with the acknowledgements placed before the reader, on with my story.

July 10, 2007
Prelude to War

01. Graduation week

The month of June in 1947 was a pivotal point in my life. I had finally achieved the high school diploma that I had been pursuing for the previous 12 years. My next goal was to find a decent paying job so that I could begin enjoying a life of privilege. In my mind this included a car, pocket money, decent clothing and the pursuit of the opposite sex. For such a life I was willing to commit my body to a 40-hour work week. All I had to do was apply for a choice assignment.

02. Seeking gainful employment

I began making the rounds of Employment Offices at the automobile manufacturing plants filling out applications which requested a great deal of personal data which I gladly supplied. They also asked questions about my previous work experience, of which I had none. Neither had I any marketable manual skills. In addition, although I was 5'8" tall and weighed 150#, I looked like a 15 year old youth instead of my actual age of 17 years.

And so the summer wore on. Although looking for a job I remained unemployed with no work, no money, no car, no clothes and no female companionship. Life can be cruel!

03. Registration for the Draft

Most of my classmates had upon reaching their 18th birthdays registered with the Selective Service Commission. When a male registered for the "Draft" he was issued a selective service number showing his classification number which was his status in the Draft.

I had time available so I walked a couple of miles from my parents' home to the Palmer Park Police Station to fill out the required Selective Service forms. I would not be officially eligible until my 18th birthday on November 25th. My growing experience with filling out personal data requests made short work of the Selective Service form. I relaxed placing my elbows on the table while the Officer checked the form. The day was hot so I had on a short sleeved shirt. "Do you have any scars or birthmarks?" he asked. "No", I replied. He pointed at my left forearm and asked, "What is that?" I looked at my forearm and for the first time in my life noticed that I carried a brown, oval shaped birthmark just below my elbow. I guess it is true that as you go through life you learn something new every day!

04. Notification of Physical Examination
05. Notification to report for Induction
06. Induction processing at Ft. Wayne, Michigan

As I arrived at Ft. Wayne I could see a stream of young men my age passing onto the post. The reception process was in full swing but to me it looked like a disorganized sports rally. Casual conversation with the obvious civilians standing in line with me alerted me to the fact that although most of us were draftees, quite a few volunteers were also present.

The highlite of the morning was the swearing in ceremony for all of the civilians entering into military service. The group was told to form into ranks in a large room. I found a place to stand in the middle of the second row where I could be inconspicuous. The group was called to attention, ordered to take one step forward, raise your right hand, and repeat after me, (not really me, but the loud, officious voice addressing the assembly). The oath we took was something like this, " I, (my name here), do solemnly swear to defend and uphold the Constitution of the United States against all enemies both foreign and domestic". And then there was something about obeying all lawful orders from a superior officer.

I did detect an implied threat of horrible consequences should I fail to perform my assigned duties.

I scanned the group but didn't detect that any body had not taken the one step forward. The ceremony had ended and we were now the property of the United States Government.

In the blink of an eye my civilian rights had been replaced by the Unified Code of Military Justice. The Army had formally and legally taken possession of my mind, body, and soul for the next two years.

07. Bus trip to Ft. Custer, Michigan

I found myself assigned to a group of soldiers being herded toward a line of buses. The destination for my group was Ft. Custer. Our bus convoy proceeded west from Fort Wayne at a leisurely pace. I reflect

on the fact that I was not permitted to go to “Camp” as a child so I began to think of the Army as simply a new adventure. I didn’t know anyone on my bus so I kept myself amused by looking out the window at a part of Michigan that was new to me.

Our first stop was at Jackson Prison. We were driven into a stone walled enclosure for the planned “rest stop”. Apparently the Military was taking no chances that any recruit would change his mind about serving his country. I resolve that this visit is as close to a penal institution as I ever want to get!

I get my first glimpse of an Army post when we roll into Camp Custer. I expected the group to be given a taste of Army discipline but to my surprise the non-coms in charge were content to herd the group to a series of tables where we form a single line before we pick up bedding materials. Our barracks for the night was a building with industrial type windows along the length of one wall. I claimed a lower cot and moved right in. So far I was content. We had been fed and had a clean warm place to sleep.

08. First night in the Army

As I made myself ready for a good nights sleep and the lights were turned off I reminded myself that we were told that our group would be awakened early the next morning. So ended day one of my two year commitment to the Army of the United States.

A soldier entered the room to announce “Lights Out” and switched off the lights. In the darkened and now silent barracks I heard the muted sounds of sobbing. I judged that more than one of my fellow recruits was finding it difficult to adjust to his separation from civilian life. Shortly thereafter I fell into a deep sleep.

09. Introduction to the routine life of a soldier

For the next few days Custer is my home. The raw recruits have to do a bit of manual labor, (picking up trash and debris, Mess Hall clean up, Fire guard on the coal fired furnaces, etc.) but otherwise we loiter about our assigned barracks.

The Company sized area is comprised of wooden two story troop barracks and several wooden one story buildings holding the Mess Hall, Supply Storage and Company Headquarters. Every building is heated by a coal furnace. It was, after all, April and piles of snow were still on the ground displaying a light covering of black fly-ash, the happy result of burning coal.

My group was assembled en mass for a meager clothing issue. Only the essential items, (woolen of course) were handed out. I get to sign my name to a piece of paper acknowleging receipt of the clothing issue, the first of many such formalities associated with U.S. government equipment issues.

I’m beginning to fall into the rhythm of the camp routines. It’s three meals a day, a cot on which to flop and, oh yes; an obligatory trip to the bulletin board at least twice a day! I’m informed that the names of recruits will be posted on shipping orders assigning us to basic training locations.

Well, the posting system does work! I’ve been in the Army less than five days when my name gets published and I am in for a long trip.

10. Assignment to Ft Hood, Texas and train trip

Ft. Hood, Texas is the destination of my “Draft” of recruits and the means of travel will be by rail. Upon “entraining” aboard a sleeper coach I found myself transported into the early 1900’s. The coach seats were velvet covered and heavy curtains hung at the windows. I also perceived a musty smell.

11. Arrival at Ft. Hood, Texas
12. A diverse collection of new recruits, (North meets South)
13. Assignment to Co. D, 16th Armored Engineering Battalion, 1st Armored Division
14. First Haircut
15. The Cadre and temporary rank
16. The Basic Training cycle
17. The Combat Engineer Training cycle
18. Field exercises
19. Volunteering for Ranger School
20. Dragooned into Tank Leader Training School

21. Transferred on temporary duty to Ft. Knox, Kentucky
22. Basic Tank Leader, (eight weeks)
23. Advanced Tank Leader, (four weeks)

Episode 1. Transfer to the Far East Command

I have been assigned to the 1st Armored Division for 14 months. The assignment for the entire 1st Armored has been to train a fully operational Armored Division. I expected that the 1st Armored Div. would be sent to Europe to join the NATO forces. Spending about six months in Germany doesn't seem all that bad as long as Communist Russia behaves itself. My brother John is on his second trip to the Mediterranean. Perhaps we could get together for a three day pass.

My personal plans start unravelling when I find that the 1st Armored will not only, "not" go to Europe, but will transfer all of the troops as filler personnel to Europe, FECOM, and other Army posts in the USA. Everyone in Company D is waiting with trepidation for their new assignments. The transfer orders come through in small packets on a daily or even hourly basis.

The normal routine in the Company vanishes and is replaced by work parties to prepare for closing down the Company Area. My strategy to keep from being put on a work detail is to take my assigned tank crew to the Motor Pool to perform tank Maintenance on the "Daily Do".

Rumors are wonderful things. One rumor is that I will be posted as "Cadre", to Camp Chaffee. I am spiritually uplifted by the news as I out-process from the post. It is amazing to me how much paperwork is involved before I can "Clear the Post". I travel from pillar to post getting the appropriate signatures from the medics, (shot records, etc.), dentist, (oral survey), Library, Red Cross and more.

I make time during the day to say goodbyes to my friends who already have their orders and are leaving Ft. Hood for the last time. I help them carry their belongings to taxis and cars.

My situation changes when I am informed that I will be included In the troop draft going to the Far East.

<Letters>
1 May, 1952 Thursday

Ft. Hood, Texas. I am preparing to leave camp with orders assigning me to the Far East Command (FECOM). My brother John is in the Mediterranean (Marine fleet assignment). I must report to my Port of Embarkation on 20 June, 1952. I have received all of my (medical) shots and need to visit the Dentist yet.

Well, one shoe has dropped as I know where I am going. I just don't know when. The cycle of daily life continues as before.

<Letters>
5 May, 1952 Sunday

Fort Hood, Texas. All medical requirements met for transfer overseas.

This morning started out in the same way as the days of the previous week. After falling in for the Morning Muster and Manpower Report, the Company received the Orders of the Day. Breakfast followed and before I could be assigned to a work detail I took my tank crew to the Motor Pool. After getting the tankers out of range of work details I returned to the Company area and again assisted people leaving the post.

It was early afternoon when I was accosted by a soldier who asked, "where have you been? We have been looking for you all morning". He said, "They want to see you at Battalion". After giving him a plausible excuse, I rushed off to the Battalion Command Post.

18 June, 1952 Wednesday

I left Detroit by train for Chicago, IL. The ride to Chicago was one that duplicated other trips that I had made from Ft. Hood, TX to my home in Highland Park. This time the train that I boarded in Chicago did not head toward Texas but traveled the northern rail route to Seattle, Washington. To my great surprise and joy I was assigned a "Compartment" for the trip. The compartment had a large viewing window and a two couch seating arrangement which also made into a double bed. A toilet (half bath) completed the room which also had a fully functional door to the aisle for privacy. I was the only person assigned to the Compartment so I stretched out on the couch for a comfortable tour of the northern United States. At the appropriate times, I took my meals in the formal elegance of the dining car. This , I might add was all at Govern-

ment expense. Overseas assignment was certainly starting off in my favor!

20 June, 1952 Friday

After two wonderful days on the train, I have arrived at Ft. Lawton, WA. The Army immediately asserts it's self and brings me back to reality. I have arrived at my Port of Debarkation and begin the processing that all troops undergo before going overseas.

25 June, 1952

Today, I joined a large number of troops from all of the service branches, along with civilians and dependents. We are herded aboard a Fast Attack Transport for the trip to the Far East. The ship is named after an Army General as are all of the sister ships in its class. I have forgotten the name of the ship but we are bound for Yokohama, Japan.

8 July, 1952

We have arrived at the port of Yokohama, Japan. My contingent was trucked to Camp Drake which, I am told is not far from Tokyo. The replacement drafts of troops are not permitted to leave the camp so we stroll about the perimeter looking through the wire fences.

15 July, 1952

I say good-bye to Camp Drake and board another troop ship which will take it's human cargo to Korea.

Episode 2. Arrival in the Land of the Morning Calm

A mist obscured the horizon during the early morning hours of July 17, 1952. The rumor is that we will be making landfall this morning. We replacements move topside to the ships' rails in small groups and when we can not see any evidence of land, give way to other troops eagerly searching for the first glimpse of Korea. Finally the message is passed to the troop compartments that the land was visible. This is the sight that I have been waiting for so I go up on deck again. When I could see past the troops lining the railings, I was struck by the islands jutting up from the sea. No beaches were visible. I thought the view similar to pictures I had seen of Norwegian Fjords. Soon the call came over the ships loudspeakers to go below to prepare for debarkation.

Our ship prepared to make harbor in Pusan, the southernmost port in South Korea. Down below in the massive holds of the ship, troops squirmed and pushed through narrow aisles to their bunks. Once at his bunk, each man began a final equipment check and organized his duffel bag. Into the bag went everything that was not to be carried in or on his fatigue uniform. The M-1 Garand rifle that was issued to him at Camp Drake in Japan was carried by the sling over one shoulder, the duffel bag over the other.

In short order, the troops in my compartment had gathered their equipment and were impatiently waiting to leave the ship for dry land. None of us were unhappy to leave our berthing behind. The canvas berths were stacked six high in double rows with about 30" of vertical height separating them. Unfortunately we were quite a ways down on the debarkation list so we waited and waited—and—waited. Finally, when ordered we climbed the ladders from our berthing to the deck and got our first look at Korea. My first impression was one of disappointment because the dock looked like any other dock that I had seen. Dominating the scene were Americans by the hundreds trying to impose organization on the mass confusion of moving troops and equipment out of the ship and off of the dock.

My group was hustled off to an assembly area in a desolate location which had apparently been a manufacturing facility. Only bare steel girders remained. No walls or roof remained to protect the concrete floor or shade the weeds that grew from many of the patches of bare earth. As I looked around me I became uncomfortably aware that no water or food supplies were in view. We made ourselves as comfortable as possible and waited for further orders.

I drew some consolation in the fact that this was mid-July so that even if we had to stay in place all night, we would not need any shelter. We were not carrying any food or water. None of our group had any information about what we would do next. Our location and movement plans were unknown and the attendant uncertainty of our next move kept us together like a flock of chickens. So engrossed, the afternoon passed slowly.

Episode 3. The Move North by Rail

A series of shouted orders focused our attention on a approaching group of Non-Coms who ordered us to Fall-In, Dress Ranks, Sling Arms, Pick up bags, March in a Column of Twos and Route Step MARCH. Amid much shuffling of equipment and false starts we moved off more or less in the intended direction. The distance traveled was not great before we approached a coal fired, steam locomotive with coach cars attached. The sight was not impressive. The coaches were small, very old and Spartan in appearance. The windows were all opened as wide as possible, a good indication that air conditioned cars were not featured on this line. My reflections were interrupted as the troops began loading into the coaches. The allotment of men for each car was tolled off by the noncoms as the men boarded the coaches.

Each of us tried to find a space to call our own for body, barracks bag and rifle but it was soon realized by all that we were facing a case of too much Army and too little space. The coach layout reminded me of the street cars in Detroit - mainly built of wood with wooden trim. The train seats were also made of wood not a wicker material like the street cars in Detroit and therefore more punishing on the parts of the body contacting the seat. As the train began to move, swaying and jolting, the ride was typical of a streetcar.

We were in for a long trip. That recognition came to the entire group in my coach at about the same time, so the troops spread out into the seats, aisles, vestibules and rest room. A person needed to exercise extreme caution in the rest room because the “Facility” was a hole cut into the floor through which was visible an excellent view of the railroad ties. Using the facilities as the train lurched across the countryside was a combination of acrobatic skill, timing and compulsion.

As I settled down in my seat, I began to recall that a few short years before, I had taken a trip on a train with my high school senior class to Washington, D. C. It was a vacation trip filled with excitement, comfort, good living and happy times. The contrast between that trip and this trip filled every sense. The culture shock was starting to sink in. No person who hasn’t experienced living in the Third World Countries like Korea can realize the void separating it from the United States. The fact that Korea was at war made the contrast worse.

Reality tapped me on the shoulder in the form of a soldier dispensing a clip of 30-06 cartridges to selected men in the coach. The orders were passed down to post armed guards at each end of the coach to observe the roadbed right-of-way for guerrillas preparing to attack the train. It seems that the day before, (Wednesday, July 16, 1952), a train on this track carrying some General Officers and USO entertainers was fired upon. The open windows in the coaches now took on new meaning. Bullets passing through closed windows shatter the glass. The shards can increase the number of casualties. The occupants of the coaches also benefit from being able to fire their rifles out of the open windows at the attackers. So much for my theory that the open windows were for the comfort of the troops. As the miles passed beneath the wheels, I observed a fine, gritty deposit forming on everything. The fine ashes from the funnel of the steam locomotive have found a temporary resting place.

The only people that we saw from the train were civilians, some men, more women but mostly children who held out their hands asking for food etc. The train engine though puffing in grand fashion was moving the couches at a leisurely pace through the countryside. By now we had received cans of combat rations which we ate in the coaches. In typical fashion some men declined to eat a few of the less popular offerings, (like Hash or Lima Beans and Ham), and these along with some other selections were tossed from the train to the waiting hands of the Korean civilians.

The railroad having left Pusan headed north, winding its way past rice paddies and small villages. The buildings in the villages were small and mainly built of light timbers, a mud based stucco, and grasses (thatching) on the roofs. The patterns of the paddies with their flat surfaces bordered by earthen banks ended abruptly in a series of small hills. The rails marched north climbing into higher and more rugged country. More small trees were to be seen. At one point the engine was unable to pull the train up a grade so the engineer backed down to the bottom of the grade, got a flying start and tried again. Some of the troops offered to get off and run along side to improve the chances for success. Cheers and other forms of encouragement were also offered by the troops. The net effect must have been a positive contributing factor for the second attempt to ascend the grade was successful.

Episode 4. The 7th Inf. Div. Replacement Center at Chun’chon

All good things must come to an end and so in the fullness of time the train pulled into a rail yard at Chun’chon in the center of Korea about 60 miles south of the 38th Parallel. None of us knew at the time where we had detrained. My group moved by truck to an enclosure operated by the Replacement Depot for the 7th Infantry Div. After our first 30 seconds of exposure, the name was shortened to the “REPO-DEPO”. For the next several days this would be my home and the focus of my existence.

The REPO-DEPO was organized much like a prison camp. There was a barbed wire fence around the enclosure. No one was permitted outside the fence without a pass and no passes were given to the men passing through this facility whether going to a unit or exiting from one. The REPO-DEPO was self sufficient having transient Enlisted Men's Quarters, a mess hall, showers, toilets, a medical unit and a supply (quartermaster) function. This portal funneled manpower to and from the 7th Div. and to other units when appropriate and required. We transients (as designated by the Army) were required to pull guard duty for the security of the REPO-DEPO just as if we were a permanent part of the unit.

I made a random choice of one of the cots in a large tent which then became my new home for a few days. While the Army was processing the paper work which determined my next assignment, I was free to wander about the enclosure and look through the barbed wire fence at the native Koreans. They, in turn, could look at me and wander wherever they damn well choose.

A feature of the REPO-Depot was the location of the urinals near the wire fence. In Army slang they are called "Piss Tubes" and are totally exposed to anyone passing by. One day I was, as they say, "Addressing the Plumbing", when I saw out of the corner of my eye, an ancient Korean woman passing by. For a moment, we observed each other; then she gracefully bowed in my direction. My parents had raised me to be courteous to ladies so I changed hands to permit me to doff my cap with my right hand and nod my head toward her. The civilities exchanged, we each went about our business.

Episode 5. I am assigned to the 73rd Tank Battalion

I was pleased to find an old acquaintance at the camp. Vincent "Vince" Cook lived a few blocks from my home in Highland Park, MI. We met in the camp while I was checking the assignments being announced at a daily formation. Vince got his assignment before I did. He got a posting to an Army Post Office and would stay in the rear area. Vince had been a Postman before he was drafted into the Army and so was appropriately placed. At the next formation I got my posting—73rd Tank Battalion. I have not previously heard of the "73rd", but my ignorance is swiftly dispatched. It is a combat unit attached to the 7th U.S. Infantry Division. I am to leave tomorrow by truck for my new Company which is operating in the "Iron Triangle".

After the evening meal, I stroll about the compound reflecting on the 14 months I have spent in the Army. I have never considered myself lucky. In fact I have felt the opposite to be true. I don't gamble because when I do, I lose. Experience has proven that to me beyond any doubt. Yet when I was called to report to the Ft. Wayne Army Post in Detroit for my Pre-Induction Physical, I could not foresee the series of events which could lead to my present assignment to a combat unit.

Fourteen months ago as a civilian, my feet were placed on the path which led me to my current situation. The men processed at Ft. Wayne, as I was, to determine our fitness for military service were of my age and some were my schoolmates. I was surprised when a number of the men who appeared to be excellent candidates for the Army were excused for various reasons. I guess that being a high school athlete and highly visible on campus is physically stressful and debilitating in it's own way.

Still I told myself that being drafted did not mean a soldier will see combat. So I took heart in the odds which were in my favor.

All draftees must take Basic Infantry Training. Once that is completed, a selection is made of a service school for advanced training in a military specialty. I could have been a cook, a baker, or a postman but due to circumstances over which I have little control, I completed a Tank Commander Course. True, the odds in my favor were shrinking, but most tankers were being sent to Europe as part of NATO.

I was looking for a position as Cadre, (a teacher) of tank crewman assigned to training in the 'States when I was suddenly assigned to the "Far East". Definitely not good news. What are my odds of seeing combat now?

Yes, there is shooting in Korea but some Armor troops were being sent to the Philippines, Alaska or being held in Japan. My odds seemed to have taken a turn for the worse but one could still have hope. The bright spot was that since the war (I mean Police Action) had started in June of 1950, the news media emphasized over and over again that Korea was very poor "Tank Country". "Tanks were wasted in Korea, —better to save them for Europe should they be needed to fight the 'Russian Bear'" which itself was highly unlikely as every right thinking (Journalist) person knew that Communists had no aggressive aims but were instead the saviors of the poor and oppressed." Obviously these journalists knew more about tanks and Communism than I did.

Even as I rode the train North from Pusan I had thought about how the United States Army has nine persons behind the lines supporting every soldier actually in combat. Hmmm, those odds seemed to

be still pretty much in my favor. But now my bubble has burst.

The reality of my situation must be faced. With my track record, I cannot expect to survive in combat. I am 22 years old and I don't expect to be around to celebrate my 23th birthday. Tears come to my eyes as I am overwhelmed with the thought of death. Just as quickly, the tears pass as I accept what I feel is the only likely outcome.

Very well, If I am to die, I will make it my business to make the enemy pay in blood for my life. I have hardened my heart. This is a deadly game. When I confront the enemy, he will die or I will. The proof of my determination will be the number of enemy casualties that I will inflict before they put me down.

For some reason I feel more at ease. When I retire for the night, sleep comes quickly.

Episode 6 Modern War with Modern Weapons and Ancient Tactics

Quote from " Confrontation in Asia: The Korean War",
Department of History, United States Military Academy,
West Point, New York

STALEMATE 1952

For the rest of the war, the two opposing Armies dug themselves into the hills along Line Kansas-Wyoming. The Communists built a defensive zone fourteen miles deep—deeper than the German lines in World War I—that had been engineered to withstand nuclear attack. Tunnels, fighting trenches, and bunkers provided an integrated defense, backed up by a massive commitment of artillery and mortars. In fact, so deeply was their artillery dug into the hills that it proved unable to maneuver in support of offensive operations thereafter. In an effort to protect themselves from the dreadful effects of (General) Van Fleet's offensive power, the Chinese and North Koreans chose to immobilize their armies.

Similarly, but for different reasons, the UN Command immobilized itself. —-Van Fleet had halted on the best defensive terrain to await the results of the truce talks. Because he was limited in manpower, Van Fleet had to stretch his troops thinly across the 155 mile front. He thus lacked the favorable ratio of men to front that would permit him to crack the formidable defensive zone across the valley.

Then, for the next twenty months, — , the armies skirmished with each other between their two main lines of resistance.

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

The Battalion was placed in support of the 9th ROK Div on 22 June (1952) for a Tank-Infantry raid up the Chorwon Valley, employing a Regimental Combat Team. Tank-Air coordination was an outstanding feature of this extremely destructive raid.

The unit returned intact for the approaching Independence Day activities. LTC Charles G. Turner returned to the Zone of Interior (USA) on 3 July, 1952 and LTC John H. Gibson assumed command of the Battalion.

Episode 7. I Arrive at the 1st Platoon of Baker Company

I think that it is July 21st and I've been bouncing around in the bed of an Army truck since after breakfast. My rump is getting sore and tenderized by the constant pummeling it is receiving from the truck's hardwood bench seats. In my opinion the driver is traveling much to fast on the dirt and gravel roads, the wheels are constantly shuddering as we slip and slide on the two lane roadbed. The fact that this road is carved into the side of a mountain distresses me even more. None of the other passengers in the truck is voicing a concern so I hold my tongue and concentrate on keeping my equipment together near me. Up ahead I see pieces of colored fabric netting stretched over the road and draped along the unprotected edge of the road. At the side of the road a signboard proclaims, "NO STOPPING, FROM THIS POINT YOU ARE UNDER ENEMY OBSERVATION" On second thought, perhaps the driver is doing the right thing! The rain was falling lightly as the "deuce and a half" (truck) turned off of the MSR (Main Supply Route) onto a muddy lane. Off to the left, a large olive drab tent became visible under some trees. As the truck lurched to a stop, a dozen or so soldiers gathered around it. I and several other replacements had finally arrived at our new home, B Co. of the 73rd Tank Battalion.

The welcoming committee was in a boisterous mood, but they were smiling at the new arrivals. Standing in the bed of the truck, I tried to shake the stiffness out of my limbs and gather up my duffel bag and M-1 rifle. A repeating theme of greeting was resounding in my ears from the group around the truck,

“Fresh meat for Joe Chink”. Again and again it was repeated like a chant at a sport’s event.

My main concern was to get under cover as the long ride here in an open, jolting, noisy truck on a rainy day was not what I had in mind to start my new assignment. A non-com took charge and moved us into the tent containing cots to accommodate 24 troops. I looked around to find a dry spot on which to place my bag and rifle, for although the cots stood on wooden platforms, a good sized stream of muddy water was flowing down the length of the tent. It was obvious that the existing 24 occupants were not prepared to accommodate the other replacement (can’t remember his name) and me so I resigned myself to sleeping on the floor. Before long, the situation takes a turn for the better. The Army does, as they say, “work in mysterious ways” as a couple of cots have appeared. The cots are assembled and with much jockeying about, find places on the wooden platforms. Upon one, I lay my weary bones to rest.

The rain was falling harder now, drumming on the roof of the tent. Two small electric lights, one at each end of the tent, provided illumination so I had the means and an opportunity to observe my new fellows-at-arms. That they were raucous I had already seen. Their clothing was in disrepair and showed an individualistic flare. But they were clean and that was a standard which I currently could not meet. It dawned on me that they had all been drinking and were now showing the effects. Some, running out of energy, were taking to their beds but a few die-hards were determined to continue the “party”. One man was fondling his 45 cal Automatic (Colt Pistol) and saying with a giggle, “I’m gonna shoot somebody tonight”. As I lay under a blanket on the cot I began to wonder about the sanity of the B Co. tankers. Were they all mental cases? Is it safe to sleep in this tent tonight? I glanced across the aisle at the other “new” man. He was seating bolt upright on his cot, his eyes riveted on the giggling pistol handler. The lights went out. In the dark, fatigue took over and so mentally shrugging my shoulders, I slipped into sleep.

In the morning I awoke in a tent filled with bustling, normal soldiers. The ranking non-com in the tent, a black soldier named Cletus Fryer took the new people in hand and straightened out the confusion caused by our arrival. In short, he started our “In-processing” to B Co. What we had observed the previous night was he said, a rare event, some liquor and/or beer had found it’s way to the 1st Platoon with some startling consequences. The resulting display is best forgotten. Members of the 1st Platoon who are being rotated home can’t leave until their replacements arrive which accounts for the joy demonstrated by some as our truck arrived. The down side is that experienced tankers are being exchanged for persons of dubious value. Reading between the lines, the message is clear, I must prove my worth to the 1st Platoon.

The Platoon members gather back at the tent before the dinner hour and engage in winding down from the activities of the day. From the back of the tent I can hear a voice making a number of announcements to the members at large. For example I hear: Boatwright got a letter today, Boatwright worked his tail off today, etc. I can not help but wonder who and where is this Boatwright fellow? Then a slightly built soldier with blonde hair comes down the aisle saying that “Boatwright is going to the Mess Hall now”. Another fellow calls out, “Wait up Boatwright and I’ll go with you”. Now I get it; Boatwright is habitually referring to himself in the third person. At least I now know one additional member in the 1st Platoon.

Episode 8. The Korean Houseboy of the 1st Platoon

There is a short Korean male wandering around the tent. His name is Vidoke (Vi-Doe-key) which I am told is a Korean word for a venereal disease. I can’t estimate his age, he could be 16 to 30 years old. He has been hired by the 1st Plt. to take care of cleaning the tent floor, shining shoes, doing the laundry and whatever else needs to be done. He is paid every month by the 1st Platoon by having a set amount withheld from each members wages. Vidoke speaks very little English and his comprehension decreases when he receives an assignment that he doesn’t like. It doesn’t take long for me to observe that he has his favorite GI’s for whom he does a great deal at the expense of the remaining platoon members. I am a new replacement so he barely recognizes my presence.

The Headquarters Staff of B Co. does the actual hiring and administration of the Korean workers of which Vidoke is only one of many. There are Koreans working in the Mess Hall, handling trash and garbage and of course working as houseboys (each Platoon has one and so does the Officers Quarters). The Korean workers all live and eat in the Company area. I see them congregating in groups on their off hours. In one service area they are forbidden to function. They are not permitted to handle or service the tools of the trade in B Co.(rifles, pistols, tanks, etc.)

As we replacements work our way through the administrative and supply functions, all is proceeding normally until we are told that pistols, the assigned tankers weapon, are in short supply. We must carry our rifles until enough people are rotated out of the Company to exchange rifles for pistols. This means that the “New Men” carrying rifles are easily identified in the Company because every man must carry a per-

sonal weapon at all times. I am very comfortable with the M-1 rifle so on that count I am not displeased. At Camp Drake, Japan, where I was issued the rifle, I personally “zeroed in” the sights. I am confident that if called upon to hit a target at 300 yds I could do it with the rifle, but would have trouble hitting a target at 50 yds with the pistol. At stake here, however, was a principle; the new arrivals were at the bottom of the pecking order and the identification provided by carrying a rifle only acerbated or concentrated the verbal abuse that comes with being a new replacement.

Episode 9. Guard Duty in the Tank Park

Being a replacement is the equivalent of being the lowest man on a totem pole. As I have never been partial to being held in low esteem by anyone, I began to look for means to improve my condition. An opportunity presented itself soon after as I was assigned to Guard Duty in the 1st Plt Tank Park. The hour tour of duty was after midnight. The Tank Park was located in a draw, (a depression in the landscape) filled with trees, bushes and tanks. That evening, I was treated to a steady diet of stories by my fellow tankers of DREADFUL things that could happen to a person on Guard Duty in a Combat Zone. I stoically listened to them all. Underlying the tales was the self evident truth that Real Tankers on Guard Duty would carry sidearms not rifles.

When I relieved the guard on the post to which I was assigned. I could see how, in the dark, your eyes and ears could play tricks on you producing imaginary threats. Finally the hour was over and I anticipated being relieved by the next guard. Instead of walking the normal post, I stood concealed behind some shrubbery. Soon I heard the soft steps of the guard approaching. He stopped and looked down the path unable to see me in the shadows. He whispered my name softly, “Rosinski”. No answer. Then more loudly with a certain impatience. My response was to move the safety of the M-1 to the fire position. The resultant metallic click was jarring to the ear in the night air. Now I heard my name called several times in even louder and anxious tones. Then I stepped out of concealment with the rifle at port arms and after making a show of identifying my Relief, I snapped the rifle safety to the “Safe” position. I didn’t relate the incident to any other platoon members but word has a way of making the rounds. Thereafter deprecating comments about Rosinski carrying a rifle were in short supply.

Episode CA. Boatwright Takes A Wild Ride

The lights in our tent remain on until 2200 hours which gives us some time for letter writing , reading, conversation, etc. The atmosphere is pretty relaxed when Boatwright explodes into the tent cussing a blue streak. Not only is he highly agitated but he is disheveled, dirty, abraided and leaking blood in several places. A crowd quickly gathers, and while we wait for a medic to arrive, Boatwright recounts an unbelievable story.

It seems that Boatwright and the platoon jeep driver (hereafter referred to as JD) have been sharing a few drinks. As the available supply of alcohol dwindles and their wisdom increases, they agree that more booze can be obtained from a nearby artillery unit. The problem is in getting there at night. A plan is concocted which involves “Borrowing” a jeep for the trip.

The pair push a jeep away from it’s parking spot and start it at a more remote location. They are soon on the road and passing a convoy of trucks. Boatwright notices that the jeep is edging toward the center of the gravel road getting closer to the line of trucks. JD has had plenty to drink and is rigidly holding the wheel and staring fixedly ahead. Boatwright tries to get him to move to the right and failing that grabs the steering wheel and tries to move the jeep to the right. It can’t be done and the trucks are getting closer.

Boatwright makes a quick decision. He thinks that he has done all that he can and it is time to get out so he jumps from the Jeep. When he hits the gravel he bounces into the ditch and slides on all surfaces of his body including his head. This is what caused his current condition. Boatwright says that as soon as he jumped, JD pulled the jeep off the right side off the road and stopped. That’s when the argument started as to who had done what to whom.

The ride back to the Company area was a sobering experience for the pair and by the time that the medic was finished Boatwright was totally sober. The medic told Boatwright that he would be filing a report about his injuries.

Now the focus shifted to finding a reasonable excuse for Boatwright’s cuts and abrasions. Finally he decides to report the while walking in the dark he fell into an open trench.

The Company Commander apparently doesn’t buy the story and Boatwright is given Company Punishment in the form of digging slit trenches for several evenings after the regular work day.

Episode 10. Morale is High in the 1st Platoon, “We are # 1”

On another evening, the Platoon members have returned to the tent prior to having dinner. I have a chance to see and hear the other crewmen in the 1st Plt. I get to meet everyone and shortly detect a re-occurring theme woven into the introductions. It is that I am very fortunate to be assigned to the 73rd Tk Bn. which is equipped with M-46 tanks rather than a Inf. Div. Tk Co. which uses the older M-4 tanks. I can see the wisdom in that statement.

For the past 6 months I have trained in M-4 tanks with the 1st. Armored Div. in Texas. It is a good, reliable tank but no longer being issued to Armored units. When I attended the Tank Commander’s Course at Fort Knox, Ky., I was shown the various types of tanks in the Army’s inventory. My exposure led me to conclude that the M-46 was a much superior weapons system when compared to the M-4.

The theme continues. Of all the M-46 battalions in Korea, the 73rd leads in combat performance, B Co. ranks at the top of the Battalion in excellence and the 1st Plt. of B Company is unmatched. This is a leap of faith for me to believe as I have not seen any evidence as yet to substantiate the claim. I nod in agreement but quietly and privately reserve my judgment on this point. I think that it is essential that a combat unit have pride and confidence in their abilities but elitism can, at times, go too far. In a “Put-up or Shut-up” situation, when unit performance fails to meet expectations, the effect on morale can be devastating. I am somewhat buoyed in hearing that the 1st Plt. has not suffered any casualties in recent combat operations. I decide that the best course for me is to learn my job and keep a low profile.

The battalion command level also took an interest in the indoctrination of the replacement tankers. In addition to training on the M-46 tank at the Company level, all Battalion replacements had to take a short familiarization course run by the Battalion. It has been a year since my introduction to the M-46 tank while taking the Tank Commander’s course at Ft. Knox, Ky. I welcomed the refresher. For some, this was the first exposure to the M-46. The class was composed of all ranks. We even had a 2nd Lt. in the group. Toward the end of the day, each of us had to evacuate the tank in a simulated “Under Fire” situation. This is accomplished by crawling out of one of two exit hatches in the belly of the tank which is incidentally less than 20 inches off of the ground. With some ill concealed smirking the cadre positioned the tank over a muddy spot on the road through which we had to crawl in making our escape from the tank. Not knowing any of the cadre, I have always suspected that the extra flair in the training was due to the presence of the 2nd Lt. in the group. —I could be mistaken.

Episode 11. First Combat Experience

My first assignment in the Platoon was as a loader under a Tank Commander named Vicarro. I don’t know his first name -everyone calls him “Vic”. Vic is a good looking Italian/American boy from New Jersey. He seems to be competent and will be leaving the company on rotation soon. I go on my first combat mission on Vic’s tank.

My assignment is to load the 90mm cannon with the type shell ordered by the Tank Commander and to be quick about it. I must get the shells out of the ready rack or the stowage bins in the floor of the fighting compartment (the turret). I also throw the empty shell cases out of the turret when I am not busy. In addition I load the boxed 30 cal. ammunition for the co-axial machine gun in the turret. I have done this job before but it was during training exercises in the ‘States. I am painfully aware that this time it is “for real” and a mistake could be fatal.

As Vicarro’s tank leaves the Company area on a dirt trail we see the MSR (Main Supply Route) in front of us. Because I am the loader I get to sit on the turret with my feet inside the loader’s hatch. I have a good 360 degree view of this small part of the world. We are one of a column of five tanks heading for the MLR (Main Line of Resistance). Our Platoon objective is on the other side of the MLR.

Just beyond the MSR and parallel to it is a meandering stream which in this hot weather looks inviting. I could imagine what it would be like to wade into it. At the junction of the trail with the MSR, the tank turns right and I look straight up the valley. Dominating the view is a hill mass which is the ground occupied by the enemy. Any wading in that stream would be observed by Communist artillery observers. I mentally decide to forgo taking a dip in the stream

We have only gone a short distance down the MSR when I see a M-4 tank on a track running off the right side of the road. The M-4’s are assigned to the Tank Companies of the Infantry Rifle Regiments and this one is the first that I have seen. As we pass, I see that the Tank Commander is visible in the turret looking forward down the road. Instead of the usual tanker’s helmet and steel “pot”, he has his forehead covered with a white bandage. Vicarro sees my interest in the M-4 Tank Commander and explains that the Tank Commander was wounded when an enemy mortar round hit the front slope plate of the M-4 hull. The

resulting explosion sent a piece of shrapnel to collide with the TC's head. Fortunately, the shrapnel only grazed his head. Never the less, I think it will be a while before he can don a helmet again.

The ride through our lines is uneventful. I am down in the turret mentally rehearsing the actions I must take when we begin our fire mission. I don't know where we are or what we are supposed to accomplish. Vic and the gunner have the necessary targeting information and the driver is following Vic's directions to get the tank into a shooting position. When Vic orders the driver to stop and I see the gunner unlock the turret traversing lock, I know we have arrived. Vic is methodically working his way through the preparations to fire. I am getting apprehensive. Surely the enemy has seen us and must be preparing to counter our fire with fires of his own. I open the loader's hatch over my head and peeked out. What I see only adds to my confusion.

The tank is on a slight rise which falls to our front before rising again. Beyond that are hills which are quite a distance away (2000 yds or more). Behind us, I see the extensive hill mass on which rests our MLR. The day is hot with little cloud cover so the slight breeze is welcome after the riding in the turret with my hatch closed. But where is the enemy? I have neither binoculars nor telescope so the terrain before me looks quite empty.

Vic has another opinion for he is calling "Load HE"(High Explosive Shell). Changing roles from spectator to loader; I drop down into the turret, open the 90mm cannon breach, take a HE round out of the ready rack, insert the nose of the shell into the breech and ram it home. As the breech block closes with a metallic thud, I step back out of the path of the cannon's recoil and yell "UP". The cannon is ready to fire and Vic and the gunner know it. I turn and pick up another shell to have ready to reload after this shot.

Minutes pass before the gunner is ready to fire. Finally the gunner yells, "ON THE WAY" followed by the heavy bark of the cannon and a shudder which shakes the tank. The first round has been fired! Several more rounds are fired in what seems to be slow motion. Apparently we are not going to quickly fire this mission and more quickly retire to our own lines. With time on my hands, even after tossing out the expended 90mm shell casings, my head re-emerges through the loaders hatch. It is, I think, time to smell the daisies.

I am rudely interrupted by a "CRUMP" and as I look for the source, I see a puff of dust off to the left and down slope of us. Vic, whose upper body protrudes from the tank commanders hatch, leans toward me and gestures to the dissipating dust yells, "Mortar round". Another dust cloud appears accompanied by the mandatory "Crump". This round is closer to the tank. Although Vic also see the dust, he is not taking any action. Another series of dust generating explosions is marching toward the tank from our right-front. This is making me nervous so I begin to close my hatch cover to put a couple of inches of cast armor between me and the enemy. Vic sees my actions and remarks that it's not necessary 'cause small mortars can't penetrate a tank.

I'm not convinced that an enemy gunner won't accidentally drop a round through my hatch. I also note that Vic is wearing a steel helmet and bullet proof vest which I am not. I close the hatch.

The action continues as before. We fire the cannon, the enemy sends mortar shells our way. Vic is now showing a lower profile in the tank commanders hatch but the hatch is still open. I mentally speculate on the results of having a mortar round drop squarely on his helmet and detonate. I conclude that regardless of how thick his head is, I will still be in trouble.

I can't see anything now. All I can do is wait—and load the cannon. Abruptly the situation changes. Although we still have shells remaining, we are moving out. We are headed back to our lines (to my great relief), untouched by enemy fire.

The ride back to the Company Area is more restful than the ride up to the MLR. One thing has not changed. I still don't know where the Hell I am or where I have been.

Once back at the Company we head directly to the Ammunition Dump to replenish our tank with cannon shells. During today's action I was easily tossing around the 90mm rounds with minimal effort (or so I thought). Now as I helped drag cases each containing two rounds of 90mm cannon shells to the tanks, I could really feel the 100 pounds that each box weighs pulling on my muscles. Most crewmen were pulling two boxes at a time. The rounds that I had rammed into the breech weighed 43 pounds with 23 pounds of that being the projectile which was hurled into the enemy positions.

The next stop was the POL dump (Petroleum- Oil-Lubricants or commonly, the Gasoline supply) where we filled the gas tanks. After that the engine and track assembly were looked at and the tank returned to the platoon motor pool (Tank Park) area. The tank is now ready for immediate action. This member of the crew isn't. I am happy to return to my tent and close out my first combat mission.

For the next day or so, I relive the action in my mind. I still don't know where we were, what we shot

at or what we hit (if anything). Vic seems pleased with the results of the mission and our platoon leader, Lt. Verble Parish has offered no criticism.

The work to maintain a tank seems endless. Following the raid, the crew must clean the cannon with brass bore brushes, clean the three tank mounted Machine Guns (MG's), tighten the tracks, grease the road wheels, service the engine, etc. ,etc. The work is dirty, greasy and some of it done in the dirt under the tank. It is really nasty when the ground is wet and muddy.

Episode 12. Assignment as Gunner on Tank 1-1

The men who have been scheduled for rotation are now gone and the B Company tank crewmen are shuffled and reassigned. I am now the gunner on Tank 1-1 which is the Platoon Leaders tank of the 1st Platoon. I see more of Lt. Parish now. He is a reserved, unflappable, pipe smoking Texan. He knows his business and projects himself as an able combat leader. I like him and he likes me well enough to overlook a few of my minor idiosyncrasies.

Episode 13. Adjusting to Life in a Tent

Because of the men who have rotated out of the Company, the cots are shuffled around in the tent to take advantage of the "extra" space. I claim a spot nearest the tent flap so that my cot is at the corner formed by two walls. The hot, and sometimes muggy climate is made more bearable when the lower portion of the tent walls are raised during the day. Any wafting breeze, however, must pass over the sandbagged walls which surround the tent save for a narrow opening at the only door. Under the cot is a wooden platform upon which I place my meager belongings (personal and Government Issue). I begin to feel that this really is as close to a home as I am going to get while I am in Korea.

Episode CA. The Dental Experience

On this summer morning, I am not happy. A filling has fallen out of one of my teeth. I dread going to the dentist but I know from past experience that putting off the visit only makes it worse. With dragging feet I report my problem to the Sergeant in the Company Orderly Room.

After the Sergeant made a call on the field phone and a short wait, I am directed to walk out to the MSR and hitch a ride by whatever means possible to a Dental Station. My request for more complete instructions are cut off by the Sergeants' impatient response that the Dentists office is on the MSR and everyone knows (besides me) where it is. That terminates the discussion.

As I head for the MSR I think that at least I have permission to leave the Company Area and with the kind of directions that I have been given, I won't be held responsible if I get lost and can't find the Dentist's Office. With that pleasant thought in mind I stroll to the MSR and hold up my thumb.

The next truck heading toward the rear area, sees my extended thumb and brakes to a stop. I cheerfully tell him that I am going to see the dentist. He nods his head affirmatively, says that he is going right past it and invites me to climb aboard. Now I am less cheerful.

The ride is relaxing and I am starting to enjoy it when the driver brakes to a stop and tells me that this is where I get off. On the right side of the road are three large tents and nothing else. The tents flaps are up so that I can see completely through the tents to the other side but I don't see any live bodies. My transportation is rapidly disappearing down the road so my only course of action is to enter the tent where it at least should be cooler.

A shape materializes from the back of the tent in the form of a Colonel. I identify myself and tell him that I have lost a filling. He directs me to a chair and is soon busying himself in setting out his tools. I look around in growing apprehension. I don't see any power equipment in this tent save for the electric lights. Now I am looking at the roof of the tent while the colonel is probing around in my mouth. In a matter of fact tone he says, "Your teeth are in terrible shape".

He continues his commentary to the effect that numerous fillings need repair and that in his professional opinion he will have to grind out the old fillings and trench across my molars before he fills them. I am doomed!

Since childhood I have lived in fear of dentists and for good reason. A trip to the dentist has always been accompanied by pain and suffering. Besides, I had a dental examination before I left Ft. Hood, Texas and I got a clean bill of health. That was only four months ago. I dread the dental procedure but I can't see any other way out. I nod my head yes and I am trying to smile confidently.

I close my eyes. I may have to hear and feel what will happen but I don't want to look at it. I can recognize the sound of the drill. It is the old fashioned, low speed, dental burr. I suspect that he is providing

the means of power himself because I don't hear the sound of an electric motor.

Something is wrong - I can't feel any pain. Beside the vibration of my skull everything is going well for me. Before I know it the Colonel tells me that he has finished the fillings. He says that he has noticed some chipping of my teeth and would like to know if I wanted him to do some cosmetic work to even up my teeth? I am so confident now that I say yes immediately.

I walk out of the tent feeling like a new man. That Colonel was not only a great dentist but a miracle worker. My teeth and smile never looked or felt better. A few light hearted steps and I'm on the MSR holding up my thumb for a ride back to B Company and the 1st Platoon.

Episode 14. Reaching an understanding with Vidoke

My lack of a working relationship with Vidoke concerns me. I have been watching him and his interactions with other Platoon members. Vidoke has a pronounced but, I think, odd sense of humor. He laughs readily and takes part in the horseplay that GI's usually engage in. To this he adds his own tricks. He (and the other Koreans) loves to throw stones at people. This is often done when the victim is not looking which is not surprising when I observe the throwing form shown by the Koreans. The throw lacks the wind-up and follow-through that an American boy must master in playing baseball. The Koreans do not throw using the entire body the way that most American boys do. Consequently, the stones fly with little velocity or accuracy.

Another trick Vidoke uses is to pass close to a person and then quickly deliver a sideways kick to the victims posterior. When the kick is successful, he laughs with delight while scampering out of the reach of his victim. When pursued, Vidoke is fast enough and agile enough to escape retribution. The victim soon tires of the chase in part because it is beneath his dignity to be so observed by his peers.

One day as I am returning from the mess tent, I encounter Vidoke approaching from the opposite direction. He is adjusting his course to pass very near me and in an instant I conclude that I am the target for his entertainment. As we pass, without a change of expression, I nod in greeting and kick my foot out with the same maneuver that he has used on others. Vidoke gives a yelp of pain and turning my head toward him, I see that he is standing on one leg in preparation to executing a kick of his own. I have beaten him to the punch using his own technique. We stare at each other momentarily. Vidoke seems inclined to let the matter drop at this point and as he turns to walk away, I do the same.

My instinct tells me that I should not drop my guard so after striding forward about 20 ft, I stop, stoop, pick a rock lying at my feet and as I pivot counterclockwise, cock my arm for a throw. I'm now looking at Vidoke's back as he bends over to pick up a rock of his own. He then turns toward me to find me looking at him. A sheepish look crosses his face and when he sees that I am not going to throw unless he does, he drops the rock and goes about his business.

From that time on my relationship with Vidoke improves. Some of the Platoon Members have taken to calling me "Ski" or "Ski-Boy", a common reference to my obviously Polish (ethnic) surname. Vidoke corrupts Ski-Boy into the Korean "Skivvy-Honcho" which is loosely interpreted as "An outstanding sexual performer with the ladies". The humor is enhanced with the knowledge that there are NO women of any kind permitted in our operational area and Baker Company tankers are confined to the our immediate area. I am satisfied with my arrangement or accommodation with Vidoke so I turn my attention to other matters.

When I am issued my assigned personal weapon, a M-1911 Colt pistol I am pleased; but now I miss that M-1 Garand Rifle. If I must bail out of a disabled tank onto the type of open country over which our tanks have been shooting, I want something with a longer reach than my Colt pistol or the M-2 Carbine or the M-3 Sub-machine-gun assigned to our tank. A little looking and talking with various soldiers reveal a M-1 rifle that is assigned to no one and it's serial number is not on the Company Property List. I quickly adopt the rifle and give it a good home. It, along with a bandoleer with six, 8 round clips fits nicely on top of the radio in the tank turret. I can grab it handily as I take my assigned escape route out of the tank commander hatch.

The pistol is worn on the hip or in a shoulder holster by tank crewmen. I have tried both and they are awkward. When a departing trooper who is leaving the Company offers to sell me a holster and belt that rides low on the right thigh, I jump at the chance. The holster can be tied with a thong to the right leg and everything stays in place even when climbing on or into the tank. I discover that with a magazine in the pistol, a quick downward thrust followed by drawing the pistol will result in loading and cocking the pistol making it instantly ready to fire. I like that! My hands are on the small size and the Colt's grips do not fit me. I send off a letter to my Father and request he send me a set of target grips for the pistol. In due course they arrive. They quickly replace the standard grips. My pistol problems are solved.

Episode 15. Using Knowledge and Skills to Pay My Way

An unsolved concern that I have relates to how I am accepted in the Platoon. The men which we replaced were experienced and known commodities. We replacements are not. My skills and talents are unknown to my platoon as, likewise, are my deficiencies. I need to produce something that is viewed as an asset by my peers. I look about for ideas. As the gunner on the platoon leaders tank, I am in charge when he is away—and platoon leaders are away a great deal of the time. I need to learn and know a great deal about this M-46 tank and the time to do so is short. I am perfectly willing to have the driver, assume responsibility for the entire drive system. It is easy to see that he knows what to do, and what he does, he does well. I therefore, concentrate on the turret. This department is likewise in good shape for the kind of firing that I have seen so far; direct fire during daylight hours at long distances.

When I check the night firing devices, I find that none of them work. These primarily are used for laying indirect fire at night. A light goes on in my head. I was trained in this kind of indirect firing at Ft. Knox. If all the tanks in the platoon are in the same shape, our tanks could not lay indirect, accurate fire at night or in conditions of poor visibility when called upon to do so. I clean, repair and replace the batteries of each night firing device on tank 1-1 and test them all. I then show the results to Lt. Parish and outline the procedure for firing the tanks as a unit at night. His response is very positive. He directs me to survey the other tanks and make sure that the rest of the platoon's indirect firing devices are also working. That yields the first step in establishing a reputation in the platoon as a knowledgeable gunner (and therefore a valuable assert to the platoon). My performance in combat as a gunner is yet to be established.

Part of my job is to make and keep the tank ready for immediate combat operations. Each of the tank commanders of the other four tanks in the 1st Platoon have the same responsibilities. Lt. Parish oversees these efforts as well as providing the link between the platoon and Company Commander.

In order to be able to tell Lt. Parish that "We are combat ready", I survey the tank and its contents. One tank with 90mm cannon, one 50 cal Machine Gun (mg), two 30 cal. mg's, one 45 cal Sub-mg and one 30 cal. M-2 Carbine (with selector for turning it into a Sub-mg.). I mentally add to that my M-1 rifle. Stowed aboard are also about fifty 90mm rounds of assorted types, two crates of hand grenades, one case of 30 cal. carbine ammo, one case of 45 cal. ammo, twenty plus boxes of 30 cal mg ammo and ten cases of 50 cal. mg ammo. The tank is a rolling arsenal.

We can remain in action for several days with minimal support for we also have two cases of combat rations and two 5 gal cans of water.

The crew with their pistols and personal effects, (in a small bag) is all that is needed to conduct combat operations. The Battalion Staff gives the Company 30 minutes to be on the road after receiving an Alert. The Platoon standard is much higher. I find that we can be on the road in ten minutes.

Episode 16. My first Mission as a Gunner

When the order to move comes, the driver and I immediately run to the tank. The driver starts the tank engine and makes his checks to certify all is normal. I turn on the radio, check the turret and then monitor the radio for transmissions from higher headquarters. The bow gunner and loader come aboard carrying personal effects, etc. The tanks are dispersed in the motor pool so we need to move to the road leading to the Main Supply Route (MSR).

For safety, because the driver has limited vision, a dismounted tanker must "lead" the tank to the assembly area. this would limit speed to 2 - 3 mph. I (as well as others) reduce time by running in front of the tank until, when clear of obstructions, I turn and run toward the tank. By leaping up and planting my foot on the front slope plate, I vault atop the hull and then get into the turret.

In short order the platoon is on the road and headed for the front. Tanks have the highest priority for road traffic. All other vehicles have received orders to get off the road when they see us coming. It usually works this way, but on one occasion I see an approaching truck that is not pulling off of the road. The jeep leading our platoon makes motions toward the truck to move off the road with no results. I also gesture toward the truck to get him to move over. As the truck passes me, I see the truck is not moving over. The tank behind me moves left toward the center of the road narrowly missing the truck and then I see the third tank move over even further left. The result is that the tank fender hits the left rear view mirror on the truck following which the truck leaves the road and bounces across an open field. I turn my attention toward the road ahead, the truckers' problems are dismissed from my mind. Someone up ahead is in enough trouble to call for tanks.

One of my first missions on Tank 1-1 takes us beyond the MLR to a flat plain facing a ridge

crowned with numerous peaks. As we make ready to pass the MLR, I release the cannon barrel from the traveling lock and rotate the turret to the front and lock the turret. Tank 1-1 is in the lead as we move as fast as possible toward the position from which we will shoot. After we pass the mine fields flanking the road we can breath a little easier for it is not good to be bunched up and come under artillery attack. I am unable to see much sitting in the gunners seat. I'm holding on for dear life as the tank lurches and bounces over the rough terrain. When the tank halts, I release the turret lock and make sure that I can elevate and traverse the cannon.

Episode 17. Shooting and Inflicting Casualties on the Enemy

The ridge rises before me. I sketch a Range Card as reference and the Lt. gives a letter name to the ones that we will shoot at. The rest of the platoon will fire at the targets I mark with shell fire. Target "A" is the leftmost peak and we open fire on it. The platoon is shooting slowly and deliberately. More of the peaks are engaged; B, C, D and E. The range is great, 2,000 to 3,000 yds, and I can't see anything up there except the shell bursts.

The enemy artillery is now paying some attention to us and as the bursts creep in toward us, the Lt. orders the tanks to move around (displace) to new positions. The technique is quite effective as each time we do so, the artillery must start over. My own fire on target "D" continues as before.

Abruptly, the situation changes as the volume of incoming shells rises. The bursts are closer than before and when we displace the tanks, the incoming shells quickly adjust on to our new positions. My mental tranquillity is vanishing. Lt. Parish is on the radio talking to the Forward Observation Post (OP) on the MLR. From their higher position and using powerful telescopes, they have detected activity on Target "A". The Lt. gives me an order to fire on "A".

The adrenaline is pouring through my body. As I give my attention to traversing the turret to re-engage "A", I seem to be as two persons; one a detached observer watching a hand turn into a blur as the turret traversing handle spins, the other person the gunner lining up the sights on the new target. I look through the sights as target "A" comes into view, deftly put the crosshair on the target, shout "On the Way" and fire the cannon. The tank and gun recoil from the blast, the empty shell casing is bouncing around on the floor of the tank and I see the round burst on target.

My eye and hands are concentrating on holding the sight on the target while my ears strain to hear the loader yell "Up". Another shot or two and Lt. Parish is relaying a message from the OP. The shells have burst among the enemy troops on Target "A" destroying them and a gun (artillery of some kind). The Platoon is still displacing to escape the incoming shells when it becomes apparent that the shells are not tracking us as before. The number of shells arriving decreases and so does my heart rate. I conclude that the enemy's artillery spotter must have been with that group on Target "A".

Soon we are ordered back to our lines, our mission completed. I start becoming more anxious. None of the tanks has been hit so far and I would like to keep it that way. I am impatiently waiting to hear that the other four tanks are moving back because one of Lt. Parish's idiosyncrasies is that his tank must be the first onto the battle field, and the last one off.

Now I hear Parish talking on the intercom to the driver. The driver has orders to move back. I align the cannon to point forward and engage the turret ring lock. I am ready to go and so apparently is the driver for the tank is moving as fast as the engine governor will permit. The throaty roar of the engine and the scream of the engine cooling fans are music to my ears.

The ride back to the MLR is a repeat of the ride in with the exception that we are the last tank out. I still can't see what is taking place outside the turret. When I can finally stick my torso out of a hatch, a cool breeze washes over me. I become aware that I am uncomfortably hot. The inside of a turret during the summer can get very hot, but the emotion and mental concentration of combat puts that feeling "On the back burner".

Returning with the tanks back to the Company is anticlimactic but does give me a chance to wind down from the emotional stress of the day. The Lt. has gone off to report to the Company Commander (CO) on today's events and presumably fill out the required paperwork. The crews, under the direction of Tank Commanders, re-fuel and re-arm the tanks before parking them in the Tank Park. I have accumulated one day of combat with this mission. If I get five more such days this month, the government will reward me with an extra $35 of Combat pay.

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

Action in the month of July included another surprise raid up the Chorwon Valley. Tanks covered

the infantry withdrawal and returned after nine hours of destruction on enemy fortifications.

Episode 18. Raiding Up the Chorwon Valley

We are on another raid beyond the MLR. The 1st Plt. is not leading the convoy. The driver is steering the tank down a dirt road through a long valley. There are tanks and infantry ahead of us. The roar of the tanks column is deafening making communication in the turret possible only by yelling or shouting at each other. The Lt. is manning the radio ready to execute any orders that are received from the Company Commander. It is hot in the turret so the Lt. lets me stand half out of the turret when he thinks it is safe to do so.

I am surprised when we pull off the road in a city with stone or concrete buildings. A good deal of vacant land surrounds shattered ruins. We pull up in front of a white structure with broad cement steps leading to the 2nd floor. I can see that some tracked vehicle has driven up the stairs leaving two parallel scars on the steps. There is no way to tell if the tracks were made by friend or foe. I don't know where we are but someone says this is Chorwon.

The tanks of the 1st Plt are placed in a defensive position as we will be staying here tonight. I don't see any infantry in the area so we will be on our own. The Lt. turns over command of the Platoon to the Plt. Sgt. and goes off to the Company CP. I will be on radio guard tonight and I am getting drowsy. I think I have been awake 16 hours and the night is just starting. I get some Benydril tablets from a Medic. They are supposed to keep a person alert. I find that they do work and I stay awake all night. The next morning the drug wears off and I get a terrible headache. I resolve that is the last time I will use that drug.

The purpose of the 73rd is to engage enemy tanks when they attack friendly units. Our M-46 has a larger cannon and thicker armor than the M-4's used by the 7th Inf Div tank companies. On this occasion our company is acting as a reserve force so we don't do any shooting. Soon we are back in the company area where we started from. I feel like I have been a tourist.

<Letters>
27 July, 1952 Sunday

Carry small arms and ammo everywhere. My cousin Dempsey Jamens is on Old Baldy with the 23rd Inf Rgt of the 2nd Inf Div. It is about 10 miles from here. On a clear night I can see the tracer fire in the sky. Dempsey is on one side of the mountain complex, I am on the other. I have not been closer than 2000 yds from the enemy. It is raining hard which keeps us from going up on the Line.
< End of Letters >

Episode 19. Church Services, Attending Mass

After Sunday breakfast, the word is passed from the Company Orderly Room that those who wish to attend a Catholic Mass will assemble at a specific time and place for transportation by truck to the church service. The location of the service turns out to be an open field, the altar is the hood of a Jeep but the Chaplain is in fact a Catholic Priest. His assistant is the Jeep driver.

The service is short but complete. The spoken words of the Priest and the responses of the congregation are thin and muted in the wind, quite unlike the sounds I remember in my church back home. The effect on me however, is one of satisfaction and fulfillment even though the surroundings are unchurchlike. I promise myself that I will attend the services whenever they are available.

On my return, I am thrust back into the company of the 1st Plt. and spend the rest of the day writing letters and establishing a rapport with my new companions. After dinner, the company starts to settle down for the night. In the relative quite, sounds from outside our company area predominate. I have some free time so I take a stroll around the 1st Plt. tent and the adjacent tank park.

From our Company Area, the lightning like flashes in the night signal another round of fighting in front of our MLR. My cousin, William Harrison Jamens, is an infantryman on "Old Baldy". Bill is nicknamed "Dempsey" after the famous boxer Jack Dempsey and it is the only name I call him. Dempsey was drafted a year after I was and immediately after 16 weeks of Infantry Basic Training sent to Korea. I would like to go to see him but find that I can't leave the Company Area unless I am under orders on Army business. The 30 minute ON CALL policy for Baker Co. precludes such a visit.

The Chinese do have tanks facing us and can move against us at any time. When they do, the minutes that we shave from the response time will be precious. A tank moving at 30 mph can cover a mile of ground in two minutes. When the call comes in to "hit the road" we always hustle like firemen answering an alarm. So far, the alarms have been false but the next one could be real.

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

"Operation Sugar Loaf" and "Operation Psycho" in August proved the effectiveness of tanks in "bunker-busting", flak suppression, and harassing fire. —Flooded terrain and enemy artillery fire seriously hampered recovery of crippled vehicles. Members of the Battalion performed many acts of heroism under fire.

Episode 20. Firing From Fixed Gun Emplacements

The 1st platoon has been used on raids in front of the MLR with good success. We are also called upon to shoot from fixed locations on the MLR. These are invariably located on top of ridges in the middle of infantry positions. The tank drives into an emplacement which protects the tank hull from enemy fire. Only the turret is seen by the enemy but as I sit in the turret it seems as though I am tempting the enemy to fire at me. The infantry thinks so too. When the M-46's come up to fire, the infantry with a little cursing starts disappearing in the deep bunkers on the reverse (away from the enemy positions) slope of the MLR. Soon we seem to be alone on the ridge.

These firing positions are on the highest ground giving me a good view of this portion of North Korea. It is not imposing. The ground is mostly bare of vegetation and unimproved. There are no roads or signs of life. In contrast, to my rear the efforts of man are seen everywhere. The comparison is one of construction versus destruction. The terrain over which I am looking is the No-Man's Land being contested by both sides. Somewhere out there are enemy observers who are marking our movements. Like a Chess game one of us must make the first move.

Several of our tanks open fire on the distant hills. The fire in my opinion is to taunt the opposition, to make him apprehensive, to intimidate him and to provoke him into a response. My initial impression is that if we hit anything of value at this long range it must be attributed to luck. The bursting shells fired by the other tanks however demonstrate our ability to hit the fortified hills and open holes in the enemy trenches.

Episode 21 The Infantry Has It's Own Artillery

Tank 1-1 has not started firing. My head is out of the turret as I continue to look at the distant enemy held ridges. There is suddenly a roar to my right which sounds like an artillery round bursting. Instinctively, I turn my head and observe a cloud of smoke and dust in a fighting position about 75 yds. away. My immediate reaction was that they had received a direct hit.

The position had a protective top on it but all four sides were open and I can see men working around something in the center of it. Activity abruptly ceased and then a tongue of flame shot out of the front of the position while an even greater amount gushed from the rear. I realized I was seeing a recoilless rifle in action. Apparently they had spotted a target to shoot at that I or the Lt. had not seen.

Another round quickly followed the first two rounds after which, with a flurry of activity, the gun was removed from its mount and carried out of sight to the reverse slope of the hill. Had they hit something of value? I was so engrossed in watching their firing procedures that I did not observe where the shells burst.

When our neighbors vanish, we are alone again. It's time for me to slip into the gunner's seat and go through the routine of preparing the main gun for firing. Tank 1-1 then joins the platoon in the business of trench busting. Soon we hear the arrival of incoming enemy artillery rounds. They are definitely not produced by a recoilless rifle! Now I know why the infantry has retired to the bunkers on the reverse slope—I would like to join them.

The target that a tank turret presents to the enemy is about nine ft. wide by four ft. high. It is a difficult target to hit at long range; still if they got a lucky hit, it would shake us up considerably. A large caliber gun hit has been known to kill the tank crew by concussive effect alone. I also reflect that as I sight through the gunners telescope, only a collection of glass lens separates me from the outside world which means that a piece of shrapnel could pass through the telescope, my eye and whatever is behind it. Should that happen, I hope that I would not know of it. Sometimes it is best not to think too much.

We expend our allotted rounds and so does the enemy for at length his fire slackens, then ceases. Now we must back out of the firing position and return to the assembly point. The infantry seems to be content to see us go so that life can return to normal on the MLR.

<Letters>

14 August, 1952 Thursday

Iron Triangle, Korea. Dempsey was hit (wounded) on Old Baldy. He wrote a letter to me from a

Hospital in Korea. I didn't get to see him.
<End of Letters>

The letter I get from Dempsey is a surprise and also depressing. It is the first and only letter I receive from him. In it, he tells me that he was hit on "Old Baldy" by a mortar round. The shrapnel struck him in the knee and back and the force of the explosion threw him into the air which resulted in a head injury. The wounds are serious so Dempsey is going back to the states for treatment and rehabilitation.

He could have received his wounds on one of those nights that I watched the artillery flashes in the sky and thought about him on Old Baldy. The Main Supply Route runs along one side of our company area. Did the ambulance carrying him to the hospital pass this way? A few questions pass through my mind but there are no answers.

Episode 22. The 1st Platoon rides to Hellsgate

<Letters>
14 August, 1952 (continued)

My platoon went on a mission (raid) to "Hellsgate". The enemy is reported to have 120mm mortars and artillery for supporting fire. Prior to our raid, the longest time that tanks have spent there has been 20 minutes. We stayed an hour. We took 5 M-46 tanks and 16 Ethiopians for infantry support. The Ethiopians were terrified of riding in tanks.

The ride into Hellsgate was over a heavily shelled road with mine fields on both sides. Our firing position was 1000 yds from Hill 472. Bunkers and trenches ringed the crest of the hill. I opened fire on the left side of the trench system. The first rounds landed in the trenches and I proceeded to shell up and down the trench line. Suddenly enemy artillery fire began exploding around the tank. My Lt. (and tank commander), Verble Parish said that the shells were arriving six at a time. There was nothing I could do about the incoming artillery rounds so I focused my attention on aiming and firing the 90mm cannon. Three rounds went into a bunker that flew 200 feet into the air before tumbling down the slope. Another bunker was engaged and hit as well as some radio antennas destroyed when the 90mm cannon malfunctioned and I had to quit firing. I expended 28 90mm shells (high explosive) and hit four good targets in addition to breaking up the enemy trench line.

With shells still falling around the tank, the Lt. recalled the Ethiopians and we retired to the MLR (Main Line of Resistance). No damage was done to our tanks, crews or supporting infantry.
<End of Letters>

The news that the Lt. brought to the platoon was not good. We were scheduled to raid in the neighborhood of Hill 472. To get there, we would pass through the "Hellsgate" which had a very nasty reputation with the tankers. So far, tanks had been unable to remain at their firing positions for longer than 20 minutes.

The plan was for us to go in fast, hit the targets quickly and then get out fast. Because the firing positions were only 1,000 yds from the Hill, we would also be carrying an Ethiopian Infantry unit to engage enemy "Tank-Killer" infantry teams should they appear. As far as I knew our unit had never worked with the Ethiopians before - as a matter of fact, I had never seen any Ethiopians and did not know what to expect.

When the Ethiopians arrived at our assembly position, several facts became apparent.

1. They were very polite.
2. The enlisted men could not speak English.
3. They looked and acted like professional soldiers.

Taking these in reverse order, the "E's", though slight of build and on the whole shorter than U.S. troops looked in fine condition and capable of handling any enemy infantry. Their facial color was quite dark. They have finely formed heads with high foreheads; straight, thin noses; thin lips; large, almond shaped eyes and curly black hair. They looked a bit like what you would see if someone took a traditional Greek Statue and painted it black.

We gathered in a group beside two of the tanks looking each other over and trying to establish some rapport. The nature of our mission depended upon mutual trust and a high degree of coordination. Gestures and smiling were all we had going for us when one of the Italian/American tankers, (Lanza, I think), spoke some Italian phrases. Immediately, the "E's" faces lit up and the broad smiles became even broader. A torrent of Italian ensued from them enabling a real dialogue to take place.

Yes, many "E's" speak Italian as a result of the Italian (Mussolini) Invasion of Ethiopia in 1936.

Yes, they were professional soldiers. Each of them was a member of the Emperor Haile Selassie's Imperial Guard. Each one was entitled to wear all military decorations awarded to them or to their forebears. (I thought that practice really put the pressure on the soldier to uphold the family honor even to the point of death).

Now came a question from them for us to ponder. Why do the Americans wear shoes during the day and remove them at night? The "E's" take off the shoes during the day to air their feet and dry the shoes but put them on again at night. No infantryman, in their opinion, should be looking for shoes to wear if he is suddenly called into a night action. I thought they made a good point.

We get ready to leave the MLR with the infantry riding on the rear decks of the tanks. I'm at my usual station in the turret sitting in the gunners seat. As we move down the road we come into the view of the enemy positions. The driver is moving 1-1 as quickly as he can down the road. Tank 1-1 is the first tank in the column and, as the road is mined on both sides, we have got to get the platoon clear before the enemy artillery can concentrate fire on the bunched up tanks. The road has been heavily shelled so the tank is rocked and jarred as we travel toward our firing area. The Infantry hangs on to the available handholds on the turret—they are having a rough ride.

When we leave the road and the tanks spread out, the going is easier. The Lt. orders the platoon to stop and the infantry immediately jumps off of the tanks and rushes forward into the low ground cover to set up a screen against enemy infantry.

The Ethiopian Infantry CO is aware that tanks attract enemy artillery fire like bees to honey so he wants to take positions far enough away from the tanks to escape the shellfire. At the same time, he needs to be able to stop any enemy tank-killer teams from getting to the tanks. The third infantry mission objective is to be able to rejoin the tanks for the ride out when the action is broken off. Those are his problems to resolve; I have my own.

At a range of 1,000 yds or less, The tanks are ready to open fire. The Lt. and I are marking targets to engage—bunkers, firing positions, the trench line and even a few slender, vertical objects that look like radio antennae. On command, I begin firing at the hill. I am opening up gaps in the trenches which prevents or at least impedes the movement of enemy troops and supplies.

Suddenly the enemy artillery fire arrives. I have been anticipating it but the volume of fire is more than I expected. Lt. Parish who has been keeping only his head out of the turret, leans into the turret to tell us that the artillery shells are large caliber and coming in six at a time. It will be more difficult to jockey the tanks out of the impact zone than previously but I'm powerless to change that so I concentrate on hitting our targets.

I've hit four bunkers and firing positions; all of which required several High Explosive shells to destroy. One bunker flies 200 ft. into the spreading debris down the slope. After 28 rounds, the 90mm cannon abruptly refuses to fire. I try all of the remedies to fire the cannon; manually recock the firing mechanism, electrically re-fire, then manually fire with the foot pedal. Nothing works, the main gun is useless. I follow the action through my gunners sight though I will have only the 30 cal. coaxial machine gun at my disposal.

Lt. Parish is on the radio issuing orders for the rest of the platoon to cease firing and prepare to withdraw and he is also recalling the infantry. The artillery fire is still falling as the infantry returns quickly and remounts the rear decks of the tanks. One tank at a time moves away from the firing area heading for the road to the MLR. Tank 1-1 is holding fast awaiting the Infantry CO and his radioman who are bringing up the rear. We will leave last. The incoming shells make it dangerous to stand on the rear deck so the CO and the radioman climb down into the turret. Now there are five of us in the turret along with the large radio that the radioman has been carrying on his back. There is not enough room to traverse and sight the turret with the five people crammed in the turret. If any enemy infantry appear, we will be at a significant disadvantage. I'm greatly relieved when Lt. Parish tells the driver to move out and he eagerly does so.

On the other side of the cannon, I make eye contact with the radioman who is hanging on to his radio and rifle as the tank starts to move. His eyes are open wider than normal and I see that he is terrified of being in the tank. The roaring noises and jarring of the hull is unnerving him. I smile and make motions for him to hang on tight. It's none to soon as the driver has his accelerator down on the floor and we seem to be bouncing over the tops of the humps on the rough ground. Now it's my turn to tighten my grip while continuing to smile at the Ethiopian radioman. The undulating wailing sound that comes from the 810 hp. Continental engine as it strains against the governor is matched by the scream of the Tower Cooling Fans under the rear deck. The tank is at maximum speed careening toward the MLR.

We have crossed the MLR and arrive at the assembly area. I have an awareness that we have exceeded the 20 minutes of engagement that was previously the maximum time at Hellsgate, but I am

surprised when I am told that we have been out for one hour. That is three times longer than any other tank unit.

The infantry and tank crews have dismounted and with relieved smiles are intermingled in a group. We have these few minutes before we go our different ways so someone asks an Ethiopian, “When you get tanks of your own, do you want to become a tanker”? The answer is “Oh, Yes”. I mentally recall that with the polite mannerisms of the Ethiopians, what they probably mean is, “Once is enough, thank you, I’d rather walk”.

Episode 23 The 1st. Plt. Claims Top Honors

After the raid through Hellsgate, I meditate on what I have seen of the 1st Plt’s combat performance. When compared with what we have been told about other tank operations, we have performed well. We go into our missions fast, shoot straight, destroy our assigned targets, dominate the battlefield, avoid enemy countermeasures and withdraw quickly. Damage to the tanks has been minimal and we have not suffered any casualties. I don’t know whether this is due to skill, luck or a combination of both but I do know that it has worked. I am now ready to concede that the 1st Plt. is all that I was told it was; the best platoon, in the best company, in the best tank Bn. in Korean combat operations.

I can also recognize that this feeling has been slowly building in me as I experienced combat with the 1st Plt. It is a lot like being a member of a football team and also a cheer leader. The entire Platoon is participating in projecting the image to themselves and others. Even Vidoke, the houseboy, has taken a stand. The Koreans have a rating system in their culture based from ONE (the best) to TEN (the worst). Vidoke concludes that the “1st Platoon, Number Hucken One!”. His English is not improving.

Episode BA. Tank 1-1 Receives Some Art Work

Tank 1-1 is a great tank with a great crew but—it lacks an identity or flair. I have given this some thought. The Army has established a policy of making every M-46 indistinguishable from any other to confuse the enemy. But the need to be able to identify individual tanks in combat (or behind the lines if the crew screws up) has resulted in compromise.

Every M-46 has a two digit number on the turret and hull to denote the platoon number, (first number) and which of the five tanks in a platoon it is, (second number). Tank 1-1 is the first tank in the first platoon. In addition the Company to which a tank is assigned is denoted by the number of white rings on the barrel of the cannon. Company A has one white ring, Company B has two white rings and Company C has three white rings.

The enemy can swiftly tell what units from a Tank Battalion it is facing. The number of the Battalion (73rd in our case)is obscured by an application of grease and dirt. Still, how many M-46 Battalions are there?

I have a plan to make Tank 1-1 unique. I begin by asking Lt. Parish for permission to apply a bit of paint to the tank. My description of what I want to do is purposefully veiled and vague. My experience in the Army is that when you tell those in command exactly what you want to do, they will be able to find a policy which forbids it.

I’m taking cover behind an accepted practice of naming tanks with words starting with the letter of the Company to which it is assigned. When in “D” (Dog) Company of the 16th Armored Engineer Battalion in Ft Hood Texas, My bulldozer tank was the DAILY-DO. When it broke down, (which was often), it was the DAILY-DOO-DOO. No graphics however were permitted. I have no intention of adhering to this practice.

It pleases me when Parish does not say no. I go down to the Supply Tent and check out some white paint (color choice is limited) and a small paint brush. The white paint will contrast nicely with the Olive Drab paint job on the turret and hull.

My brother John created a picture of a cross of Lorraine (there is one vertical line and two horizontal members of unequal length) made of bones. Superimposed on the cross was a Stylized human skull. John would draw this on anything available and even made a flag to fly on a sailboat.

Without any shame or apology, I intend to use his image. After all, what are brothers for? I have wiped off a surface on the turret front on the right side of the gun mantel and began to paint the image. The effort was free hand so I did the best could under the circumstances.

Next, I considered the cannon. I remembered the cartoon movie “Pecos Bill”. Bill was the cowboy that “never was throwed” and he met a fiery stallion that “never was rode”. That horse was called WID-O-MAKER because whoever tried to master him was sure to come to a bad end. I painted the name Wid-O-Maker in cursive script on the gun tube between the white barrel rings and the Bore Evacuator Tube. Then I

waited for the repercussions.

Lt. Parish came by and looked at the art work. I half expected a Verble (no pun intended) dressing down for exceeding the bounds of our agreement. I was relieved when he asked if I could put the word "TEX" on the turret below the tank commanders cupola. The work was speedily done as he had asked.

When Bruce Whitehouse became the driver on Tank 1-1, he had a request of his own. "Can we put my girlfriend Mimi's name on the tank?" I was agreeable as we seemed to be a roll with flaunting policy. I turned the paint and brush over to Bruce and he commenced to put MIMI in cursive script on the left front fender of the tank.

On the next excursion across the MLR the Wid-O-Maker led the 1st Platoon against the enemy.

<Letters>
16 August, 1952 Saturday

Oumsong, Korea. The 7th Inf Div rear echelon is in Chun'chon which is 60 miles south of here. The rumor is that the Chinese only outnumber us by two to one, not ten to one as previously thought. The enemy is clever and hard working but in most ways inferior to UN troops. He can, however, kill you just as dead as would a perfect soldier. His (the enemy's) advantage is in infantry and artillery.

The 73rd Tank Battalion is here to provide "armor suppression". Our Intelligence people think that three battalions of T-34 tanks oppose us.
<End of Letter>

Some of the rumors about the Chinese "Hordes" outnumbering us by ten to one are being squelched by Army Intelligence. The best educated guess is that the ratio of manpower is two to one in favor of the Chinese. The news is well received in the platoon. We do however, respect what the enemy can do, even though we are convinced we will beat him when we meet.

The conclusion that the enemy is holding three battalions of T-34 tanks in reserve in our sector is a sobering one. The general feeling of the platoon is that the tankers have proven that they know their jobs and that they work well as a unit. If a tank engagement results, we will win.

<Letters>
24 August, 1952 Sunday

Korea. It's raining like hell. Water is running through the middle of the tent. I went for a walk into the surrounding hills last week. I looked at old trenches and bunkers. I found a few pots.

The 3rd Platoon went to Hellsgate and had two of five tanks knocked out. Charley Company also lost a tank which they had to abandon and burn. The 3rd Plt tanks were brought back by Tank Retrievers. One of the tanks was hit seven times by mortar and 76mm artillery. No one in the 3rd Plt was hurt but Charley Company had three casualties when a mortar round caught them outside of the tank looking at the damage.

The Infantry support had 17 of 30 men carried back. They crowded in too close to the tanks which were receiving mortar fire.

Last night the boys in the platoon acquired some hard liquor and got drunk. They are suffering hangovers this morning.
<End of Letters>

Episode 24 Tank 1-1 Moves Under a Mine Field

We are moving up to execute another raid into the No-Man's Land in front of the MLR. This time the raid will be commanded by the B Co. Commander with a total strength of 17 tanks. The force is being led by the 1st Plt with 1-1 tank at the head of the column. Before we crossed the MLR, Lt. Parish met with two ROK Army engineers. We believe that they are familiar with this sector and know where the defensive mine fields are located. Their job is to guide the column through the safe lanes in the mine fields. Once through, B Co. will fan out to our shooting positions.

The move through the mine fields is to be done in the early morning before dawn. When there is enough light for the enemy to see into the valley, he will see our force deployed against him and ready to open fire. We are moving slowly in the darkness down a path to the edge of the mine field. We can't use any lights as the enemy can observe the terrain over which we are moving.

Finally, Tank 1-1 stops and a conference takes place between the Lt. and the ROK engineers. The group is standing on the rear deck of the tank peering into the dark. The Koreans are not fluent in the Eng-

lish language but the Lt. does get the message. The Korean engineers can not find the safe path through the mine field.

Lt. Parish gets into the turret, puts on his radio gear and calls the Company Commander to explain this latest development. Yes, we are at the edge of the mine field. No, we don't know where the Safe Lane through the mine field is. The CO sitting in his tank (8 tanks behind us) makes up his mind quickly. He orders the Lt. to move the 1st Plt tanks forward into the mine field. I am dumbfounded when I hear the news. The CO is going to use a $250,000 tank and five crewmen as a mine detector. When we hit a mine, we will know one was there. I think the decision is stupid, but from the look on Lt. Parish's face we are going in, stupid or not. The order to move forward is given to the driver. The Korean Engineers have no opportunity to get off of the tank - they are going in with us.

Sitting in the gunners seat, I can feel the engine power rising and the tracks churning as the tank lurches forward. Very soon the vibration and motion changes. The tracks are moving but the tank is not; we are bogged down. The tank hull is resting on the ground. The Lt. leaves the turret to determine the extent of our problem. My anxiety is rising. It is not good to have a tank immobilized where the enemy can see it and smother it with an artillery concentration. And when the sun rises the enemy will certainly be able to see us!

The tank engine is idling, drowning out any sounds from outside the tank. Time is slipping by without the reappearance of the Lt. I decide to go out and have a look. At this moment a gunner is superfluous so I climb out of the turret. The first thing I notice is that it is not as dark as it was when we crossed the MLR. The Lt. and the Koreans are standing by the left front fender of the tank peering intently at the front of the tank. I jump down to the ground and hurry to join them. As I reach the group, I can see what they are looking at. The tank has plowed it's way into and beneath the soft ground of an old rice paddy lifting the dirt onto the front slope plate—and nestled there are also two large anti-tank mines.

It is obvious what happened. The tank is actually under the mine field. The mines are on top of the tank hull. We are also definitely not in the safe lane. My reaction is swift and instinctive. I start shouting! The message is profane and instructive, "Get the @#*^&* tank out of this blankedy, blank mine field NOW". Apparently everyone had seen enough of the mines for the appropriate action swiftly taken.

The next tank in the column, 1-2 tank, gets the order to come in behind us and pull us out. The driver maneuvers his tank directly into the set of furrows made in the ground by 1-1 tank. When he is less than ten feet away, the towing cables of the tank are attached to the towing pintles of each tank. Now with each tank applying reverse power, the bogged down tank is towed out of the mine field. The entire operation takes little time but in that interval the other tanks (less the 1st Plt.) have bypassed us moving down the road to take up positions on higher ground.

It's getting light and our schedule is shot. We are at the wrong place at the wrong time. An alternate location is established for the 1st Plt on the right flank of B Company. Soon the Lt. is satisfied that the 1st Plt tanks are positioned properly in this alternate location and that we can start shooting as soon as we have sufficient visibility to mark targets and observe the results. The lull gives me an opportunity to squirm out of the gunners seat and pop my upper body out of the Tank Commanders hatch. The first glance is toward the enemy positions, still in deep shadow and indistinct in the early morning mist. I now look left and a thrill shoots through my body like an electrical shock.

Stretched out along the high ground are 17 tanks in line abreast facing the enemy. The tank engines are idling, the sound overriding all else. The massive tanks project a repressed, menacing power. They are an irresistible force that no enemy can oppose. A feeling of confidence overwhelms me sweeping away the anxiety that came to me in the mine field.

There is time for me to notice that the high ground on which we rest is more like the top of a dike or perhaps an old railway roadbed. Maneuvering is possible but there is not much room to spare. The Lt. orders us to our assigned stations. Each tank has a portion of the enemy fortifications to shell in order to create the maximum effect on the enemy. Each platoon radios a report of readiness to the CO. The overture is about to begin.

The firing begins with a 17 gun volley. Inside the tank the noise of my cannon and the other cannons are muted by the thick steel walls of the turret. I know from my own experience as a tank commander that Lt. Parish's situation is much more unpleasant than mine. Even wearing earphones, the crack of the cannon is painful to him. He is also spotting the point of impact of my shots which means that he is exposed to the back blast of the cannon muzzle brake. As a consequence, small brass particles of the shell rotating band fly off the spinning shell hitting his face and hands. His only protection is to hold his binoculars in front of his face when the cannon is fired.

The Lt's duties continue as he is responsible for directing and evaluating the fire of the other four

tanks of the 1st Plt., receiving reports from the Observation Posts (OP's) who are monitoring our action and also keeping the CO informed on what is happening on this, the right flank of the company. For these activities he uses the tank intercom and the two radio sets (SCR506 and SCR508) that the tank carries.

A couple of shots from all of the tanks in rapid succession and the fire rate then slows down. We want to make sure that we are engaging good targets which will cause great damage. The enemy is not as impressed with our show of force as I am. Now the enemy artillery fire is coming our way so we move about a little. So far no one has been hit, but Viccaro (1-4 tank, I think) is reporting incoming anti-tank fire. The rounds are passing over and around his tank and impacting into the earth bank behind him. The Company just settles down and continues as before. The enemy artillery keeps trying but we are fortunate as the shells land where we "ain't".

In between shots from our cannon, the Lt. and I have our heads about a foot apart. We both hear some popping noises. They don't sound like cannons firing and they don't sound like "incoming" artillery shells. First he and then I stick our heads out of the turret to locate the source of the popping noises. An amazing sight greets my eyes. Several members of 1-3 tank are out of the tank and walking around it looking at the suspension system. The thought occurs to the Lt. and me at the same time, the tank has run over and detonated some anti-personnel mines with the tracks. The crew is walking around in a minefield! The other tank is only 70 yds away. We try yelling at them to get back on the tank but with 17 tank engines running simultaneously, the effort is futile. The Lt. dives for the radio and tries to make contact with 1-3 tank. In some way the massage is received and understood because the crewmen remount the tank without setting off any more mines.

Someone has decided that we have been out long enough. We are moving out to return to the MLR and I am happy to see it. On the way out we pass the place where 1-1 tank drove into the minefield and the recollection sets my mind fuming. I will not quickly forgive or forget the CO's decision to send us blindly into a minefield. Once back through the MLR, 1-1 tank leads the way back to the Company area. I mention my feelings about the minefield incident to the Lt. and although he hears me out, he impassively lets the subject drop. End of discussion.

Several weeks later, Lt. Parish relates a bit of news to the 1st Plt. It seems that our CO was hosting a group of officers from another battalion who are trading in their old M-4 tanks for M-46s' like ours. To demonstrate the capabilities of the M-46, he took his tank with the other officers aboard out into the same area where tank 1-1 had plowed the anti-tank mines out of the ground. Acting as the driver, the CO proceeded to put the tank through it's paces. In the process, he drove over an anti-tank mine which not only damages his tank but throws him completely out of the tank breaking his leg in the process. His wound requires that he leave the company. I receive the news with a certain amount of satisfaction. I find that it is possible for me to forgive and forget—under the right circumstances.

The 1st. Plt is back in the company area getting some time off. The weather is very wet which inhibits some of our activities. I take the opportunity to climb the hill behind our company position to look for souvenirs. I find some old fortifications, a few pots and what appears to be a graveyard but nothing of value. There are supposed to be pheasants in the hills. If so, they keep out of sight. I easily convince myself to turn back for where there are fortifications, there are usually mines.

The 1st Plt. is talking about the results of the latest tank raids of the 73rd Tk Bn. The 3rd. Plt. of B Co. has had a rough time at Hellsgate and so also has C Co. The M-46 tank is proving to be capable of sustaining a good deal of damage while still protecting the crew. Whatever casualties are being taken have occurred when the crew members are outside the tank making them as vulnerable as if they were in the infantry.

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

The remainder of August and September past with the Division front relatively inactive.

Episode 25 Rebuilding a Tank in the Field

<Letters>

30 August, 1952 Saturday

My tank has been moved to a rear echelon maintenance area to overhaul the tank. Our crew, under the direction of some mechanics, removed the tank turret, repacked the turret bearings and put it back on the tank. We also removed the engine & transmission replacing the assembly with a new one instead of rebuilding it. We are now working on the track and suspension system. The work is hard, dirty and greasy—

and the hours are long. The work will be completed in a couple of days and then I will be able to take it easy for a while. I can't complain too much because I'm learning a lot about the M-46 tank that I wouldn't know if I didn't pull this type of maintenance. Dempsey and his Mother wrote to me that he will be coming home soon. I've got Guard Duty tonight. I'll be a Corporal of the Guard. It's a soft touch.
<End of Letter>

The weather has taken a turn for the better. The rain has stopped, the ground is drying up and the sun beats down on us. The powers that be have decided that the 1st. Plt tanks need a major overhaul. Other units may be involved but we don't know about them. What we do know is that the tankers will do the work under the direction of maintenance specialists and we are expected to complete the overhaul as soon as possible.

The repair facilities for the overhaul are located far behind the MLR. Our first job is to unload all of the munitions, machine guns and loose equipment from the tank being careful to stack them neatly—we will reload them all on our return. It gives me a peculiar feeling to look at the tank in this condition. It looks like a tank but it can't fight like a tank. I liked it better the way it was.

The tanks are driven to the location specified which looks like a common, flat, open field. The maintenance people take command at this point. They tell us where to park the tank and describe what we are going to do.

The first operation is to remove the entire turret from the tank and put on the ground (on wooden supports). The turret must weigh 12 tons. A couple of us work at removing the proper bolts to release the turret from the hull. A motorized crane appears, hooks on to metal "eyes" cast into the turret, picks up the entire assembly and lowers it to the ground. Now we get busy working on the turret race and bearing system. The crews job is hot, greasy and dirty. The maintenance people hover in the background telling us what to do and at the same time, look over the turret and hull for anything else in need of repair.

The next step involves removing the engine and transmission package from the tank and sticking in a rebuilt unit. Fortunately, this tank was designed to make engine switches fast and simple. The trick is to lift about 8 tons of metal out of the hull of the tank without crushing or breaking attached parts including hands or fingers. As it is not often that the engine compartment is this wide open, we dive right in and clean everything up prior to installing the replacement package.

The suspension system gets a thorough inspection. Some road wheels are replaced and all bearings greased or repacked. Shock absorbers get attention too as they take quite a beating when we maneuver over rough ground at high speeds.

The completion of this work is the signal to remount the turret. The work now flows in reverse order with tests being performed to make sure the rebuilt components function properly.

The final step is to replace both tracks. The new tracks are positioned in front of the tank so that the crew can hook the old and new tracks together and let the drive sprocket do the heavy work. Completing the track exchange is very heavy work. We are all glad to see the end of that job.

A quick "road test" and everyone is satisfied that the overhaul is complete. We drive back to the company area and start the laborious task of rearming the tank. All told, we have spent most of a week on this activity.

My Aunt Lillian Jamens writes that her son Dempsey, is to be shipped back to the 'States soon. The good news is that he continues to recuperate from his wounds.

Episode 26 On the Subject of Blades

I have acquired two cast off carbine bayonets and modified them for my own purposes. The regulation blade on the carbine bayonet is about 7 inches long. One of my knives has a shortened blade (5 inches) and a scabbard that can be attached to my lower leg. The other has a blade without the regulation leather handle and crosspiece. With a wooden handle that I made for it, the knife fits behind the pistol in my non-regulation holster.

I have had lunch in the Company Mess and I am taking a leisurely stroll back to the 1st Plt. tent when I observe Vidoke and several other Koreans throwing knives at the butt of a section of a tree. My interest is aroused so I wander in that direction. I can see that the knives being thrown are widely different in construction. Moreover, though the throwing range is about 15 ft., the knives either miss the target or hit it other than with the point causing the knife to fall to the ground.

The group sees me approaching and stops their practice. My interruption has been without a purpose on my part, save for curiosity, and I see that they are waiting for me to initiate the conversation.

Lacking anything of value to say, I realize that I am carrying one of my carbine bayonets in the pistol belt around my waist so I decide to throw it at the target. From about 30 ft. away, I reach down and draw the bayonet, momentarily stop and throw the bayonet as if I were pitching a softball underhanded. I have put a lot of force into the throw and as I follow through with the motion I see the bayonet bury itself into the center of the target.

The Koreans are astonished at the throw and become quite excited and vocal. I am even more astonished than they. I am not skilled at knife throwing of any kind. What has happened is strictly luck! My expression does not reveal what is passing through my mind which is, “Don’t press your luck, it is time to leave”. I walk to the target butt, extract the bayonet, nod my head to the group, turn and walk away. I think with some satisfaction that my reputation with the Koreans has not suffered in this encounter.

< Letters >
31 August, 1952 Sunday

I’m glad that I was a Corporal of the Guard last night. It really rained hard. Usually I walk (guard) post but last night I was in bed.

I just got my pay for two months plus one month of combat pay and two months of overseas pay. It came to $245.00. I also have $50.00 a month sent home to my parents.

I carry two knives now. One is a carbine bayonet with the blade ground down. It makes a good throwing knife. The other knife is a carbine bayonet with a handle that I made. It looks good but is no good for throwing.
<End of Letter>

Episode 27 The Scorched Firebug

The company has been ordered to move to another location. In preparation for leaving this area, I have been assigned the task of burning the wooden platform upon which our latrine has rested. I get a five gal can of gasoline from the fuel dump and liberally pour it on the wood. The platform is quite wet from the recent rain and because a good portion of it rests upon the ground, I soak the wood until the gasoline runs off like water. Putting the gas can down, I throw a lighted match on the platform.

The result is a roaring fire. Now I have nothing to do besides watch over it until the charred embers fall into the latrine pit. I am surprised when the fire burns itself out and the platform remains in place. My conclusion is that I have not used enough gasoline.

I pick up the gas can, walk to the center of the platform and pour the gas on the wood beneath my feet. With a Whoosh, the gas is ignited and I see that I am standing in a ball of fire.

My reaction is instinctive and instantaneous; I close my eyes, hold my breath, drop the gas can and dive sideways off of the platform. Upon hitting the ground, I execute a shoulder roll and bounce to my feet.

Serving as a tank crewman, I had long before considered that one day I might be on fire (or burning) and that rolling on the ground was a way to extinguish the flames. A small stream was about 70 ft. away so I decide to dive into it rather than rolling about in the dirt. I had only taken a few steps when I realized that my clothing was not on fire so I stopped and checked myself for burns.

I could see that my left forearm and hands had been burned and I saw out of the corner of eye that the wooden platform was blazing away. Now came the hard part. I began looking for the duty NCO to report my misfortune. He heard my story without comment and told me to get my burns looked at by our medic.

The medic discovered additional burns on my neck and decided that I should be looked at by a real doctor so soon I was on my way to a Mobile Army Hospital (MASH) unit further behind the front line.

The hospital was a collection of tents just off of the MSR. The compound was self contained with hospital facilities, tents for the staff, a kitchen with dining room and tents that were used as hospital wards. After having my burns cleaned and treated, I was told that I was staying for a while.

The jeep driver who had driven me to the hospital went back to the company for my personal kit (tooth brush, shaver, etc.) while I was being processed as a patient. My personal effects joined me at the assigned cot in a ward tent. The cot was the second from the door on the right side. I spent a little time making the place homey, nodded a greeting to my neighbor on the first cot, right side and then stretched out to think over this change of events. I think I may have drifted off to sleep.

My next recollection is that it is morning. I get up to find my neighbor setting on his cot and as I go through the morning ablutions and making up the cot, we begin to talk. He is very calm and has a quiet manner. After exchanging names, he asks why I am in the hospital. I tell him and then ask him the same question. His reply is, “I don’t know”. Now he has my undivided attention! He continues his story.

He is from the 187 Airborne and his company was on the top of a ridge that was attacked at night by the enemy. In the morning he was evacuated off the ridge. “They” took his rifle and his boots because he would not need them. His voice was without emotion as he repeated that he did know why he was in the hospital. I suspected that he was in shock, or in more modern terms, suffering from Combat Fatigue.

Breakfast was being served so we left the tent to walk 50 yards or so to the Mess Tent. Although it is still September, this morning is cold and a heavy dew is on the ground. My companion walks toward the Mess Tent and it is then that I see that he is barefooted. He doesn’t seem to notice so I stop him and ask where his shoes are. He replies that he has none. He shows no concern so I take him back to our tent and put on his feet a pair of thin, rubber shoes that I have been using as slippers. They are of Korean manufacture and look like the low rubbers used in the ‘States to protect shoes in the winter. Then we start again to get our breakfast.

In mid-morning I am told that I am being moved to a field hospital in the rear. The front line has been very active overnight and all the patients that can be moved out are going to other facilities. It doesn’t take long to clear my records and gather up my personal effects. Soon I’m on a truck leaving behind the hospital, my calm, quiet tent mate and my black, rubber slippers.

I am dropped off at a railroad siding. I’m amazed to see what appears to be Pullman cars just like the ones I’ve seen in the ‘States. There is a difference once I am inside my assigned car.

The inside of the car is immaculate. There are female nurses, (Officers at that), showing me to my berth (I got an ‘upper’). Those of us who have walked in are made comfortable between white cotton sheets with our heads resting on fluffy, white pillows. I am starting to enjoy this!

The atmosphere changes as I look around and see that all of the patients didn’t just walk in. Some were carried in and more of the same are arriving. The staff is concentrating on those people that require help and treatment. As a result I am left to my own devices. As is usual I don’t know where I’m going so I make up my mind to relax and enjoy the ride.

During the day, I look out the window. The train makes a number of stops as the day wears on but I don’t recognize any of the scenery. The train ride continues into the night. I have a good nights sleep and in the morning the train stops at my destination - a field hospital in Taegu, Korea.

I am able to walk into the hospital and get processed into a ward which holds soldiers who also can fend for themselves. I now have the urge to write a few letters home but lack my writing papers which are still back at the company. I appeal to a Red Cross representative for writing materials and receive a writing pad and a few envelopes. As far as I can remember this is the only thing I have ever gotten from the Red Cross.

< Letters >
21 September, 1952 Sunday

Taegu, Korea. I am in a field hospital recovering from a slight burn on my left forearm I should be back to my company in a few days.

The radio says that the Reds (the enemy) are using tanks again. As far as I know the Reds haven’t used tanks in my sector but they might try.

A tanker (tank crewman) here at the hospital told me that his platoon of five tanks (M-4’s) attacked a T-34 tank at about 800 yds. They couldn’t penetrate the T-34’s armor but the T-34 knocked out two M-4’s with two shots. The result was ten dead tankers. The M-4’s finally flanked the T-34 and shot off his tracks. An infantry tank-killer team then laid napalm along side of the T-34 and ignited it with tracer fire from a 30 cal machine gun. Of the two knocked out M-4’s, one had a hole clean through the turret, the other had a hole in the front slope plate between the driver and the bow gunner. The shell finally lodged in the engine (after passing through the length of the tank hull).

This hospital is huge. As far as I can tell, this is a fenced compound of one story buildings. My ward contains people who have nearly recovered from their wounds or ailments. The place is quite lively. There is even a radio here so that we can listen to music. This place is a far cry from life in B. Co. which is located above the Light Line (the strip of land behind the MLR where no civilians are permitted, everyone carries weapons and ammunition, and some form of an attack by the enemy is possible).

I soon find out the fence around the place is to keep unauthorized persons out and to keep me in. I can look through the fence at the city and the broad dirt road just on the other side of the barrier. The place is unattractive and dirty but it is busy. After a while, I get tired of the sights (mostly people) and hearing language that I can’t understand.

The Red Cross has provided me with a letter writing kit. I appreciate that as my writing materials are back at the company. It seems as if I will have time on my hands, (the burns are not severe), and it has been three weeks since I have written home.

The radio news reminds us all that the enemy is still active. The report says that the enemy is using his tanks against us again. I wonder if the 1st Plt. was involved. I find one of the patients' is a tanker so we are soon talking shop! His unit is equipped with the M-4 (76mm. gunned) Sherman tank. The story he tells me about an engagement with a T-34 tank by five M-4 tanks is depressing. Two M-4's and crews lost before the T-34 is finally disabled and then destroyed. How could the outcome have been so one sided?

From my knowledge of the armor piercing power of the 90mm shells, I am convinced that I would have hit and knocked out the T-34 at 1500 yds, long before he could do the same to me. There is such a thing as bad luck so perhaps the 76mm guns of the M-4's just hit the enemy in the wrong spot. That is something to think about for there is the chance that some day I might be in a similar situation.

Episode 28 Shopping for Winter Boots

Within a week of my accident, I am discharged from the hospital and find myself at the 7th Inf. Div. REPO-DEPO again. Before I can be sent up to my company, I must be reprocessed. I have a different feeling now than I did when I first came through here in July. I'm going up to the 1st Plt of B Co. as a regular member not as a green replacement. None of the transient personnel are familiar to me so to pass the time I stroll aimlessly through the area. Suddenly, my attention becomes focused on the ground before me. I see two great heaps of boots!

My memory leaps back to a time before my accident when the supply sgt. of B Co. had issued cold weather gear to the 1st Plt. We were disappointed to get "Shoe-Paks" for footwear. The Shoe-Pak boot has a rubber sole, rubber lower shoe, and a leather upper shoe. The Shoe-Pak was not suitable for the Korean winter and was being replaced with the all rubber Thermal boot (Mickey Mouse Boots). We were told that the first issues would go to the combat units starting with the infantry on the MLR. The advice was, "Just be patient, you will get yours soon).

You can imagine my surprise to see Thermal boots being worn by great numbers of non-combatant troops in the KComZ (Korean Communications Zone which is behind the Combat Zone) as I moved from B Co. to the hospitals and back again. It was apparent to me that the boots were being siphoned off before they could reach the front lines.

One of the piles of boots before me are Shoe-Paks, the other Thermal boots. Casually looking about me, I perceive that I am alone so I quickly sort through the Thermal Boot heap. I find boots that are my size, replace new boots for the old ones on my feet and toss the old boots onto the Shoe-Pak pile. This stop in the REPO-DEPO is paying some dividends. Within a day, I am on my way by truck back to B Co. which in my absence has been relocated to another position.

A truck takes me up to the new B Co.location. As I leave the truck carrying my personnel effects, the Company area has the appearance of permanence even though I know that a week ago it was elsewhere. After checking in to the Orderly Room (tent), I rejoin the 1st Plt. They seem to be happy to have me back but I fear more attention is paid to my new boots than to me. A quick glance confirms that the Thermal boots for the company have not made it this far north.

Within the hour I am reunited with my personal weapons, other equipment and my cot which has been set-up on a wooden platform in the corner of the tent adjacent to the door. It is as if I had never been away although I must admit that in the evening I regale the 1st Plt. with tales and sights I have accumulated on my journey to the rear area and back.

Episode 29 Replacements for the 1st. Platoon.

A few new faces are present in the 1st Plt. 1-1 tank has a new loader, Ed Lutz, who is from Pennsylvania. Ed is a tall, well built soldier with a calm demeanor. I like him immediately and think we will work well together. The other new face belongs to a soldier named McLaws. He is assigned as loader to 1-3 tank working with Puchalsky who is the gunner. McLaws informs the platoon that he has previously served in the United States Marine Corps during W.W.II but has signed up with the Army for the Korean Police Action. McLaws is about 5 ft. 7 in. tall, has a stocky build, wears a mustache and is 26 years old. He also claims to have been a former Gunnery Sgt. and seen combat in W.W.II. I am glad that he is not my loader as he thinks that he has all of the answers before he has been asked the questions.

The daily average temperature in these mountains is falling. While the days can be quite warm, on clear nights the cold is intense. The switch to cold weather gear is in full swing. I now have a goose down

filled (insulated) sleeping bag. The large sleeping tent has had two oil stoves installed in it, one at each end of the tent. This necessitates relocating the sleeping cots, pushing them more closely together. As a result, my cot is closer to the tent wall and remains closest to the tent door.

A wooden door has been added to the tent entrance. The door and frame are made of wooden slats from the shipping crates that enclose the 90mm cannon shells. The crates are carefully disassembled to provide a source of wood for many different uses. The slats find their way into the floor of the tent, latrine construction, etc. The door in the tent does a better job in containing the heat in the tent at night.

While the tent is heated during the early morning hours (before and during breakfast) and in the evening (during and after dinner until lights-out), the heat is off at other times. This means that the tent is unheated as we sleep.

My cot position at the door makes me particularly susceptible to large temperature changes as the door is opened and closed. I become the conscience for the tent. When a trooper comes through the door without quickly closing it, he is admonished by my loud shout to, “Close that Fuckin’ Door.” It soon becomes a personal trade mark that continues as long as I am in the company.

The cold weather also alters the procedures we follow to make certain that the tanks are ready for instant action. Whenever a tank is moved to a new position, it is driven on to a bed of brush to lift the tank tracks off of the ground. Experience has shown that otherwise the tracks can freeze fast to the ground immobilizing the tank. The engines are run several times during the day and night to charge batteries and keep the engine oil temperature up. When the engines are running, a gale of hot air generated by the tower cooling fans rises from the rear deck. This hot air is used by the crew to restore body heat and dry wet clothing.

It is impossible to keep water from accumulating in the tank’s two gasoline tanks (fuel containers). This is a problem when the temperatures fluctuate above and below 32 degrees F. Too much water in the tanks can cause water to be drawn into the fuel line where it freezes, halting engine operation. To remedy this, we drain the fluid which is water contaminated from the bottom of the fuel tanks. When the temperature rises above freezing thereby changing the frozen ground to mud, a crewman crawls under the tank with a wrench to open the drains. This is a messy task and soaks a mans clothing with mud, water and gasoline. Thankfully, we need to do this but infrequently.

The gunner also periodically rotates the turret to make sure that water has not frozen in the space between the turret and the hull. If that should happen, it would be impossible to turn the turret.

As the winter progresses and the air temperatures head for the basement, the frequency of these operations increases.

Episode 30 The 1st. Platoon Sees The Light

The tours of nightly guard duty in the Tank Park are continuing. Some disturbing reports of inexplicable sightings by our guards are accumulating and it is making the troops nervous. It seems that an elusive light is being seen which, when the guard investigates the source, disappears. Several people have encountered the light independently on different nights.

An informal discussion by platoon members reaches a decision. The next time it happens, the guard on duty will alert the platoon who will turn out “en mass” to solve this mystery once and for all.

The situation comes to a head late one evening. I am away from the tent when the guard on duty rushes in to announce, “I’ve seen the light”! In a flurry of activity, the 1st Plt. grabs any and all available weapons, (M-3 sub-machine guns, full-automatic M-2 carbines and 45 cal pistols), and hurries back to the guard post. A dozen troopers deploy into a skirmish line and when they too “See the Light”, open fire in that direction.

The sudden, ear splitting sound of continuous gunfire rends the air, alerting and alarming all of B Co. The bullets flail the target area but also carry beyond, where they pass over the tents of another tank platoon. At the sound of the firing and snap of bullets passing overhead, the other platoon responds as if they were under attack by enemy infantry. The entire Company follows suit while the officers dash madly from the BOQ to find out WHAT IS HAPPENING?

By the time I get back to the 1st Plt. tent, an uneasy quiet has descended on the camp. The CO and 1st Plt. Ldr. have already caught up with the impromptu firing squad. After hearing the explanation for the gunfire, the CO is not only unimpressed but is livid with rage. An inspection of the target area shows a heavily damaged, dead tree and bullet scarred boulders. The officers conclude that the “Light” was really phosphorescence produced by the decay of vegetation in the dead tree. He orders the culprits to report to his office in morning.

When the Captain leaves, the 1st Plt members are very agitated and apprehensive. As it stands, several sergeants may loose their stripes (rank) in the morning. The prime candidate is Sgt. Cletus Fryer as he is the ranking NCO in the group.

Going to breakfast the next morning is not a happy time. Spirits pick up however when we hear the news that, last night at a Checkpoint 1.5 miles down the road, the MP's caught some enemy stragglers. Hearts are lighter when last nights shooters attend the Captain's meeting after breakfast.

The 1st Plt. holds to their story. At least one of them has the makings of a good lawyer. The known facts are simply stated.

1. Unknown persons are in the tank park showing a light.
2. When challenged, they refuse to answer.
3. Ignoring the challenge forces the guard (and others) to open fire.
4. After being driven off, the unknown persons encounter the MP's roadblock.

I personally think the phosphorescence is a more reasonable explanation but this is a combat zone where an aggressive posture is preferred to timidity. The CO must think that he will have a hard time proving carelessness or incompetence for he drops the subject and we hear no more of it.

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

In October, the Battalion was rapidly dispatched to assist in the defense against an impending Chinese Communist attack on "White Horse" mountain. This soon became known as one of the most fanatical Communist attacks of the war. For nine days the battle raged. The tankers kept their guns hot night and day defending and counterattacking, finally being reinforced by the 140 Tank Battalion before friendly forces completely reoccupied the mountain. The Battalion was released from it's mission with the 9th ROK Division after supporting 9th ROK Division Units and units of the 2nd Division, including the French Battalion, and was dispatched to the 2nd Division sector.

Episode 31 The Latin Connection

Tank 1-1 has gotten a new replacement for the Bow Gunner position. For the last month, I have heard rumors that the 73rd would getting some ROK soldiers as tank crewmen. Some of the US Infantry units are already participating in such a program. The ROK's would be trained on the job. I do not think this a good idea in tanks because of the skill levels involved and the necessity of prompt, accurate communications in combat. I am relieved to find that our new bow gunner is not a ROK—he is a Puerto Rican.

My joy is short lived. The replacement, Raul Riviera Gonzales, understands little English and speaks it even less. I do not speak any Spanish which is Raul's mother tongue. One ray of light is that he is a whiz in maintaining machine guns and sub-machine guns. I cheerfully assign him that responsibility.

On the negative side, Raul has an attitude problem. He resents and resists having to take orders. I have tried to make him feel that he is a part of the 1-1 tank family with no success. His cot is next to and parallel to mine in the tent so we are less than four feet apart.

This day, after lunch, we are both lying on our cots for a few minutes before we head back to 1-1 tank. The morning has not gone smoothly with Raul dragging his heels at every turn. Now as he lies there looking at me, he is scowling and muttering to himself in what must be Spanish. He is also waving a knife in his right hand. This situation has got to be resolved and soon.

My tank usually splits all of the duties among four men instead of the usual five men on the other tanks. Lt. Parish, our fifth man, is aboard 1-1 tank for combat operations, but is gone the rest of the time. Even if he were present, no one would expect him to share the maintenance functions. In the present situation, I'm getting very little work out of Raul which in effect reduces the functional crew to three; Lutz, the driver and me. While turning this over in my mind I've been looking up at the canvas roof of the tent. I turn my head toward Raul to find him still holding his knife in his hand and sending black looks in my direction.

My pistol belt is lying under the right side of my cot and one of my bayonets is in it. Impulsively, I reach down, draw the bayonet and with a convulsive turn, my body clears the cot. As my feet hit the floor, I lunge at Raul pinning his knife carrying arm and body to his cot. My body is on his, our faces inches apart with the point of my bayonet close to his throat.

I'm staring into his eyes which are wide open. His body is rigid and immobile. Both of us are frozen in position for a long moment, then with my eyes focused on his face, i slowly release him, stand and return to my cot. I don't for an instant take my eyes off of him for the next move is up to him. The result is anti-climatic for Raul does nothing, but starting that afternoon his attitude improves—to my great relief!

There is a sequel to the story. At the end of the month, coinciding with receiving our pay in MPC

(Military Pay Certificates) which are also known as “Funny Money”, we have a Company Party. The EN’s (non-officer types) can buy 6 cans of beer for about 15 cents a can. In an effort to control hoarding of cans of beer, the entire 6 cans are opened before dispensing them to the buyer. The result is that we are all in the mess tent determined to have a good time and finish our beer ration.

The 1st Plt is congregating together. I observe that Raul is attacking his beer ration with gusto. Another thing I notice is that the more beer that he drinks, the better his English skills become. By the time that he becomes a little wobbly on his feet, I can understand almost everything that he is saying. For an instant, I think that I have discovered a new way to teach English; just pour enough beer into the student and the student will become fluent.

The reality of the situation is that Raul has put one over on the platoon. Without the beer party, he could have continued his charade for a long time. I award the point to Raul! The revelation is accepted in high humor at the party on the part of all. However the next day introduces a major change. No one in the platoon accepts the response, “Me no understand” from Raul.

The pressure is building in the Iron Triangle. The enemy is more active now so the 1st Plt. takes part with the rest of the company in shooting up his fortified positions.

< Letters >
3 October, 1952 Friday

Please excuse the mess this letter is in. I’m writing it in the cold turret of my tank.

My Company just went on the Alert. Everything must be ready to move out in five minutes or less. My crew has finished loading on board our personal gear and had made last minute checks on the tank. I’m standing radio guard (operating and monitoring the tank radio) in the turret. My hands are quite cold as you can see by my penmanship. The sun has gone down over the hills and the light is fading rapidly.

This morning I was up on the Main line of Resistance (MLR) engaged in bunker busting. I got credit for seven of them and I would have gotten credit for more if the Forward Observer hadn’t messed me up at the beginning of the (fire) mission. He started giving me firing orders which accounted for one target hit in 20 shots. Amazing, isn’t it! I fired all 48 rounds of 90mm cannon shells; 43 rounds of High Explosive (HE) and 5 rounds of White Phosphorus (WP). The reason that we quit was that we ran out of (cannon) ammo.

I only had three rounds of White Phosphorus left when the Forward Observer (FO) found a target of Chinese running around in a draw. That was fine but he gave me the wrong deflection and range changes so that I wasted all three rounds and didn’t hit anything (of value).

The light is failing so sayonara (good-bye in Japanese).
< End of Letter >

We are constantly shuttling up and back from the MLR to fire at the enemy. On October 3rd we make the trip twice. In the morning I am shooting from a fixed position under the control of a Forward Observer (FO). He can observe enemy positions and movements from his OP that I can’t see myself so he sends elevation and defection changes by radio to my tank. The problem is that he lacks the facility to properly adjust my fire. He finds the targets and tells me where to shoot but we are not hitting the targets as we should.

After I’ve fired 20 rounds, we have only hit one bunker. The situation improves for the next 23 rounds; I hit six bunkers. This is not good enough but I am out of high explosive (HE) rounds.

The next radio message creates a moment of indecision. The FO has seen a group of the enemy gathered in a draw and is calling for a fire mission. A quick conference with Lt. Parish yields the decision to use the three rounds of White Phosphorus (WP) we have remaining. It’s not the best solution, but it is all that we have. WP rounds are typically used to mark targets to show where the rounds are falling or to make smoke to conceal targets. When White Phosphorus hits a human being, it burns clean through the body (also does the same for metals).

After I fire three rounds I am infuriated that we have not hit anything. Out of ammunition, we withdraw from the firing position to return to the company area. The worst part of the mission is that I can’t think of anything I could have done to change the outcome.

The return to the company is marked by the usual flurry of activity to rearm and refuel the 1st Plt. tanks. The crews then perform the required maintenance to clean the guns and service the automotive components (engine, tracks, suspension) of the tanks. Following that, the crew are free to take care of their own needs. I am looking forward to a relaxing evening. This hope is shattered when the order comes at dusk to “Mount Up”, we are going up to the MLR again.

The tent empties quickly as the crews run to the tanks. As soon as the driver starts the engine, I turn on the radio and put on my ear phones. The Platoon is under radio listening silence. For the moment my sole job is to listen for orders so I dig a sheet of paper out of my Musette Bag and start to write a letter to a friend, Frank "Butch" Sadowski. The temperature has fallen to the point where my hands are so cold that it is hard for me to read my own writing. I persist until the lighting fails and I can no longer see the sheet on which I have been writing.

The next few days are just more of the same. Both sides are jockeying for advantage. On the 6th of October the 1st Plt. emerges from the MLR to attack the enemy which is concentrating in front of our forward infantry positions. We are using the same tactics that we have used before. We come out quickly, take up positions on the enemy flank and commence firing on his fortifications. We also expect counter-battery fire and we get it—in spades!

The incoming artillery rounds arriving are large caliber, numerous and on target. The tanks are displacing to find a location outside of the impact area but it is not working. Rounds are landing beside the tank with a thunderous bang. I'm trying to break up enemy trenches and bunkers as fast as possible because the "Incoming" is making me nervous.

Suddenly, there is a terrific WHAM that shakes the tank. I am aware that I am soaking wet. Is it blood? The thought is quickly dismissed. I see that the interior of the turret is drenched with liquid, it covers every surface and it is dripping off of the ceiling. The liquid is water but where did it come from? The answer is soon found. Shrapnel has hit the two 5 Gal. water cans tied to the outside of the turret. The resulting concussion has thrown water in every direction forcing it though every crack and crevice on the surface of the tank.

The tank has not been damaged. Before I have much time to think about what is going on, the platoon is ordered back to the MLR. We make it back to our lines intact and without further incident. Our first stop is the assembly area.

Emerging from the turret, I can see the damage to the water cans. The crew starts examining the tank for any other damage including our Musette Bags which are also strapped to the turret. Mine has a hole in it made by a chunk of shrapnel. I examine the contents. I find that an undershirt from a pair of "Long John" underwear, which I had neatly rolled up, has been perforated. I unroll it and hold it up. To the crews amusement, the garment looks like it was made of fancy lace. The underwear, however, makes the point that we were lucky this time. None of us can recall being in a more severe bombardment.

Episode 32 1st Platoon Supports an Infantry Attack

On the evening of the 7th of October, the 1st Plt. moves to an assembly area behind the MLR. Our task in the morning will be to support the attack of a company of US Infantry. The infantry will attack along a ridge to retake an Observation Post which has changed hands four times so far. The current occupants are the enemy.

The assault unit arrives after dark. With the battlefield illumination reflecting off of the clouds, I can see the infantry finding places to rest on the cold and muddy ground. The tankers will sleep on or in the tanks; we will be cold but will be spared the mud. I watch as one of the infantrymen unloads a goose-down sleeping bag, lays it in the mud, and without removing his muddy boots, climbs into it and zips it up. "Sweet dreams, Buddy", I think as I climb into the turret.

My bed for the night is the gunners seat in the turret. Ed Lutz has a bed on turret floor on the other side of the 90mm cannon. The crew will not pull guard duty tonight due to the fact that we are within our own lines.

I have been napping for several hours. The sitting position cramps my muscles so I shift my body around to relieve the discomfort. It's 0300 (3 am) and I hear noises outside. I get up and look to see what is going on. The Infantry Company is assembling to begin their climb up the ridge. Although the time of their attack is set for 0630 (6:30 am), they have a long, uphill climb to reach their "Jump-Off" positions. I'm surprised by the silence of the troops as they form up and take the trail leading up the ridge. There is no talking, no visible emotion, only an occasional click of one piece of equipment hitting another. Somehow, it seems inappropriate for me to break the silence with words of encouragement or support so I simply turn around and climb back into the turret.

Our part in the drama takes place after sunrise. The standard format of "Shoot and Scoot" is followed by the 1st Plt. From our positions we can't see the Infantry unit with whom we passed the night. After we complete the mission we return to the company area and in the melee of the following days no one can tell us if the OP was recaptured.

< Letters >
8 October, 1952 Thursday

Iron Triangle. Joe (the Chinese Communists) attacked along the 7th Division front (line) a couple of days ago so we came up to support the infantry. One Observation Post has changed hands four times already. Joe had it this morning but the infantry attacked this morning at 6:30. I don't know how they made out.

On the morning of the 6th, my platoon went out to shoot up some bunkers and put pressure on Joe so that he would be partially diverted from the objective of his attack. JOE SHOT BACK! I haven't been under a worse (heavier) bombardment. The shells were really close. We collected much shrapnel (steel fragments from exploding shells impacting the tank). Every member of the crew had something torn up by the stuff (shrapnel). A piece went through my clothing bag and my rolled up woolen undershirt. It looked like lace when I unrolled it. Another big hunk of metal went through a water can. We were drenched with water on the inside of the tank. It (the water) was everywhere, even on the ceiling.

Now for the future. The battle is still going on. Reports of enemy armor have been coming in daily. I don't know when I will be able to write again so don't be discouraged if you don't get my letters right away. <End of Letters>

Episode 33 White Horse Mountain

The fighting is escalating in this sector (Iron Triangle) and we are soon on the road again. This time to support the 9th ROK Div on White Horse Mountain. The enemy attack started on the sixth and the ROK's are in trouble.

The 1st Plt moves onto a flat plain to the west of White Horse. Lt. Parish has his head out of the turret directing the driver so that the tank will avoid the numerous shell craters in front of us. I have my head out of the loader's hatch alternately looking at the craters and White Horse Mountain to my right flank. We are skirting a huge crater on our left when Parish orders the driver to stop. We have arrived at our firing position. The other four tanks complete the movement so that a ragged line is presented to the enemy.

I now have an opportunity to look at the crater next to the tank—it is large enough to put a Jeep into and have nothing showing. I sincerely hope that whatever it was that made the hole will not show up while we are here. Lt. Parish is satisfied with our dispositions so I get into the gunners seat, unlock the turret, detach the cannon from the travel lock and declare that we are ready for business. I observe White Horse through my gunners telescope and it appears deserted. Now it is a matter of watching and waiting.

As the crew settles down to wait, (although the Lt. is on the radio making sure that we are in communication with the proper OP and the other tanks in the 1st Plt.), I think about the job at hand.

The defense of White Horse has been complicated by a new technique that the enemy is using. In order to limit the exposure of his assault troops to artillery fires, the enemy has built a series of deeply entrenched bunkers in front of the ROK defenses. The function of these holes is to have a place for the enemy troops to take cover when our artillery fire is called in on top of him. The enemy is depending on the fact that a short, but finite amount of time elapses between the time the enemy is spotted by our FO's and the time that the artillery shells actually arrive on the target.

The time varies but it can be several minutes before the Fire Direction Center receives a fire mission, plots a solution, alerts the artillery batteries, fires a ranging shot and then fires for effect. In the meantime the enemy reinforcements and supplies can unpredictably scurry from one protected position to the next. The enemy has built enough off these bunkers so that we can not watch all of them all of the time.

From the radio traffic we can determine that the infantry battle is taking place even though we can't see it. The day turns to evening and then night. The tanks remain in place as we listen to the radio, periodically run the engine to charge the tanks' batteries, eat C Rations, drink water, (yes we replaced the water cans) and off-load our bodily wastes.

The Lt says that he wants us on the tank at all times and in the tank most of the time. The practical solution is to use a steel helmet as our toilet and throw the contents over the side. We now have a practical use for the shell crater at the side of the tank.

The Platoon call sign is coming through the radio with a fire mission. I look through the telescope and see the enemy troops at the same time that the Lt. is receiving the call. The enemy is coming over a ridge into full view. The leading wave seems to be running flat out, taking huge bounds as they head in our direction. Now as I see them, it is apparent that they are running on the down slope and picking up speed.

Lutz throws a High Explosive round into the cannon and I hear the Breech Block slam shut. In

confirmation, Lutz yells, “Up” so that the entire crew knows the gun is ready to fire. My brow is against the headrest as I track the leading element of the enemy force. I try to get the permission to fire by announcing, “ready to fire”, but the Lt. is still on the radio telling the OP that we ready and asking permission to engage. We get the go ahead from the OP and Parish changes the radio to the Platoon channel and gives the command to “Open Fire”. The entire procedure has taken about 10 seconds.

I’m bouncing around on my seat like water on a hot griddle. I have an advantage in that I know what the Lt. will say to the rest of the platoon. The words are barely out of his mouth when I shout, “ON THE WAY” and press the firing button. As the cannon is recoiling and Lutz is feeding another round into the breech, I see the shell hit in the center of the four men leading the formation.

The closest man throws up his arms and tumbles down the slope and the other three vanish from sight. I raise the gun to fire at the next group when the cannon shells from the other four tanks hit the group. I can’t see any targets because of the explosions so I hold my fire. The other tanks are in the rapid fire mode pumping shells into the target area. I am about to join them when I see the entire top of the hill leap into the air. The cause is obvious, the Field artillery shells have arrived in the form of air bursts over the target. The platoon immediately ceases it’s fires. Our job is over, the artillery will lash the target with a rain of steel shards until the FO is convinced that the enemy troops have been destroyed.

The enemy has learned something from this experience. The action tapers off. The FO doesn’t see any more targets for us so we settle down for the night. Lt. Parish leaves us to attend an Officers Call leaving the Plt. Sgt. in charge. I think he (Parish) is going to report the days activities and get the plans for tomorrow’s operations.

With Parish away from the tank, I am in charge of the tank which includes mounting a radio guard for the Platoon. On the hour, every hour, the Company Headquarters radio net calls the 1st Plt for a report. If all is well and there are no problems, the response to HQ is brief. In between times we must listen at our radios without breaking radio silence. Ed Lutz and I must share the duty because of Raul’s heavy accent. I can’t be sure that the accent in conjunction with static on the radio won’t result in errors in the messages. The driver is exempted because he will be up every two hours to start the tank engine. Running the engine charges the batteries and gives us confidence that we can move the tank on short notice.

My solution is to run the earphones, microphone and cords out of the turret on to the rear deck. They will just reach my head as I lay on the deck. I have the knack of sleeping until I hear our call sign on the radio at which time I wake up and make our report. Then I go back to sleep. A bonus is that the rear deck gets warm when the engine is run which is a plus on these cold nights.

The rest of the platoon is standing a conventional guard schedule (two hours of guard for each man). I depend on them to detect any enemy activity about our tanks. Perhaps we also have friendly infantry in front of us but we haven’t seen any.

The next few days had us moving about the battlefield shooting at whatever the FO’s could find for us. The arrival of the 73rd Tk had a marked negative effect on Chinese reinforcements on Whitehorse so that the ROK’s were gaining the upper hand.

On one occasion, we passed by a French unit that is attacking enemy positions on Arrowhead Ridge. I could clearly see the lead element, four men plus a radio operator climbing a steep trail. The radio man had a fluorescent panel draped over the radio so that the forward position would be marked. The idea was that our artillery and aircraft would keep their fires ahead of the orange colored panel. The enemy was dropping mortar shells on the trail and I could see the French taking cover when the shells rained down. Despite the enemy fire the French column was making slow but steady progress toward the crest.

< Letters >
17 October, 1952

Things have slackened off the last two days. We have been shifted from the Chorwon Valley to supporting the 17th Inf. Rgt. We haven’t been in action here as yet. We are waiting for the Chinese to attack in force. This is the same ground that I have been shooting over this past summer so I know the region quite well. Joe is supposed to have three infantry regiments behind his lines and we expect him to attack at any time.

The 9th ROK Div. whom we were supporting has finally taken White Horse Ridge (mountain). We also supported the French Battalion at Arrowhead Ridge. In one afternoon’s action, nine of our tanks accounted for 70 enemy casualties. I fired the first shot. That 90mm cannon sure cuts them (the enemy troops) down. The enemy came over the (crest and) slope of the hill running like hell, but before they got 75 yds. we were hitting them. I saw my first burst hit in the middle of a group of Chinese. The ones behind the

burst were obscured by the smoke but I saw the man in front throw up his hands and tumble down the hill. The Chinese looked like rag dolls lying on the slope. When I opened fire the range was about 2900 yds.

I was unaffected by the sight of the bodies. We had stopped a company of Chinese from reinforcing their positions on White Horse but this will not appear in the papers.

A Prisoner of War told our Intelligence people that the Chinese would have taken White Horse Ridge (mountain) if it hadn't been for the tanks. The Chinese had figured out a way to evade the artillery fire but couldn't buck the 90mm. My Lt (Verble Parish) told me this.

My outfit wasn't the only armor there of course. We had roughly 2 1/2 Battalions of 90mm gun tanks and 1/2 Battalion of 76mm gun tanks with 2 Battalions in Reserve. In all we had about 143 90mm gun tanks and 30 76mm gun tanks on the line with 132 90mm gun tanks in Reserve.

If you do read anything in the papers about tank (action) in the ROK Sectors, it will be about ROK tankers because the UN Command does not want the Chinese to know that we are shifting our armor around the battlefield (MLR).

Today I had a shower. The first one in two weeks. We are eating hot Chow (meals) too. It sure beats C-Rations.

<End of Letters>

Episode AA. McLaws Draws First Blood

We have two tank crews sharing a bunker on the MLR. Tank 1-1 and Tank 1-2 are occupying firing positions on the ridge about 70 yards apart. Our section of two tank crews has been ordered to deepen and improve the connecting trenches between the bunker and the tanks on the ridge. If under artillery fire, we need to be able to move along the trench without exposure to enemy fire. Six or seven of us are shoveling in the trench line but Puchalsky and McLaws are up on the ridge cleaning the cannon and other weapons on tank 1-2. They are using a method frowned upon by the Army. Gasoline is poured into a steel helmet and a little engine oil added. After washing the gun parts in this mixture they are allowed to dry leaving a thin film of oil on the parts.

Puchalsky has been having a hard time with McLaws as his loader. McLaws resists operating as a team player and doesn't take orders well.

The digging crew has discovered why the connecting trench is so shallow—there is a rocky ledge at the bottom of the trench. We are pounding on it with sledge hammers to no avail. Suddenly, a shot rings out and we all instinctively turn toward the sound.

I see Puchalsky and McLaws standing next to the tank. McLaws has his hands covering his face and head and his knees are buckling: Puchalsky is standing next to him with a 45 cal pistol in his right hand. For an instant the diggers are shocked into immobility trying to understand what we are seeing. Someone says, "My Gawd, Puchalsky has shot McLaws".

Has their disagreement led to a shooting? McLaws has nearly crumpled to the ground when he pulls a handkerchief from his pocket, wraps it around his head and straightens his body. Again his legs are collapsing as Puchalsky tries to get a good look beneath the handkerchief. No one in the trench has moved when Puchalsky looks down hill at us and makes a sign with his hands (still holding the pistol) that everything is all right. The digging detail goes back to work while McLaws is off to see one of the Medics.

Soon we are all treated to an explanation of what we saw or thought that we saw. After cleaning the tank cannon and other tank weapons, Puchalsky and McLaws decided to clean their personal weapons. McLaws drew his handgun, cycled the pistol slide and then removed the magazine (instead of first removing the magazine) which left a cartridge in the chamber. He was holding a loaded pistol.

Mistake number two took place when he lowered the hammer by pointing the pistol at the helmet full of gas and oil and pulling the trigger. The pistol fired, the bullet went into the helmet, followed the contour of the helmet making a 180 degree turn and came out again hitting McLaws in the ear. The flesh wound and resulting shock caused all of the gyrations that we saw from the trench.

A short time later I saw McLaws and we exchanged a few words. In mock chagrin, I told him that no one would believe our claim that the 1st Platoon is the best platoon in the battalion when they find out that we are shooting ourselves. I made a few more comments in the same vein and then McLaws removed himself from my presence. Having delivered my bit of satirical humor, I dismissed it from my mind.

Later in the afternoon, I was sitting in the bunker. I believe that I was trying to fry a couple of pancakes in my messkit on the Yukon (gasoline fueled) stove which provided heat for the Bunker. I was not doing well. Improvising a batter from a package of 5-in-1 rations, the pancakes were coming out like bananas sliced lengthwise. The door opened and Lt. Parish came in. He got right down to business. "Rosinski, What

size round wounded McLaws?"

I was stunned by the question and needed time to think so I said, "What?" Now Parish showed some impatience as he deliberately rephrased his question, "When the artillery fire hit the ridge - and McLaws took the binoculars up on the ridge to locate the source - and the round exploded near him - and a piece of shrapnel hit him in the ear,—what size artillery round was it?"

Now I was beginning to get the picture. All wounds to soldiers are reported by the medics and McLaws either from my remarks or from a reluctance to report that he had shot himself claimed the wound was caused by enemy action.

I didn't want to have any part in wherever this was leading so I merely said, "I don't know sir, I wasn't there; you will have to ask McLaws". That seemed to satisfy the Lieutenant and that was the last of the discussion.

There is a sequel to the shooting. Some weeks later while in the Company rear, the entire Company was drawn up in parade formation and the 1st Platoon looked on in disbelief as McLaws was awarded the Purple Heart for being wounded by enemy fire.

Episode 34. Tank 1-1 Fights Around The Clock

One of our outposts on a ridge is under attack. The 1st Plt has been brought up to give direct fire support to the defending infantry. There is no way to put a tank onto the outpost itself so the Platoon takes up firing positions on the flanks. On the right flank is another ridge with a one lane road cut into the side. The road stops near the top but Lt. Parish thinks that if a tank can make it up the road, we can fire on the enemy line of attack.

The Assignment is given to 1-1 tank, the other four tanks will take up supporting positions on flat ground below and to the rear. Our driver has the job of driving up the narrow cut, a rock wall to his right and a steep embankment to the left. There is no room for the tank to turn around once the driver starts up the road, and because we are under enemy observation, the full crew including Lt. Parish is in the tank.

The road ends at a point where the tank cannon can sweep the entire right flank of the ridge under attack. In minutes, the turret is ready for the first fire mission.

The driver and bog gunner are sent down the road to the comparative shelter of the base of the hill to our rear. There is no need for them because we can't move the tank to evade artillery or anti-tank fire. In this high risk situation, common sense dictates that we have as few people in the tank as possible.

Our FO (Forward Observer) is in an OP at a higher elevation and to our rear. From there he can see more of the enemy activities than we can. Where to begin? The first step is to disrupt the attack and freeze the enemy in place. Starting at the forward enemy positions at 1,000 yds, I fire HE shells into the ridge. Then, working toward the enemy rear, I fire at the trenches blowing open holes in the trench walls to restrict the flow of men and supplies to the forward positions. This action is like stirring up an ant hill. There are more targets than I can engage. Then as suddenly as the enemy troops have appeared, they disappear from view.

One of the enemy troops breaks cover and running hard, heads for his front line position. Without thinking, I turn the cannon toward him and fire. The shell bursts short (too low) and behind him. Lutz reloads and yells, "Up". I'm leading the runner as if I was shooting at a rabbit when I yell, "On the way" and fire the cannon. This time the shell skims over the crest of the ridge without exploding. I know it passed close to the runner because he ducks and is running even faster. I hear Lutz say, "Up" as I continue to track the runner.

I'm in the act of firing when the enemy turns his face toward me. He then flings himself forward in a swimmers racing dive straight over the edge of a cliff and vanishes from view. His act astonishes me to the point that I hold my fire. He is gone from my sight so there is no way of determining the result of his action. If that soldier is still alive he must be hurting something awful.

There is no time to discuss what has happened. I turn back to the task at hand. The tempo is slower now. The enemy is aware of the intervention by 1-1 Tank and he has gone to ground. Now the procedure is to methodically pick his positions apart searching for troops, munitions and communications routes and then destroy them.

The slow, but sustained fire, is consuming the HE rounds carried in the tank. The Lt. sends coded messages over the radio to inform the CO of the number of rounds remaining. The platoon is using a color code to describe the amount of fuel and ammunition remaining on board. For example if we have 10 to 15 rounds remaining, the Lt. would say that, "The color of the 'baseballs' is green". The CO will then have a resupply of Ammo driven up to us. He had better hurry because we now have only two HE rounds remaining in the tank (plus five rounds of WP).

A new attack is launched by the enemy. Infantry is running through the trench network toward our outpost. I can see helmets bobbing above the lip of the trenches. Our two HE rounds are quickly fired followed by the five WP and the cannon is empty. I'm now machine gunning the trenches with the turret mounted, co-axial 30 cal. gun. I can slow up the advance but I can't stop it. The combined defensive fires from our outpost and light artillery continue to build and now I can see the results. The attack loses momentum and is repulsed.

The Lt. gets my attention; our reload of Ammo has arrived. He and I exit the turret and I see a Jeep tucked in behind the rear of Tank 1-1 where there is some protection from enemy fire. In the driver's seat is a Sgt. and behind him, the rear of the vehicle is stuffed with gleaming 90mm cannon shells. I think it takes a lot of "Guts" to drive that Jeep loaded with a highly explosive cargo into the clear view of the enemy.

Speed is of the essence to get the rounds into the tank. We quickly set up an assembly line. The Sgt. takes a round from the Jeep, hands it up to the Lt. on the rear deck, who then hands it to me. I quickly move to the loaders hatch in the top of the turret and lower the round into the hands of Ed Lutz who stows it away into the stowage rack. By the time I turn around and step back to the Lt., he has another round to pass to me. I lose track of the number of rounds but it must be more than 20 and less than 40.

When I turn around again, the Lt. and the Sgt. are standing on the rear deck engaged in conversation. I walk to join them. We have our backs to the enemy and facing the rocky wall at the right side of the road. Suddenly, I see a twinkling on the rock wall and a puff of dirt. The Sgt. shouts' "Sniper" galvanizing the group into action. As I spin about, I am standing the furthest from the turret and then my mind goes blank.

My next recollection is finding myself sitting in the gunners seat with my hands together, fingers joined and my thumbs revolving about each other. The effect is what is called "Twiddling your Thumbs". Behind me, the Lt. is settling into the tank commanders seat. He is amused. He tells me that in the rush to get undercover, I passed both the Sgt. and him, leaped into the air and without my feet touching the turret, disappeared into the tank commanders hatch like a rabbit into a hole.

My action, in addition to being a source of amusement, was effective in that I am sitting here with a whole skin. Now I begin looking through the telescope for my "friend" the sniper. I can't find him so we resume the process of shooting up anything that is of value to the enemy. In the process, the Sgt. drives his Jeep away into safer surroundings.

The day is drawing to a close and a decision must be made to provide support for our outpost. The best solution is to withdraw Tank 1-1 and replace it with another tank and a fresh crew. The narrow road and confined shooting position makes this a risky switch. Instead, it is proposed that another tank crew man the position for the night shift. Bruce Whitehouse will be the gunner and man the cannon. His loader and tank commander will complete the crew in the turret. Bruce can use my range card for shooting at night when our optical sights are useless. The hope is that after a day of intense fighting, the enemy will use the night to rest and regroup.

The change of crews is soon made. I can't recall who becomes the third man in the turret to act as the tank commander. For me the important thing is to get some food and sleep. The night passes quickly for me for I sleep soundly. When morning comes, I get up ready to relieve Bruce on the gun.

The Lt. fills me in on what happened overnight. The story that I am told astonishes me. In the night, the enemy launched a major attack on the outpost. The outpost called the OP announcing that, "The Chinese were in the wire". They wanted artillery brought down immediately right in front of their bunker. Using the range card, Bruce pointed the cannon and fired. The response from the FO on the MLR in the rear chilled his blood. "Cease firing, you have hit our bunker". Bruce later told me that when he heard that his heart skipped a beat. In a moment the outpost came on the air, "Keep firing, you are shooting right into them". The cannon shells broke up the attack and sent the enemy reeling back to their own positions. A relative quiet then descended on the ridge.

Bruce's activities continued later on that same night when the sound of a vehicle was heard in the valley. It was coming from the direction of the enemy lines and sounded like a tank. The chances of hitting a moving target under such conditions is very low, but worthy of a try. Bruce fired a couple of shells toward the target location and was rewarded by the sight of something burning out there. At dawn, no trace of the target remained. The best judgment of the FO was that it was a self propelled gun that was hit and set afire. The fire was then extinguished and the tracked vehicle salvaged by the enemy.

Bruce was quite satisfied with his nights work. So was I. He had demonstrated his shooting skills under difficult conditions. This first full day of operations was proof of my often repeated contention that Tank 1-1 was the BEST TANK OF THE BEST PLATOON OF THE BEST COMPANY OF THE BEST TANK

BATTALION IN KOREA.

The first shift is in the turret again and it is business as usual. The fire missions are being executed when the 90mm cannon refuses to fire. There is no time for problem solving. The decision is promptly made. We must back the tank down the road and replace it with another 1st Platoon tank. As soon as the exchange is made, Tank 1-1 is off to the Ordinance Maintenance shop in the rear area.

Episode 35. A Malfunctioning Cannon Seeks Professional Help

A Jeep is leading our two vehicle column as we make our way to the rear. I have an opportunity to think about my cannon. The last time it quit on me was at Hellsgate. A maintenance man came out to the Company area to fix it at that time. Now we are going to a better equipped facility for the repair.

The repairs are promptly started, but it is late in the day so the crew of tank 1-1 is driven back to the B Company bivouac area where we spend the night at our tent in the Company area. The next day the Maintenance Team finishes the repair but the mechanics haven't been able to define the problem. After disassembling the gun and putting it back together, it now works. Why the gun is so temperamental is still a mystery. As the gun now will fire, the control of the tank reverts back to me. The return to our platoon must be coordinated through the company so we drive to it to spend our second night.

With only one crew in the tent, it is rather lonely. I think about home and the fact that it has been several weeks since I have written. After dinner, I get out some writing materials and write a few letters to people back home. The others have gone to bed before I finish by candle light. The oil stove in the tent has been off for several hours and the cold penetrates everything as I lie on my cot. I have guard duty in the morning from 0400 to 0500. Tomorrow we will drive back to rejoin the platoon on the MLR.

Episode AC. McLaws Strikes Back

Living in bunkers in the winter is more comfortable than living in tents. It is however, a matter of trade-offs; no showers but the bunkers have Yukon stoves which use gasoline for fuel rather than oil. This means that we can run them all day long because we get plenty of gasoline for the tanks. In fact, the two tank sections deployed in this bunker has a fuel dump less than 100 yards away. When we need gas we just walk over and carry a couple of cans back. This is a luxury that the infantry does not enjoy. When they are in these bunkers gas rationing is enforced just like oil use is controlled in our own company rear area.

This particular bunker has two sound power telephones mounted at the only entrance door about three feet from the Yukon stove. One phone connects the bunker to the next higher command position; the other to Tank 1-2 which is in a firing position on the ridge above us. Tank 1-1 is just outside the door on a relatively flat piece of ground on an otherwise steep slope. The tank is also connected by phone wires so that we can mount the tank and also use the tank radios if required. All things considered, we are doing very well for ourselves.

The last platoon briefing made a point of informing us that captured prisoners have told Army Intelligence that the enemy is trying to capture tankers for interrogation. We need to exercise more caution when on guard duty.

Our night guard duty calls for one man to be in the turret of Tank 1-2 (connected by phone to the bunker), and one man to be in the bunker monitoring both phones. The guard duty rotates in the platoon in two hour shifts.

One night I have the phone watch in the bunker at about 0200 (2 am) and McLaws is in the turret of Tank 1-2. I have discovered that enough light leaks from the cracks in the Yukon stove to permit me to read by it's light. Only rarely can I get hold of a book to read in Korea but this is one of those times. I'm holding the Pocket Book novel close to the light from the stove when I hear the report of a gunshot!

I throw down the book and leap to my feet, my right hand grasps my pistol and shoves it deep into the holster. As I pull my hand up the pistol comes free, it is loaded and cocked and ready to fire. I recall the warning about the enemy wanting to capture tankers. If enemy infiltrators are assaulting McLaws position, they may be getting ready to toss grenades into the bunker.

I head straight out the door with the pistol out in front of me. When I emerge I'm moving fast and I realize that I can't see a thing. My night vision has been destroyed by reading the book. Suddenly, I'm caught under my chin and my legs go out from under me. For a moment I'm flying and then I hit the ground and the wind is knocked out of me. For an instant, I'm stunned but then all is quiet. I've stopped sliding down the slope, I'm flat on my back with right my leg doubled up against some object. The pistol is still in my outstretched arm, cocked and ready to fire.

In a few seconds I realize that the deeper shadow over my left shoulder is Tank 1-1 so I crawl over

to it for additional cover. I don't hear any movement or firing so I call out to McLaws by name.

It takes several calls but he does answer. I ask, "Was that you who fired that shot?" He cheerfully acknowledges it. "Why?", I ask. "I saw a ROK stealing some gasoline cans so I shot at him", said McLaws. He apparently thought it was a good idea to shoot into our gasoline dump.

I'm at the end of my rope. I have some aches and pains and need to get back to my guard post. On my way back into the bunker I entertain a few black thoughts about our former Marine Corp Gunnery Sergeant. When I enter the bunker I see that everyone else is still sleeping soundly.

The next morning I attempt to determine what exactly happened last night when I ran out of the Bunker. I see the commo wire running from Tank 1-1 to the bunker and it is about five feet off of the ground. I must have been caught under the chin by the wire, upended and dumped down the slope. An engineers stake protrudes from the sloping ground at the location where I stopped sliding. It's a wonder that I was not seriously hurt. I have a few words with McLaws but he is unable to understand why I am upset just because he fired his pistol at a thief.

< Letters >
31 October, 1952

I just can't seem to get into the writing mode lately. I came off the line last night. My 90mm cannon needs repairs so I came back to have the Ordinance people fix it. It (the cannon) went out on me while I was shooting at the Chinese. The cannon got fixed today, so tomorrow I should be going back on the line.

From our (firing) position, I could see Chinese running and flying all over the hill. In one fire mission of 5 or 6 rounds, I got credit for 10 Chinese. The firing position is cut out of the side of a hill and has room for only one tank, so we take turns firing from there. Yesterday, my tank and two others got credit for 50 to 60 Chinese, 6 bunkers, 3 ammo dumps and some trenches. Today, the rest of the platoon got credit for 130 Chinese, 100 yds of trenches, a 76mm antitank gun and a 57mm Recoilless Rifle.

Of course there is another side of the coin. A sniper was firing at the Lt., a Sgt. and me when we got out of the tank for more 90mm Ammo and a 76mm Anti-tank gun fired at us but both missed.

I have most of my cold weather gear now. The weather is cool but above freezing. The nights are crisp and the days pleasant. Today it hailed for about 15 minutes so we may get a cold spell.

Every time I go out it gets easier to pull the trigger on the Chinese. I see the infantry casualties coming back in the ambulances dirty and bloody from the fighting. The least I can do is to hit every Chinese I see so that the infantry never has to meet him in combat. I have at least 20 Chinese casualties to my credit which are verified and I don't know how many others that have not been reported.

Everyone has gone to bed except me. I'm writing by candle light. I'm on guard duty from 4 to 5 this morning. Tonight is Halloween.
<End of Letters>

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

October, 1952 will long be remembered by members of the battalion for many reasons. The tenacious, aggressiveness and heroism displayed by the tankers during this period inspired the admiration and acclaim of all the units with which they operated.

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

Without pausing for breath, the battalion plunged into the next operation, being committed in four different division sectors for the "Triangle Hill" attack. From the 9th ROK Division on the right, through the 2nd and 7th U.S. Infantry Divisions, to the 2nd ROK Division on the left, the front exploded. The Hill 598 complex, better known to the veterans as "Jane Russell", "Snipers Ridge", "Pinepoint", and "Pikes Peak" erupted in an inferno of violence. "Triangle' was seized the first day and tank fire assisted in the taking of "Jane Russell" and "Pikes Peak".

The 73rd continued to support the attack on the 598 Hill mass until the third week of the battle when, on 5 November, they were ordered to move to Yon-chon in support of the 1st ROK Division. The 7th U.S. Infantry Division moved to I U.S. Corps Reserve.

Episode EB Repairing the Phone Line

November 20, 1952 The bunker assigned to the crew of Tank 1-1 is usually also the command bunker for the 1st Platoon. This is the current situation so we have two telephone sets in the bunker. One of the phones is connected by commo wire (two conductor insulated wire) to the MLR. The duty operator must

call the next higher command according to a fixed schedule to confirm that the system is operating properly and that all is well with the 1st Platoon.

It is also the common practice to have the duty operator “fix” the wire should communications to the MLR be interrupted. Tonight it is my turn to stand phone guard. As luck would have it, the phone to the MLR goes dead and I must find the cause of the problem and fix it.

It is just before midnight when I leave the bunker with a couple of hand tools, a flashlight and a phone set to “run the wire”. I grasp the commo wire as I exit the bunker sliding the wire through my hand and follow the wire down off of the ridge toward the MLR.

My foul humor engendered by this task is matched by tonight’s foul weather. It has been raining intermittently all day and the rain clouds overhead make this a dark night with very poor visibility. Reaching into my memory for help in following the wire, I recall that I am on a narrow road leading down into a small valley. The road passes through the valley and is flanked on both sides with mine fields.

It is along the narrow corridor formed by the road and the mine fields that has become the favorite place for the laying of dozens of commo lines running in every which direction. The line that I am following is one of many, some are active but others are not.

The most common problem with the phone lines is a severed wire due to enemy artillery fire or one of our vehicles catching wires in the tracks or wheels and breaking them. I have been quite careful not to let the parted end of my wire slide through my fingers so when I feel the broken end I stop immediately.

The next step is to connect the sound power phone that I have been carrying to the end of the wire that I have followed from the bunker. When I ring the circuit a familiar voice answers on the other end. I am relieved that the circuit is working from the bunker to my present location.

Now, where is the other end of the break in the wire? Feeling around on the ground I find a vast number of wires. I must connect the hand set to a wire, ring for a connection and if I get the wrong party on the other end (or no party on the other end),disconnect the phone and try another wire.

I begin uttering a few well chosen curses as I realize that I am moving toward the mine field in my quest for more wires to try and in the dark I have no idea where the mine field begins.

This location is part of a defensive line interlaced with strong points and anti-personnel mine fields. The use of a flashlight is not a good idea so I have been shielding the light as I check the wires. Finally I pick up the end of another broken wire, hook up the phone and connect with the right number. As fast as I can I reconnect our phone line and head back to the bunker. I am cold and wet but at least I am away from the edge of that mine field without tripping any of them.

Back in the bunker I sit next to the stove to dry off and wait for the phones to ring or for my replacement to relieve me.

< Letters>
22 November, 1952 Saturday

Now that “Ike” has been elected you had better plan on being in the Army.

I just thought I’d mention last months record. My platoon was on the line for 28 days. This month my platoon has almost three weeks on the line. It looks like I may get about two straight months on the line. Anyway, here’s the score from 5 October to 4 November, 1952.

Enemy Troops Killed	*169*
Tanks or Self Propelled Guns	*1*
76mm Anti-tank Guns	*2*
57mm Recoilless Rifles	*5*
Machine Gun Emplacements	*3*
Bunkers damaged or destroyed	*150*

This action took place at White Horse Ridge (mountain) and in support of the 7th Infantry Division in the Iron Triangle.

Now we are supporting the 1st ROK Division on the Imjin River about 35 miles north of Seoul. I’m living in a bunker and haven’t had a bath in two weeks.

Today at 0930, 35 tanks opened fire at the Chinese (positions). I was to have been in on it but my 90mm (cannon) wasn’t working. Maybe I’ll earn my combat pay tomorrow.
< End of Letters>

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

Moving into prepared positions on the Main Line of Resistance on 9 November 1952, the battalion participated in “Operation Kickoff”, firing in battery against pre-selected enemy fortifications for an intensive four-hour shelling. Many other direct fire missions were accomplished by the battalion in support of the 1st ROK Division until early in the morning of 11 December, 1952 they were called upon to participate in support of friendly counter-attacks to recover the vital outpost known as “Little Nori”.

< Letters >

My crew is living in a bunker on the reverse slope on the MLR. The tank firing position is on the crest of the ridge above us. There is enough space so that when the tank backs up several yds it is concealed. When driven forward, the turret and gun are exposed for firing. To reach the tank from the bunker, we must run uphill for 50 yds. or so.

< End of Letters >

Episode 36. Caught In The Open With My Pants Down

Our one and only single hole latrine is located about 100 yds to the right and downhill of the bunker. It is a simple wooden box with a hole in the top. Anyone occupying this seat has a grand view of the reverse slope, the bunker, the road below running parallel to the MLR and the barren fields beyond. Likewise, the occupant is on exhibition to God and everybody else who may be passing by.

This morning, November 23rd, has the makings of a pleasant winter day. At 10 am, I am sitting on the latrine with a magazine in my hand. My meditations are shattered by the sound of incoming enemy artillery shells. The explosive blasts are in the draw between the latrine and our bunker. The troops that I can see are rapidly disappearing into the bunker or other fortifications.

I immediately conclude that I have finished my current assignment and must take shelter, but where? The magazine goes flying as my pants come up. I can’t cross the draw to the bunker because shells continue to rain down upon the draw. I can’t run to the road, it is open territory without defensive works. I turn uphill toward the trenches on the ridge line.

The adrenaline is flooding my body as I skim over the ground (or so it seems to me). When I reach the trench line, I find I can duck into a covered weapons position. It is heavily sandbagged and shaped like the letter “U” with the open arms facing the enemy. It is obviously intended to serve as a machine gun nest. Now that I am under cover, I have time to look around. The covered and sandbagged roof is open at the front and rear. Carefully, I look toward the bunker; I can see no one and in addition the rate of the arrival of incoming shells has diminished.

The artillery barrage has scared me but also makes me angry. If I can get to my tank with a few of the crew, we may be able to return fire onto the enemy line. By shouting toward the bunker, I am able to talk to my crew. The message is simply, “Leave the bunker and get to the tank to return fire”. The consensus of those in the bunker is that the risk is too great. The reply is a disappointment but is rooted in common sense. Risking a tank crew to thumb your nose at the enemy is a bad wager.

There is nothing to do now except to wait it out. Soon the enemy will get tired of this exercise (I hope). Now my mind focuses on the arrival of each shell. The shells are passing close overhead to fall on the reverse slope behind me. I begin to tighten my body as the shells pass over. I’m lying at the bottom of the gun position with my body curled around the sandbagged firing platform.

One of the unfortunate consequences of being shelled without a means of responding is that it gives me too much time to think. I realize that my shelter is in view of the enemy FO. If the FO decides to destroy this position or if by accident the artillery fires a “Short” round, I will be history. The sounds of arriving shells, explosions and shock waves is getting to me. I no longer think of retaliation but only of survival.

When the shelling finally stops, I have been physically and emotionally pummeled. The enemy has scored on the 1st Plt today but we are still here. Another day is coming and I look forward to repaying them in kind.

Episode EA

<Letters>

24 November, 1952

Yesterday my Platoon was heavily shelled by the Chinese. We received 54 incoming rounds and my position got 16 of them. The bunker held up OK but we are putting on more sandbags anyway.

I got caught on the top of a hill when the barrage started and couldn't get down so I jumped into a machine gun emplacement to wait it out.

A general was up here 30 minutes before we got the shelling. Too bad he wasn't here for the fireworks.

<End of Letter>

Today is November 25th and for the rest of the 1st Plt it is another ordinary day on the line. The bunker in which I am living accommodates one tank crew. For the moment I am alone enjoying the warmth of the gasoline fired "Yukon" sheet metal stove which is the source of heating for the bunker and a means to cook (or heat) whatever food comes our way.

Today should have special meaning for me, it is my 23rd birthday. I am somewhat surprised but thankful that I am alive to celebrate it. In July, I did not think that I had much chance of surviving combat but I have now accumulated five straight months of Combat Pay without receiving a scratch. (I choose not to count my stay in the hospital for self inflicted burns).

There is no real celebration for my birthday save for sincere best wishes from the crew of Tank 1-1. The focus of attention quickly returns to the primary goals of the crew; stay alert and stay alive.

Two days later, the entire company in concert with the 8th U.S. Army does have a celebration. It is Thanksgiving Day. In recognition of it, every effort is made to serve a turkey dinner to the troops, not only in the rear but also in the front lines. We have a mini-Holiday when a headquarters Jeep driven by a Mess Sgt. arrives at the bunker loaded with metal insulated chests. The chests contain the fixings for a complete, hot turkey dinner plus dessert and coffee. The transfer of food is speedily accomplished and the Jeep careens back down the hill. The Sgt. has more stops to make at other bunkers before his mobile mess duty is completed. The fact that the enemy and his artillery is on the other side of the ridge is an added inducement to keep moving.

An old Army adage is "Don't bunch up". The crew carries the food to the relative security of the bunker where, as we eat and socialize, we can let down our guard for a brief time. Too soon, it is over and we return to our duties as Thanksgiving becomes a fading memory.

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

In an intensive week-long action the battalion supported counter-attacks from fixed positions on the Main Line of Resistance and from mobile positions on both sides of the Imjin River. At times the 73rd was subject to intense anti-tank fire while firing on both "Little Nori" and Chinese-held "Big Nori".

Episode ED Parish Calls In The Artillery
November 27

Episode EC Tank 1-3 Debates Who is the Best Gunner

November 29 The Heavy Section of the 1st Platoon consists of Tanks 1-1, 1-2 and 1-3. The positions that we are occupying on the MLR place Tank 1-1 on a ridge behind and above the other two tanks. From my firing position, I can see Tank 1-2 off to my left front and Tank 1-3 off to my right front. As is usually the case, the bunker for the crew of 1-1 is the command bunker and has phone lines to the tanks to our front and the MLR behind us.

I have the phone guard and I am enjoying having nothing to do but sit by the stove with my thoughts. A rude interruption arrives in the form of an explosion. It has the characteristic sharp crack of a high velocity tank cannon.

Surely not ours, I think, because we have been told that we can fire only when fired upon and to otherwise conserve the tank ammunition. My curiosity aroused, I go out of the bunker and look for the source of the gunfire. Another blast has just been sent winging toward the enemy lines—and it came from Tank 1-3.

I hurry back to the bunker, pick up the phone and call 1-3's bunker. One of the crew answers the call and my question regarding the firing (which I might add is continuing). The response that I get is less than reassuring.

It seems that the Tank Commander, Sgt. Cletus Fryer and the Gunner, Cpl. Ed Robinson have been engaged in a debate over which of them is the better tank gunner. I get the feeling from the phone conversation that the two have had a nip or so of strong spirits during their discussion. Exhausting the verble arguments without a satisfactory result has caused the debate to escalate to a trial by fire.

When I hang up the phone I am faced with a dilemma. Although I do have the phone watch, I do not outrank Sgt. Fryer. He is in charge of Tank 1-3 and reports directly to Lt. Parish who is away from the 1st Platoon at this time. Meanwhile the firing is still going on.

Now the other phone connected to the Battalion Headquarters is ringing. When I answer the phone a strange voice is demanding to know why the tanks are firing without orders to do so. It seems that HQ has been called by the Observation Post in our sector and they too want some answers.

I start mentally back-pedalling and stalling because I don't quite know what to say. The sounds of increased numbers and varieties of explosions that reach my ears cause me to move to the door and look outside the bunker. I can see that enemy artillery fire is hitting our positions. I am relieved to tell HQ that we are receiving "Incoming Rounds" and that a tank is delivering Counter-battery fire. To strengthen my claim, I stick the phone out of the bunker door and transmit the sounds of the bursting shells.

My response seems to placate the caller because he acknowledges my explanation and hangs up. I consider that we have been very fortunate to have been handed an excuse for our rash behavior. The prompt retaliation by the enemy in shelling us has done the platoon a favor.

< Letters >
2 December, 1953 Tuesday

Imjin River. It's very cold here with two inches of snow on the ground. The temperature is 9 Degrees Fahrenheit and still dropping. I have guard duty tonight too!

I had a shower today for the 1st time in over a month. I didn't get clean but at least I got the 1st layer of dirt off.

The boys opened a fifth (of whiskey) tonight—need I say more.
< End of Letters >

Episode EE The Sunday Paper is Delivered
December 7

< Letters >
10 December, 1952

Imjin River. I will probably go on the line in five days. Christmas at the Front. Well, it figures because I spent Thanksgiving there. It is colder than Hell.
< End of Letters >

Episode EF The New Sergeant's Bunk
December 18

< Letters >
19 December 1952

Imjin River. The Chinese are attacking around "Big Nori" and "Little Nori". I was up there yesterday and I saw enemy bodies lying on the slope of "Big Nori" by using a telescope. We are supposed to relieve a tank outfit up there as soon as the weather breaks. The firing positions are only 1800 to 2000 yds from the Noris'.

The Chinese said over the radio that they would be in Seoul by Christmas. Maybe! He will go through HELL before he gets there.

Today I went to a Shower Unit for the first time in three weeks.

Last night someone sawed a Master Sergeants bunk in half. It was in this tent too. He is very irritated but he doesn't know who did it. I think someone doesn't like him very much.
< End of Letter>

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

After the successful recapture of "Little Nori", the 73rd was relieved to move to the 2nd Infantry Division sector where, during Christmas week 1952, all elements of the battalion participated in a Christmas party for 600 children of war-stricken Sorom-Ni.

< Letters >
26 December, 1952 Friday

I'm in Reserve now and expect to be here for the rest of the holidays. I don't expect to go back to the Noris' because the fighting has died down over there.

This is the beginning of my sixth month in Korea. Only 2 1/2 months and "Rotation Gonna Set Me Free". HALLELUJAH!

It sure is cold. No snow but really cold. I sleep in a squad tent with two (oil) stoves, a down sleeping bag and a pair of Long Johns (underwear) and I still wake up cold at 0400.

I went to a Christmas party on the 24th. It was for Korean children and I had a pretty fair time. The kids entertained us with some singing and dancing. They were good too!
< End of Letter >

Today is December 30th. I have been notified that I and several dozen other troopers have been promoted in grade. I am now a Sergeant. I have been functioning as a Sgt. or SFC for over 15 months so there is no change in my job description. I will be getting more money, but as long as I am in B Co., there is no place to spend it.

One change does take place. I am in a group of tankers when I hear a question that begins as "Sgt!". I quickly look about to see which of the Company Sgt's joined the group. It takes several seconds to realize that the question is directed to me!

< Letters >
31 December, 1952 New Years Eve

I didn't do any shooting at the Noris' but I did see the place. Many dead Chinese. There may be more action in this new area. It is "Old Baldy-T-Bone-Porkchop". Nice place for a tank battle and "Joe" has some that he has been saving.
< End Of Letter>

Episode AB McLaws Plays With Fire

Back in the company rear again. We are living in the large tent which holds the entire enlisted compliment of the 1st Platoon. The safety equipment on the tanks is being inspected so many of the portable fire extinguishers have been brought into the tent. The weather is very cold and we are running our two oil stoves at about maximum heat. This evening I have been away from the tent and upon my return hear an amusing tale.

It seems that the combustion in the oil stove nearest the entrance to the tent started to "Run Away". This situation had occurred before and the solution is to shut off and remove the oil line, disconnect the flue (which extends upward through the tent roof), and let the excess oil in the firepot burn out. That is a messy business.

Failure to take prompt action would result in a super hot fire which causes the flue to become red hot. When the glowing flue progresses up to the top of the tent, the canvas tent easily is ignited. On the other hand, the stove could be carried out of the tent using asbestos gloves. The oil could burn itself out away from the tent.

The Platoon members taking their ease on their cots decide to move the stove outside. One pair of gloves is in the tent and McLaws puts them on. Another soldier heads out to his tank to get another pair of gloves to help move the hot stove which is filled with burning oil.

McLaws decides to move the stove on his own. Knocking aside the flue, he picks up the stove and turns toward the open tent door. Unfortunately, as he turns, he tilts the stove and a stream of burning oil sprays on the wooden floor. Pandemonium breaks out. Soldiers are scurrying away from the flames and in the confusion, McLaws, with stove in hand, backs through the tent door.

The makeshift tent door has a protruding threshold which catches McLaws' boot heel. As McLaws falls backward, he throws the stove over his head into the company street. McLaws has escaped without injury!

Meanwhile back in the tent, the troops grab the fire extinguishers and smother the flames. No harm done but everyone got a good scare.

There is to be sure, a sequel to this story. It seems that the Company Commander was exiting the Orderly Room (Tent) at the exact moment that McLaws came tumbling out of the tent with stove in hand. The flames were very much in evidence inside the tent. It must have been an impressive sight.

Several weeks later, the Company stood on Parade and watched the incredible scene of McLaws receiving the Soldiers Medal for his heroic efforts in saving the platoon members from a fiery fate.

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

The arrival of the year 1953 found the 73rd in the vicinity of Yonchon, an area previously occupied by the 73rd Tank Battalion, once again a part of the 7th U.S. Infantry Division. Elements of the Battalion were strategically placed to fulfill the 73rd's primary role of close support. This was accomplished by preparing and occupying defensive positions on the MLRs, and counterattack positions in the forward areas.

Episode 37. Operation Smack or the Spud Hill Raid

The members of the 1st Plt are informed that we are participating in another raid beyond the MLR with the objective of securing prisoners. B Co. will provide armor support for an Infantry Plt. that will assault enemy positions on T-Bone Hill. As far as the 1st Plt is concerned the code name for the operation is "Spud Hill". The 1st Plt assignment is to rapidly move to the western flank of T-bone and direct cannon fire on trenches and bunkers. This will isolate our infantry's objective preventing the enemy troops from escaping or being reinforced during the raid. Our other task is to engage enemy armor if it attacks across the flat valley to our front.

Our platoon briefing has been exactly that—Brief. The 1st Plt. crosses the MLR first; I think we have the furthest to travel to occupy our firing positions. The T-Bone hill mass extends to the north of our fortified positions of "Arsenal" and "Yoke". Arsenal is closest to the MLR and our route passes behind it as we move to the left (or West). Soon we are on a flat plain opening up towards the north. If the enemy tanks come, it will be from this direction. In the distance the enemy main line is visible. I expect that we will be shelled today.

Lt. Parish is satisfied that the 1st Plt. is in the right place. The tanks disperse and make ready to fire. Using a voice code, the participating units are reporting their progress and so Tank 1-1 listens in. The first act starts with the rapid movement of the 2nd Plt. to the edge of a creek on the right flank (or East) of T-Bone Hill. The plan is to have an air strike on the top of the target right after the tanks arrive at the creek.

The air support arrives on time but the tanks are 10 minutes late in arriving on station. This turns out to be in our favor as part of the napalm dropped on the target falls short. It hits the ground where the tanks should have been. We have been lucky so far.

The 1st Plt. opens fire on the enemy trenches and bunkers on the west side of the hill. Within minutes, the fire of five tanks creates such open holes in the trench line that I don't see any way for reinforcements to pass this way or for the enemy to put up much of a defense.

On the other side of the hill, the second act starts. An infantry company in armored, tracked vehicles (M-39's) emerges from a terrain feature known as "The Alligator Jaws". The "Jaws" are far to the east of T-Bone thereby exposing the Infantry to possible artillery shellfire and "plunging fire", (infantry fires from the higher elevation, defensive enemy positions) as they approach the hill. The normally open topped infantry carriers have had wooden timbers fastened over the normally exposed tops to provide a measure of protection. Again fortune smiles on us as the infantry arrives at their assault line without casualties.

The 2nd Plt. has been firing at the trenches on their side of T-Bone the same as has the 1st Plt. They are trying to disrupt the enemy's defensive positions and communications thereby preventing a coordinated defense. The violence of the shelling is also intended to shock the defenders into inactivity giving our infantry the opportunity to occupy the trench line.

The expected enemy artillery barrage on the 1st. Plt. has arrived. The large caliber shells of 122 mm size are searching for us so we keep moving the tanks to make the enemy's job harder. This keeps up for the entire time that we are on station. Our luck holds and we are not hit.

The 1st Plt.'s grip tightens as we continue to fire at the hill but we must take care as the radio confirms that the third act has started. The infantry skirmish line is on it's way up the eastern slope. I can hear the radio reports on the progress.

The mental concentration in the tank is split several ways. From my perspective, one eye is on the assigned trench line, one eye is watching for any intervention of enemy tanks, one ear is listening to reports from our tank and our platoon and one ear is listening to the reports of progress on the other side of the hill.

It is not long before the coded messages bring disturbing news. The code for friendly casualties for this operation is "Football". The stress on the infantry is apparent as they report, "We have footballs, send stretches". This communication blows the security of the code if it is intercepted by the enemy.

The bad news continues. The enemy is firing machine guns from two concealed positions on each flank of our infantry. The infantry skirmish line which is climbing the hill towards the trenches near the summit is being stalled. In addition the defenders are throwing grenades down the slope onto our troops. The

casualties continue to mount as the day lengthens. The operation is in serious trouble.

Whatever solutions to the problems are being taken on the other side of the hill, it becomes obvious that they are not adequate. My emotions are rising; we need to take action now! Here sits the 1st Plt. dominating the enemy defenses on the Western slope and we seem powerless to help. There is a spur or ridge North of us leading to the top of T-Bone. I think a tank can climb it. I suggest to Lt. Parish that we send a couple of tanks up the spur to take the defenders in the rear.

The Lt. hears me out, gives me a long look and says, "No". Fortunately for me and the rest of the platoon, he recognizes that the course of action I have recommended would be highly dangerous and throw the operational plan into disarray. The 1st Plt has an assigned job to do and a place to occupy for this action.

The radio is again broadcasting coded messages to the various units taking part in the operation. The attack has failed and the infantry are being withdrawn to the original assault line. The tanks cover the withdrawal of the infantry and the armored troop carriers. When the troop carriers are safely away with their cargo of the combat effective infantry and the wounded, the tanks themselves leave the field.

As we head back to the MLR, my mind is in turmoil. The only conclusion to draw is that the operation has failed—we (the 1st Plt.) have failed. It is a bitter pill to swallow for this is the first time since I arrived in B Co. that I have been in an action that was not a success. The ride back to the company area is lacking in conversation, each crewman is lost in his own thoughts. I feel depressed and personally humiliated by the time the tanks make their turns off of the MSR into B Co.

Once back in the Company area, the post raid routine asserts itself. Animation revitalizes the crews as we refuel, rearm and inspect the tanks for battle damage. A flood of information about the raid starts coming in. This morning, the details of the raid were veiled in secrecy; now it seems that every passing person has some tid-bit or rumor to add. The aggregate of what I learn does not paint a pretty picture.

It seems that the operation which we know as the Spud Hill Raid has been created in excruciating detail over an extended period of time. Brochures were printed as hand-outs to a flock of high ranking officers who were invited to see the event. The Public Relations people handled the brass as if they were spectators at an Army/Navy football game.

I am at first appalled by what I hear, then I seethe with anger. Questions, for which there are no answers, run through my mind. How could we surprise the enemy with an attack that was so well publicized? Does not the enemy possess intelligence agents in the South Korean military? How can the changing nature of a battle be addressed when the battle plan is rigid and is being directed from a remote location? What was the real objective of the battle—to take prisoners—to conserve the lives of our fighting men—or—to have the Field Grade Officers look good in the eyes of their superiors and their peers! In my current mental condition, I suspect it is the worst case scenario.

The work is finally completed and I join the other members of the platoon as we go to the mess tent for dinner. I don't remember what is on the menu; I'm not very happy or hungry, but I am trying to make a dent in the food on my plate. A voice at one of the tables behind me is intruding on my thoughts and I begin to recognize an underlying theme. The speaker is a SFC (Sergeant First Class) and tank commander from one of the other B Co. tank platoons that were supporting the infantry assault on the eastern slope of T-Bone. He is new to the Company having replaced one of the experienced tank commanders who has rotated home.

In a loud voice he is describing what he saw of the infantry attack to several tables of listeners. From his tank, he saw the wave of infantry start up the slope toward the enemy trench line. Before the attack reached the trench, it stalled under the defensive fire of two machine guns that were hidden from view. Simultaneously, enemy infantry started throwing grenades down on our troops from their higher positions on the hill. In graphic detail, he described how the enemy exposed their bodies above the lip of the trench to hurl clusters of grenades down the slope. One of the enemy was pictured as using the technique of facing away from our assault line to throw the grenade cluster over his head and back in order to more forcefully launch his missiles.

I am waiting to hear of the counter-fire that the SFC delivered against the trench line but I wait in vain. The SFC had been content to shirk his duty as a participant and to assume the role of a spectator. His tank was close to the hill. He could have directed machine gun fire from his co-axial gun against the grenading enemy infantry—but he did not—instead he did nothing. To compound his folly, he appears to be ignorant of what he could have done to snatch victory from defeat for our infantry.

The enormity of his actions, or rather, the lack of them hits me like a blow. I want to rush over and confront him; to lash out violently. My body begins to shake, I can't swallow my food and I can't talk. I've

got to get out of here before I lose control of myself. I just rise from the table leaving everything behind and quickly leave.

Walking away from the tent, I leave the voices behind and get my emotions under control. In my mind, I've just put the entire blame for the failure of the raid onto one man. The SFC was only one inexperienced tank commander. His platoon had four other tank commanders who witnessed the same events. And what about the Plt Ldr., the company commander, etc.; what did they do? Apparently nothing! There are times when it is not good to think too much.

Excerpt from "WAR IN PEACETIME", Gen. J. Lawton Collins, pg 325

It was during this period that an experimental small-scale attack by one infantry company on the front of the U.S. 7th Division went awry. Operation Smack had been designed to test methods of coordinating close air support, artillery, tanks and infantry, and to take prisoners. Senior Army and Air Force officers and a number of correspondents had been invited to view this test from a convenient hilltop. Unfortunately, a malapropos "scenario" of events gave at least one newsman, newly arrived in Korea, the impression of a gladiatorial exhibition for the entertainment of the "brass"

It was a commentary on the vexed mood of the American public and the Congress at the time that I had to spend almost a full day before a congressional committee to convince one wrathful congressman and the press at home that this action, in which the company had taken relatively heavy casualties, was a legitimate test and not intended to be a show.

< Letters >
7 January, 1953 Saturday

Only 32 days to ago. I have not been relieved from combat yet.

I was at T-Bone Hill on that crummy "Spud Hill" raid. I was dodging 122 mm Artillery fire all day. We are going on another raid the day after tomorrow. This is be strictly an all tank raid of about three platoon strength. The (Scheduled) 66 tank raid was called off because of unfavorable publicity in the United States over the "Spud Hill" raid.
< End of Letter >

Episode AD. McLaws Executes the Hit and Run Play

The road system in the company rear area is a collection of dirt trails. Two other platoon members and I are walking down a trail engaged in small talk when, without warning, I receive a powerful blow in the middle of my back. The impact flings me off of the trail where I slide along the ground.

When I come to a stop, I look back at the trail and see the rear end of a jeep sitting there, with McLaws in the drivers seat. He has turned his head toward me and has a perplexed look on his face. I imagine that he is thinking, "What was that funny noise and what is Rosinski doing stretched out on the ground?"

It is obvious to me what happened. McLaws had backed the Jeep out of it's parking place onto the trail without looking backwards to see if the trail was clear. The rearward motion of the jeep stopped right after I was struck. The spare tire/wheel mounted on the back of the jeep hit me in the back and sent me flying.

I climb to my feet and look at my companions. They, in turn, are looking at me and when they see that I am unhurt we all look at McLaws. He dismisses us with a turn of his head, drops the gearshift into drive and moves off. We can't believe his irresponsible actions but I am now convinced that McLaws is a greater danger to the US Army than he is to the Communists.

The 1st Plt. takes part in a number of raids including additional visits to T-Bone during the middle of January. Now that the ground is frozen hard, tanks can go just about any place they please. A bonus is that the anti-tank mines which were laid several inches below the surface of the ground will not detonate if a tank runs over them.

< Letters >
20 January, 1953

I've been a Sergeant for almost a month now. I might not be a Sgt. much longer. My Plt Sgt and I are going around and around and he is threatening to make a Private out of a well known Sergeant! He is the Ole' Boy who's bunk was sawn up by persons unknown.
< End of Letter >

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

On 25 January, elements of the battalion jumped off in a coordinated assault on the formidable enemy occupied hill mass of “T-Bone”, a key terrain feature dominating the Yokkok-Chon River Valley. Tanks provided constant direct fire cover for the assault and later the withdrawal.

**** From the 73rd Bn History ****

From this time (26 January, 1953) until the end of February, the battalion conducted nine major tank raids, capitalizing on the trafficability provided by the frozen terrain. These raids proved extremely destructive to enemy fortifications and personnel, being launched against reverse slopes and other positions not susceptible to small arms and indirect fire. Approaches through enemy mine fields and other anti-tank obstacles were covered by enemy artillery and mortar fire making resupply and recovery operations extremely hazardous.

The following week, the 1st Plt. moves back to live in bunkers on the MLR. This is a new location for us and we are pleased to see that the former occupants have industriously constructed large, sturdy bunkers and strong fortifications. It is hard to admit, but tankers are not known for “digging deep” or their commitment to “hold ground”. When “Stuff” hits the fan, we want to mount the tanks and wage a mobile war. This does not mean that we can’t appreciate or take advantage of excellent fortifications when it is to our advantage.

Someone in the battalion operations section has come up with a plan to discomfort the Chinese. February 13th is some kind of day of celebration for the Chinese. The 1st Plt will join a number of other units in delivering massive artillery fire into the enemy positions.

We are at present living in bunkers on the MLR so our part in the exercise is well defined. The number of rounds which we will fire has been communicated to us. At the appointed hour, for a few minutes, we fire as fast as we can at a preselected target. We are attempting to catch the enemy off guard and from our position the combined fire is spectacular. Abruptly the firing ceases and the MLR becomes almost peaceful. The crews leave the tanks and return to our bunker.

Our bunker in this location is double in size of our usual accommodations. It has a front and back door and is divided into two rooms. We have brought our cots with us which works out well indeed. We have been very comfortable here. It is too bad that we have been ordered to return to the company tomorrow which is St. Valentine’s Day, February the 14th.

On Saturday morning, the platoon has no scheduled fire missions. We are instead packing up for the move back to the company. I am sitting on my cot, getting my equipment together when the enemy launches a terrific artillery barrage against our position. The group option is to set tight and wait it out.

My personal response is to take out a pocket knife and cut a notch in the wooden post next to my cot for each shell that explodes outside. This little exercise takes my mind off of the shelling but the row of notches increases to the point that I am running out of space, so I stop. Eventually, so does the shelling. Another person in the bunker who has been more diligent than I have been, offers the opinion that in excess of 100 shells has fallen. I believe him.

With the immediate danger over, I return again to my packing. Suddenly, incoming shellfire strikes again. I get up and move from my room in the bunker into the other room. The outside door flies open and Puchalsky steps into the room. He has his hand to his shoulder and says, “I’ve been hit!

This is the punch line to a common bit of grisly humor practiced in the 1st Plt. Any enemy fire nearby evokes this response leading to the conclusion that the speaker is immediately heading back to the U.S. and out of the war. I open my mouth to rebut him when I get a good look at his face. At that moment, I realize that he is not kidding.

Several of us converge on him and steer him to a cot. Someone calls for a medic. By the time the medic arrives the artillery fire has lifted and Puchalsky’s torn coat and shirt are off. To everyone’s amazement, the shell fragment has torn the coat but only abraded the skin on Puchalsky’s upper back. The medical repairs are swift and minor in nature. While this is going on, we hear of what took place.

When the shelling stopped the first time, Puchalsky took some baggage and his folded up cot to his tank. While standing next to the tank, he raised the cot over his head to throw it on the rear deck. As he did so, he felt or heard the shell coming down and instinctively dropped to his knees and bent at the waist. As he did so he felt a hard blow to his upper back. Leaving everything behind, he made a dash back to bunker where I saw him coming through the door.

I find myself viewing this day in two ways. It has been an unlucky Valentine’s Day because of the

intensive shelling that we have received. On the other hand, it has been a lucky day for Puchalsky because he escaped receiving a fatal wound due to his quick reflexes. As evidence, the folded cot was brought back from the tank. It was shredded by the shrapnel from the exploding shell. If Puchalsky had not ducked, he would have taken the full force in his back. Puchalsky remains on duty and the Combat Casualties Record of the 1st Plt. remains unblemished.

< Letters >
14 February, 1953 Valentines Day

Today, we got 14 incoming rounds of about 120 mm mortar size. One of the boys, Puchalsky, was nicked by shrapnel. Yesterday, which was Friday the 13th, "Black Friday", I killed two Chinese and wounded three more at T-Bone Hill.

I'm not feeling too hot. I've got a touch of the flu but just received some news that really gave me a pick-up. In 12 days, (February 26 to be exact), I am supposed to start back to the United States. I am going to try to stay off the line from now on. That shelling today had me a little worried. I can't see sticking my neck out.
< Letters >

The 1st Plt. has returned to our company area. I'm told that I have been scheduled for R&R (Rest and Relaxation) in Japan. I'm surprised at the news. The usual tour of duty in Korea is a year. After six months in a combat unit, a soldier gets a 5 day pass (with transportation to and from Japan).

In my case, I had a maximum of nine months that could be spent in Korean Service so I was not expecting to be selected for R&R. In order to reduce the amount of time the soldier has to think about going on R&R, he only gets a day or so warning. So it was with me. The next day I am on my way by truck to an airport for a flight to Japan.

When I return to the Company from Japan, I received a major shock. Lt. Parish has left B Company. On February 20th, he was officially off the company rolls. Verble has gone without leaving a forwarding address or any chance for me to say good-bye. That is now history and the life of the platoon goes on.

The replacement for Lt. Parish has been on board with the 1st Platoon since February 15th which was about when I left for R&R. For the next five days, the transition of command takes place.

The afternoon after my return from Japan I am sitting on my cot writing a letter back home to my parents. Puchalsky comes into the tent and tells me that the new Plt. Ldr. has taken Tank 1-2 (Puchalsky's tank) up on the line for a firing exercise. The apparent purpose is to evaluate tank readiness and crew performance. Further, the lieutenant has done the same with each of the other tanks in the 1st Platoon with the exception of Tank 1-1. All of this is news to me, so I concentrate on what he is saying.

From Puchalsky's point of view the firing went well. He hit the selected targets as ordered. He then tells me that the Plt. Ldr. asked him, "Who is the best gunner in the 1st Plt"? Puchalsky said that he replied "Rosinski". When further pressed by the lieutenant for a justification to his reply, he said, "Rosinski has had more education". The Lt. seemed satisfied with the response.

I too am satisfied. The willingness of Puchalsky to volunteer the information to me is gratifying. I believe that it is a measure of how I am regarded by my peers. My college mathematics and engineering studies as well as my Army training as a Tank Leader (or Commander) have had a pay-off. This will however, put some mental pressure on me when the Lt. takes Tank 1-1 up to the line for our turn at bat.

February 21st is an unusually warm day and is the first work day I have had with the crew of Tank 1-1 in a week. I've decided to drain the water from the bottom of the Wid-O-Maker's gas tank. Water collects in the gas tank along with sediments from many different causes. When too much accumulates, the engine performance suffers and may even quit running. This is a serious situation for a combat vehicle. The crew is getting ready to remove the drain plugs when the new Platoon Leader comes by.

The crew receives new instructions from the lieutenant. We are to take digging tools and work on improving fortifications in the Company perimeter. I try to make the case that our time would be better spent by draining the water from the gas tanks but my plea goes unheeded. Collecting a couple of shovels and a pick, the crew heads for a section of trench to spend a few hours in a futile effort trying to penetrate the frozen earth. Little progress is made which doesn't please anyone.

Tank 1-1 is the last tank to be evaluated. The Lt. takes us to a firing position on the MLR which is unfamiliar to me. The directions are simple, "Fire at the enemy trench line". The distance is about 1000yds. so I can see everything in great detail through the gunners telescopic sight. Lutz shoves a HE round into the cannon and we are ready to start the exercise.

I begin by placing the sight 6 to 8 ft below the lip of the trench off to the right of our position. When the round hits, the resulting explosion excavates a large hole in the trench wall. That part of the trench becomes impassable. I repeat the process on the left side of the trench line with the same results. Now that the trench facing me is isolated, I begin to blow out sections of the trench wall every 100 ft or so. Thus far the firing is typical of what tanks normally do to enemy fortifications.

I'm looking through the telescope as another round pierces the trench and explodes sending dirt and debris in all directions. To my amazement, a body pops out of the hole in the trench and slides down the slope. As the dust settles, two more bodies are visible in the remains of the trench.

The Lt.'s voice on the intercom, which has till now been calm and businesslike, rises half an octave and he seems to be somewhat agitated. I think these are the 1st enemy casualties he has seen. The firing to this point has been measured and methodical. Now the tempo increases as we fire into the remaining sections of trench, searching for more of the enemy. The firing yields no additional bodies. I am certain that I have killed three of the enemy. There may be more buried in that trench that we have not seen but we will never know.

On our return to the company, I mentally review the days activities. The entire platoon has done well in the firing exercises, but as far as I know, Tank 1-1 is the only tank in the platoon evaluation that has produced confirmed enemy casualties. The concealment of enemy troops in the trench was unknown to us until the enemy troops were exposed. This makes the direct hit an undeniable accident. Having said that, it is results that count so I am satisfied that my reputation as a gunner remains intact.

The next day the Plt. Ldr. tells me that the 1st Platoon is going on a raid tomorrow, February 25th; and that I will be the gunner on Tank 1-1. The order stuns me and sets me back on my heels.

On Valentines day I was told that I would be leaving the Company in 12 days on February 26th. It was a little unusual to get that much notice; most of the men got a week or less notice and were immediately relieved of combat assignments. I didn't really expect to be exempted from combat for 12 days but with R&R and other duties I did think that I qualified as a short timer. As far as I knew, I was slated to leave the Platoon in two days.

I had the feeling that I was being unfairly treated so I told the lieutenant that I was not going. He said, "yes, you are". I said, "No, I'm not". The discussion continued in the same vein ("Yes, you are"; "No, I'm not"). With an impasse at hand, I played my last card and said, "We'll see whether I go or not". The discussion was abruptly terminated, the Lieutenant left and I sat down review my options.

I was on shaky ground. I could not disobey a direct, lawful order but I really did not want to go on that last raid. I had heard of a number of stories with unfortunate endings where some soldier had made one last combat mission too many and was wounded or died as a result. But, refusing to go on a mission could result in a court-martial and if convicted a jail term! I was between a rock and a hard place.

The next morning found the 1st Platoon in an assembly position on the MLR. Tank 1-1 was there and I was in the gunner's seat. I had come this far and was still looking for a way out of this mission.

Three platoons of tanks had driven into this position before the sun came up. The 1st Platoon and another would cross the MLR at about 1000 hr's to shell the enemy fortifications. The remaining platoon would stay on the MLR as the reserve force to reinforce us if the need arose.

The 1st Platoon tanks are in single file awaiting orders. The command to start engines is received and Bruce Whitehouse begins cranking up the Wid-O-Maker for another ride into No-Man's-Land. The starter grinds -and grinds - and grinds but the engine won't start.

I happen to be standing behind the tank when this is going on. It's dawning on me that there is an excellent chance that Tank 1-1 is not going on the raid and therefore neither am I. The Lieutenant is standing by taking in the situation in disbelief when he turns my way and sees a smile on my face. He instantly rounds on me and in growing anger accuses me of sabotaging the engine. He is also threatening me with a court-martial!

I can see that he has recalled the little talk that we had the previous day. I quickly deny the charge but we are both distracted when the rest of the 1st Platoon tanks try to start their engines without success. I look at the larger picture and ask myself, "What's going on here?" The Lieutenant walks away as a tracked vehicle mechanic comes up to trouble shoot the engine problems.

The mechanic quickly diagnoses the problem on the Wid-O-Maker as water in the fuel line. A similar conclusion is arrived at for the rest of the platoon. The Brass makes a change in the mission. The 1st Platoon will stand down and the reserve platoon will take our place and cross the MLR.

The Lieutenant returns to my side unwilling to accept that I had not created this situation. The term court-martial also is reintroduced. But now a light is going off in my head. This is a warm day for February

just like the one five days ago when I wanted to drain the water from Wid-O-Maker's gas tanks.

When the weather is below freezing, the water in the gas tank settles to the bottom of the gas tank and freezes solid. Water thus can't enter the gas line to the engine. When the weather is warm the ice in the tank melts and it is possible for the water to be sucked into the fuel line. I'm convinced that this is what is happening.

My response to the Lieutenant is that I do think that charges for a court-martial may be drawn up but that he, not I, may be the recipient. Then I reminded him that I had scheduled a maintenance session to drain the gas tanks and that he had overruled me and sent the crew on a digging detail instead.

The rest of the day is anticlimactic. The mission has been successfully completed by the other two platoons, our tank engines are serviced and are functioning again and we have returned to the Company rear area. The events of the day are dropped from discussion and I hear no more about it.

One bit of unwelcome news reaches my ears. I will not be leaving the Company tomorrow which is February 26th. The date has been moved back to the 28th of February. To compensate for the delay, I am informed that I have been relieved of combat duty as of February 27th.

< Letters >
27 February, 1953

I'm sitting in the tent all by my lonesome because the rest of the platoon went out to shoot up T-Bone Hill. Fortunately, I am relieved of duty as of today so I didn't have to go.

I'm going down to Chun'chon tomorrow for rotation. From there, I go by rail to Inchon where I catch a boat (ship) for Sasebo, Japan. That is where I get on a boat for the Continental United States. It shouldn't take me over a month to get home. I should have left here for the states two days ago but there were so many replacements in Chun'chon (Repo Depot, 7th Inf Div Rear) that there was no room for the rotatees. I sure was irritated when I got the news.
< End of Letters>

Today is February 27, 1953 and this is my last full day in B Company. I call on the Supply Sgt. to turn in my 45 Colt Pistol (after removing my custom hand grips and replacing them with the regulation grips). My record is certified as having all Company issued equipment properly returned. Officially, I am cleared to leave for rotation back to the United States.

With time on my hands, I write some letters and then loiter near the MSR. My movie camera is close at hand. This morning the 1st Plt. went out on a raid across the MLR with Ed Lutz as the gunner on Tank 1-1. I want to photograph the platoon as it returns and see the event from the perspective of an observer instead of my usual post in the turret.

When the tanks come into view, I am gratified to see all of them returning safely. My camera is ready and I start shooting film as the tanks enter the Company area. I am soon engulfed in the sound and fury of tanks rushing about heading for fuel and ammo dumps and ultimately into the tank park. A measure of silence returns as the 1st Plt. writes "Fini" to another raid.

I return to the tent. It is filling with the returning tank crews who are intent on the next high priority assignment - dinner.

The tank crews are returning to the tent after dinner. This is the last evening (and night) that I will spend with the 1st Plt. I can't take some of the items home that I have accumulated so I give them as gifts to my friends. The two bayonets, the low riding holster, the target grips for my 45 cal. Colt Pistol pass over to other hands. The M-1 Garand rifle will remain on Tank 1-1.

With a lot of banter, good humor and best wishes filling the tent, I pack up my belongings. What belongs to the U.S. Government takes up little space in the barracks bag. It is still the dead of winter in the hills of central Korea, so I will wear much of my clothing tomorrow.

My personal stuff takes up more room. I have my new 16 mm movie camera, Ray-Ban shooting glasses (Polaroid lenses), Two cassettes of film, writing materials, and personal toiletries which I put in my musette bag.

The two bags are placed under my cot for the last time. I am to report to the Orderly Room tomorrow early. The 1st Plt will still be asleep (except for the person on guard in the tank park). Now I really have run out of things to do. The last good-byes have been said. The hour grows late and the lights are extinguished. Everyone is in bed now including me and soon I am extinguished in sleep.

Morning comes to me in the form of one of the people on guard duty. After making sure that I am awake, he leaves a flashlight and goes off to his other duties. In the dim glow of the flashlight, I can see to

dress and then I lug my belongings out of the tent. I do so quietly and as my cot is next to the door, I create very little disturbance. Finally I pass out of the door for the last time.

Thoughts rush through my head as I pick up my bags. I'm facing the entrance to the tent. I am pulled by the urge to leave, yet a reluctance to go. The good-byes were all said last night, what more is left.

Suddenly, the quiet is shattered by a bellowing chorus of voices, "SHUT THE FUCKIN' DOOR". A gale of laughter from the tent follows which I quickly join. My dilemma has been resolved. There IS nothing left unsaid. As usual, the 1st Platoon has lived up to it's name and reputation. My bags in hand, I turn on my heel and briskly stride toward the Orderly Room.

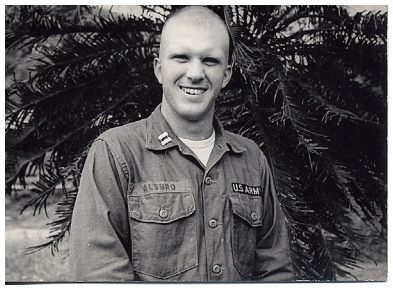
**** From the 73rd Bn History****

In such famous landmarks as "Iron Triangle", "White Horse", "Porkchop", and "Old Baldy", the memory of the men who gave their lives in the Korean conflict will live on in the history of the 73rd Tank Battalion always keeping alive the Battalion's tradition of Honor, Fidelity, and Courage.

**** THE END ****

VIETNAM

THE VIETNAM WAR AS NOT REPORTED BY THE US MEDIA
Donald E. Alsbro, COL, US Army, (Ret)



CIVIC ACTION
"WINNING THE HEARTS AND MINDS"
By Donald Alsbro
COL, US ARMY (Retired)

One Year in Don Alsbro's 31 Year Military Career
July 1966 to August 1967

INTRODUCTION: "Dad, what did you do in the Army?" I'm writing this so that my kids, grandkids and great grandkids will have a better understanding of what I did during my year in Vietnam. Unfortunately, my dad passed away when I was 8 yrs old and it wasn't until my mother passed away that I came across pictures of him sitting in an Army Air Corp plane in 1918 during WWI. However, there is no explanation of where the picture was taken or what he did in the service. His military records were burned in a large fire in 1972 at the National Records Center in St Louis. I actually spent two tours in Vietnam, this one from July 66-July 67 and a later one from July 70-July 71. During the first tour, I worked for one year with the Vietnamese people and got to know them and their culture. Fortunately, I kept a diary! I had branch transferred from the Infantry (INF) to the Adjutant General Corp (AGC) in Aug 67, so it necessitated a second tour. This was spent as an AG personnel actions officer and I spent every day doing the same thing, processing records. Thus, no diary was kept. I spent 4 months with the 4th Infantry Division and 8 months with the 23rd Inf Div or Americal Division. I hope that you will enjoy reading how in 1966-67 I spent a year "winning the hearts and minds of the people," instead of being involved in battles. Although as you read this, you'll see that I did have some close calls.

Jungle School—July 1966

In July 1966 after a short month of seeing relatives and getting caught up in everything that we'd missed during our three years in Germany, my leave came to an end. I had to leave from Kalamazoo to attend the Jungle Warfare Course in Panama and then to Vietnam for a year that I didn't know what to expect.

While we were home I had received a welcome letter from CPT William Coley, S-5 (Civic Action) for the 11th Aviation Group that I would be replacing him as the Group's Civic Action Officer. He said that the Group was in the process of moving several villages from inside base camp. It sounded very interesting, but as I'd come to find out, in the Army nothing is for sure. The needs of the service dictate and those orders could be changed in a second.

Sharon, Lynn and Steve were staying with Sharon's folks in Kalamazoo while I was in Vietnam. As I look back, I realize now what an imposition we placed on her folks. After not having children around for quite a few years and then to have two under the age of 5, must've been a shock to her parents. To my

knowledge they never complained, but when I was faced with a second tour to VN in 1970, Sharon made the wise decision to join a bunch of waiting military wives in Green Cove Springs, FL. They stayed in a large housing development, specifically for families whose spouse was in Vietnam.

On July 12, 1966 I boarded a plane for McGuire AFB, NJ and a subsequent flight to Ft Sherman in the Panama Canal Zone for the two week Jungle School. The course commenced on/about July 15. Ft Sherman was located on the Pacific Ocean side of Panama. It was the best Army course I ever attended. We learned many things. Things such as eating snake and other delicacies that you will find in the jungle, how to construct a hut out of jungle vines and leaves. I believe that the huts were called bojeos (bo-he-oh). We also learned how to rappel off cliffs, ford high streams, make a beach assault and many other fun things. The course ended with a 3 day escape and evasion course (E&E) through the jungle and numerous streams.

The E & E course started with a beach assault in the morning and we had about 20 miles of jungle to cover. The object was to make it back to Ft Sherman without being caught by the enemy. We were told not to form large groups but stay in small groups of 2-3. However, some did form larger groups and I ended up in a group of 5. A large group of about 15 had a very interesting experience.

They were walking down a jungle road and a civilian dump truck drove by. The guys stopped the truck and made a deal with the Panamanian driver to take them in the back of the dump truck to Ft Sherman. The agreed price was $1 per soldier which meant $15. They jumped in the bed of the truck and were going along when all of a sudden the truck came to a stop and the driver started blowing the horn. He had delivered the soldiers into the middle of the aggressor's camp and the guys spent the whole night as POW's subjected to various "torture" methods. As it turned out, the aggressors had paid the driver $2 per person to deliver them, so the driver came out with about $45.

Upon completion of the Jungle course we were flown back to McGuire and given a few days to get to San Francisco and Travis AFB for the flight to Vietnam. As I recall, the nation's airlines were on strike, but somehow I made it to MI where I spent a couple of days with the family. Sharon and I took the Milwaukee Clipper ferry boat across Lake Michigan from Muskegon to Milwaukee. We took our car on the Clipper and Sharon drove me to the Air National Guard base at O'Hare in Chicago where I caught a C-130, four engine Air Force plane for a rough and long flight to San Francisco.

SHARON'S THOUGHTS:

It was fun to go across Lake Michigan on the Milwaukee Clipper. It was something different and that we'd never done before. It gave us some time to be together before the long separation we faced. I well remember that it was raining hard and darkness was soon approaching. I left Don at the airport and headed home by myself. Here I was with tears running down my face, trying to see through the rain drops and darkness having just left my beloved husband at the airport where he'd be sent to a war zone and I thought I may never see him again. I hate driving in hard rain and the dark, but here I was driving our VW bug that we'd brought home from Germany, through the rain, in the dark in Chicago! I'd never driven in Chicago before and don't think I'd ever been there but once or twice. I wondered if I'd even make it home. I remember saying to myself, "once I'm on I-94, I'll be ok, 'cause it goes to Kalamazoo." Now it seems really silly that I hadn't studied the map and understood how to go from O'Hare Airport to I-94 and home. I remember as I was trying to see and watch signs, I saw one that said I-94, so I just kept following signs with I-94 on them. I ended up going through Chicago instead on the planned route around it. It didn't matter to me as long as I kept I-94 in my sight. I was so happy when I saw the sign that said "Welcome to Michigan!" Then I knew I'd make it home.

DON'S STORY CONTINUED:

I reported to Oakland Army Depot where I spent a couple of days on medical hold, having medical tests at Letterman Army Medical Center in San Francisco. This gave me a chance to see Fisherman's Wharf, Chinatown and other sights. It was my first time in San Francisco.

Upon medical clearance from Letterman, I took the military bus to Travis AFB. In my two tours in VN (66-67 and 70-71) I crossed the Pacific Ocean from US to VN and back six times. Many troops had the good fortune of flying on contracted commercial jets with soft seats, professional stewardesses and other amenities. Every time I crossed the big pond, it was on the Air Force C-141, which has canvas, web seats facing backwards, no stewardesses, and very austere conditions. The food consisted of C Rations (Meal. Combat, Individual) and the servers were the lowest ranking enlisted soldiers in the group.

"C-Rats" came in a cardboard box and usually had an entrée such as beans and franks, chopped

ham and eggs, or beef steak and potatoes. They could be eaten cold or heated. The latter being the preferred method. One of my favorites was spaghetti and meatballs. There was also a B-2 unit containing cheese, crackers and candy, a canned dessert such as peaches or applesauce, and an accessory pack. The accessory pack contained a P-38 can opener, mix for a hot beverage, salt and sugar packets, plastic spoon, chewing gum, a pack of four cigarettes and several sheets of toilet paper. Each complete meal provided approximately 1200 calories.

Cigarettes were great trading material for those of us who didn't smoke. However, due to health concerns, cigarettes were eliminated from the packages in 1975. "C-Rats" were phased out in favor of Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) beginning in 1983. I'm not sure when cigarettes were removed from field rations but I can recall in my Infantry Basic Course at Fort Benning, GA and in field maneuvers in Germany, hearing the sgt saying, "Take a break. Smoke 'em if you've got 'em."

As I look back on some of the problems that have been experienced by Vietnam soldiers, namely PTSD (Post Trauma Stress Disorder), I think much of it can be attributed to the way we were processed in and out of Vietnam.

We said good bye to our families back in our home town and got on planes bound for Travis or McChord AFB in Seattle, WA. We had no idea what the future held and in later talking to most of us, many were convinced that we would be returning to our families in a casket. We were processed efficiently, but in a rather coldly manner and sometimes this processing took several days. We were then rounded up and put on buses for Travis and planes bound for Vietnam. We had several hundred soldiers on the plane, each one bound for a different unit and no one knowing anyone else.

I had an advantage, being 26 years old and having had three years in the military. Many of the enlisted soldiers were barely 20 years old, some just out of Advanced Individual Training (AIT) and faced with a lot of uncertainty. I'm sure many felt that they would not return alive and in 58,000+ cases they were right!

When we came back from VN, the same cold, indifferent process was reversed. We got on the "freedom bird" bound for the USA not knowing anyone else on the plane. We landed at Travis or McChord AFB's and because we were still in our khaki uniforms, many soldiers were greeted by war protestors calling us "baby killers" or spitting on us. Fortunately I never had that experience. If I had, I don't know how I'd have reacted. I've talked to many who have, and it is no wonder that as soon as they landed in CONUS, they went to the nearest restroom and threw their uniforms away, dressing in civvies that they'd bought in Vietnam in the PX.

Just think, for many of us twenty four hours after leaving a war zone, you were back in your civilian house and expected to act as if you'd never been gone. I know that many of us were able to adjust, but for those who spent 12 months of combat in the field and witnessed killings, it was too much, especially if you didn't have a good support system and you were a young 19 or 20 year old.

For those who ridicule the idea of PTSD, they don't know what they're talking about! It's often been said that "we went to VN as strangers and came back as strangers." It has taken some veterans many years to adjust and for some never will. That's why it is important that the Vietnam vets form support groups for mutual assistance.

Fortunately, the military has learned their lesson. Now, most of the troops going to Iraq are going as a part of a unit. They've trained as a unit and developed bonds of friendship. They come back as a unit and have to spend a few days going through readjustment classes at their home base before they are allowed to go home. The families are also given instruction on what to expect and how to act. This is something that we never had. It is similar to a diver who has to go through decompression chambers before being released,

VIETNAM—1966-67
The "real" story!

As I recall I landed at Ton Shun Nhut AFB around Aug 4 and spent a couple of days going thru processing before boarding a C-130 for the trip to An Khe, in the Central Highlands, where the First Cavalry Div (Airmobile) was located. The First Cav was a very unique and highly sought after unit. The 11th Air Assault had spent two years at Ft Benning, GA training for airmobile operations. The unit was then activated as the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile) , a unit that has a memorable history in all of the major conflicts of the 20th Century.

Upon deployment to Vietnam in Aug 65 the Cav landed in Qui Nhon and moved inland about 50 miles to An Khe. They weren't in country for long, before they were engaged in the Battle of Ia Drang Valley in Nov 65. This battle was one of the fiercest of the VN war as over 400 soldiers from six battalions lost their

lives. Their story is documented in the book by Gen Harold Moore, "We Were Soldiers Once…and Young." The book was later adapted into the film "We Were Soldiers" with Mel Gibson. This movie is considered by many as one of the top 10 movies of all time. 4

LTG Moore, who was a LTC at the time, commanded the 1/7th Cavalry Battalion which along with the 2nd and 5th Cavalry Battalions' lineage traces back to the mid-19th century days. The infamous LTC George Custer was commander at the disaster of Little Big Horn, June 25-26, 1876. The 7th Cavalry's official nickname is "Garry Owen" which comes from the traditional Irish drinking song "Garryowen" that was adopted as its official march tune.

When I arrived in Aug, I was often referred to as the "Second Team." I was in the 11th Aviation Group, known as the "Red Hawks." The 11th Avn Gp consisted of HQ and HQ Co, 11th General Support (Maintenance), 227 and 229 Assault Helicopter Battalions, and 228 Helicopter Bn. The 227th and 229th were equipped with UH-ID Hueys, known as "slicks." Each battalion had over 100 helicopters and could transport an infantry battalion into combat. The 228th had Chinooks which were large two bladed choppers that could transport up to 40 soldiers into combat. Because of the TO&E (Table of Organization and Equipment), the First Cav had over 500 choppers but fewer Jeeps and trucks. When you needed to get somewhere, it was often easier to get a chopper, than a vehicle.

When I was in Germany in the spring of 66, I'd received a welcome letter from the First Cavalry Division saying that I would be assigned as a civil affairs officer with HQ, 11th Aviation Group. Then when I was home on leave in July I received a letter from my sponsor CPT William Coley welcoming me to the Red Hawks as his replacement. He told me that I would be responsible for the two Vietnamese villages that the Group had just helped move from inside base camp to the outside. He mentioned that I might also have the added responsibility of managing the Red Hawk Officer's Club.

Needless to say, I was quite impressed with the efficiency of the Cav in being able to send letters while still involved in combat. However, having been in the Army as long as I had, I knew that the needs of the service dictated my assignment and I could be transferred to another unit in an instant. The mission is foremost and that is the way it should be.

Because of the buildup of the US Army for Vietnam, I had spent 18 months as a 2nd LT and only 18 months as a 1st LT., being promoted to CPT in July 1966 while I was home on leave. Being an Infantry CPT meant that I could be assigned as a Company Commander of an Infantry unit with over 150 men. It was an awesome thought, as having spent three years as a Recreation and Sports officer for the 3rd Infantry Division , hardly prepared me for leading troops into battle. I had never intended to make a career of the Army. My ambition was to get out of the Army as soon as possible and become a high school history teacher and football coach, just like Mike Hoban, my high school coach. Since my dad died when I was 8, all of my coaches served as my surrogate father.

My memories of the first few days with 11th Aviation Group are rather vague. I remember meeting MAJ Ben Abramowitz who was the Adjutant, CPT Wm Coley and COL Howard Lukens who was the Group Commander. I then met my Civic Action Team which consisted of SSG Leon Fletcher, SGT Nguyen Rep who was our interpreter and PFC Dennis Heittman. What a team!

SSG Fletcher was a helicopter crew chief and on his second Vietnam tour. I was told the story that he was in Vietnam with the "First Team" in 65 and learned that his wife in the US was having affairs. Because his enlistment was up, he took a break in service, came back to the US, got a divorce and re enlisted. When he got out he was a SFC, but because he had a service break he had to come back in as a SSG. Also, because he had been shot down several times, when he returned to the Cav, he was reassigned to ground duty with 11th Avn Gp. Several times I've tried to see if I can locate "Fletch" but no luck. I would love to know if he is still living and where. Originally he was from Houston TX.

5

PFC Heittman was a draftee and college grad from CA. He didn't really enjoy the military, but he could be counted to do his job and he appreciated the fact that he would be sleeping in his own bunk back at base camp every night and not "humping" the hills out in the field. He was very intelligent and while I can't remember his college major he did like to teach English and math to the Vietnamese kids.

SGT Nguyen Van Rep was also a college grad, and probably about 24 years old. Prior to his military service he was a school teacher. Rep spoke perfect English and in the entire year that he was on our team, I never had a reason to question his loyalty. Rep was his first name and like so many Vietnamese males, Nguyen is the family name. He was from My Tho, a city in the Delta and his girl friend Mai, also was from My Tho, had come to An Khe to be near him. Mai was a very attractive young lady. I've been told that she was 21 years old. She had married a major in the South Vietnam Army at the age of 16. He was killed

in 1964 and she had a young child, probably four years old that she brought to An Khe with her.

NOTE: What a team we had! I wish that I knew where they live now. I've tried several times to locate Fletcher and Heitman to no avail. I have checked the names on the Vietnam Wall and thankfully SGT Fletcher is not listed.

VIETNAM DIARY

One of the best things I did on my tour was to purchase a diary in the PX. I remember I was in the PX and on the spur of the moment I decided to purchase one. Thank goodness. Forty years later when I'm trying to remember what transpired, 95% has faded from memory. However, with the help of the diary and pictures that I saved the memories are coming back.

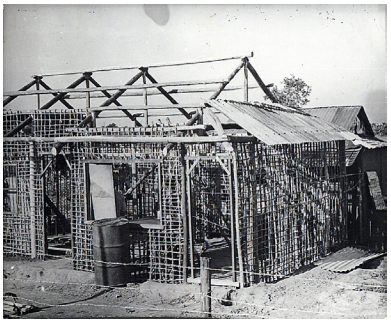
The 11th Avn Gp was responsible for helping the residents of two hamlets: An Dan and Tan Tao. These hamlets had been located inside the Cav's base camp, Camp Radcliff. Camp Radcliff was about 8 miles across and 25 miles in circumference. In the middle of the camp was a large hill called Hon Cong Mountain. It had a large First Cavalry insignia painted on the top and could be seen for miles.

Less than a mile from base camp was the town of An Khe which probably had a total population of 20,000 when all the hamlets were counted. An Khe was the HQ of An Tuc District of Binh Dinh Province. Highway 19 ran from the China Sea coastal city of Qui Nhon to the towns of Pleiku and Kontum. The total trip was about 100 miles and it went through infested VC territory. I made numerous trips from An Khe to Qui Nhon to pick up civic action supplies. Highway 19 went thru areas that had been infested with the VC's, but since the Korean Tiger Division took control of the road the attacks were infrequent. However, they did occur and we were always on the edge of our seat when driving through the pass. We had several scares that turned out to be false alarms, but you didn't have any trouble staying awake on the ride. I never made it to Pleiku but SGT Fletcher and Rep did on several occasions. One time they were supposed to be gone two days and ended up being gone four days. I was so relieved to see their smiling faces when they showed up. SGT Fletcher didn't seem to be fazed by the experience, but he said that Rep was petrified. Rep knew that if the VC captured them, that he was a dead man.

Prior to the arrival of the Cav, the villagers had led a very primitive life. There was no electricity, the only vehicles were mo-peds or bikes. To receive medical help it was necessary to go to Qui Nhon which was about 45 miles to the east. An Khe had a very primitive school that went to the sixth grade, but most of the kids didn't attend as they had to work in the rice paddies or fields to help the family.

The hamlets were moved because being inside the base camp perimeter, they presented security problems, thus were moved about 2 miles and situated several hundred yards from the perimeter of base camp and along a river that allowed the villagers to do their daily wash, take baths, etc. Across the river was the village of An Khe. The move took place in Jun/July and by the time I arrived they were pretty much situated. There were about 1,000 people in each hamlet. In addition, there were over 300 refugees who had been evacuated from the forward areas. These people were living in large concrete buildings in the village and were a problem because many of the villagers didn't really accept them.

The move started in June. This marked the third time in ten years that the people were forced to move. The two previous moves were due to Viet Cong (VC) terrorism. However, this time they had the assistance of the US Army in surveying, grading and transportation. They were also given a small stipend to be used for the purchase of building materials.



New house - sticks and mud.

The success of the move can be evidenced by the fact that in the old village there were only 7 houses out of 194 that were constructed out of cement and tile. The rest being made from mud and grass.
In the new village, there were 124 houses constructed out of cement and tile. When I arrived in August many of the villagers were still in the process of building their houses. They went from a stick frame, mud and straw house to one of cement blocks, plaster and tin and tile roofs. I tried to get out to the village on a daily basis and in most cases succeeded.

As to schools, education was practically non-existent. An Khe has a population of over 20,000 with no schooling above the sixth grade. If a student wanted to go to the seventh grade it was necessary to move to Qui Nhon. In July, prior to my arrival the 11th Aviation Group took up a collection and raised $40,000 towards the construction of an An Khe High School.

ACCOUNTS FROM THE DIARY

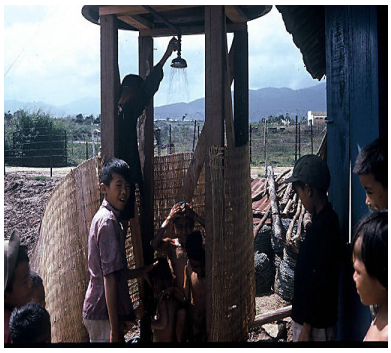
Sept 7, 66

After spending the morning in meetings, I was out to the village watching SGT Rep teach a class on Vietnam History. After dinner we went back to the village and played softball with the villagers. We had shown them several days before how softball was played and they were catching on. They still were confused about how to make an out and when to run. The beauty of sports is the game overcomes language barriers.

Sept 8

I took CPT Layton from Cav Hqs, G-5 (Civil Affairs) out to the village and showed him how much the villagers had done in only 3 months. The roads were in place, drainage was being worked on, most of the houses had been built, a village community building was built, a dispensary was being built and we had started making plans for a large playground with a basketball court, volleyball court, softball field, swings, teeter totters and slides. It will be located next to the dispensary.

In the afternoon we had sick call. We had more on sick call than the doctor could see. Everyone had colds and cuts. We started an educational program about infections and it is starting to pay dividends. The people are coming in for cleaning out cuts and a band aid. We installed a shower and running water at the dispensary. The water system consisted of a 55 gal drum filled with water and a faucet head. Unfortunately the water is heated by the sun. If the kid came in to get a cut cleaned out and was dirty we encouraged him to get a shower. Every kid got a sucker or lollipop for coming for medical treatment and after a couple of months of this, we had practically eliminated the awful gangrene and impetigo (scalp disease) that I initially saw when I arrived.



Kids taking shower at dispensary.

In the evening we showed movies in the village. We had plastered a white screen on the side of a building and with the help of an Army generator and a 16 mm movie projector we showed movies once or twice a week. Tonight we had a movie on President John F. Kennedy, a film on hookworms and the third one on the atrocities of the VC. The JFK film showed the civil rights movement, shots and his funeral. The second movie on hookworms was a cartoon emphasizing the importance of using outhouses, instead of the fields. “The Night of the Dragon” was about the VN war and showed the atrocities of the VC. There were about 500 in attendance and they remained very attentive.

Sept 9

Took LT Charlie Fitt and LT Harry Holloway to the village. Holloway and Fitt are Pathfinders whose job it is to parachute or drop into a LZ (Landing Zone) on the first chopper and guide the “sleeks” or assault choppers in. Very tough. Fitt and Holloway, along with a couple of older villagers explained the rules of softball and had a great time. We also passed out yo- yos to the kids.

Sept 10

I watched the kids in the village try to work their yo yos. Bill Coley, the man I replaced, left for home on a 10 min notice. His last words were “Gary Owen,” a reference to the fact that his first six months with the First Cavalry Division was with the 7th Cavalry, which has the unofficial nickname, “Gary Owen.” CPT Coley was a great guy who did an awful lot that he didn’t get credit for.

Sept 11

Today was election day in An Khe so the Americans weren’t allowed downtown. Later we learned that 96% of An Khe voted and 92% of Binh Dinh province voted. This was only to elect representatives to go to a constitutional convention. If only the US could have turn outs like this.

Sept 12

Today was spent holding sick call. The villagers had renovated a 2 room building next to the playground. On a daily basis we brought out a military medic to basic sick call for treating wounds and minor injuries. The severe cases we would transport to the An Khe hospital, a very dilapidated facility. Once a week we would bring out a military doctor from one of the battalions.

This evening we showed “Gunsmoke,” major league baseball and “Patterns for Peace.” The kids

always get their heads and fingers in the projector light to make figures, just like my kids do at home.

Sept 13

Today we got our ¾ ton truck stuck not once, but twice. The first time was inside base camp as we were trying to get furniture from the hamlet's old temple. The second time was a little more scary. We were outside of base camp on the way to Cuo An, about 8 miles from Camp Radcliff. Six months ago this village was not secure and the VC burned several homes. However people were starting to come back. We went to look at a swing set that wasn't being used. However, it was not worth the effort. On the way back, the truck slid into a rice paddy. Fletcher walked back about a mile and found a VN truck that pulled us out It was not a secure feeling, being with a disabled vehicle in unknown territory. In the evening we played softball. Fletcher and I were on different teams. The kids are enjoying it and are grasping the idea of how the game is played.

Sept 14

In the morning we got culverts for the draining of the ditches from Pacific Architect and Engineering (PA&E) and some school desks that they'd made. English classes were held with 35 students between the ages of 10-16 and there were probably 25 older ones watching. We borrowed a villagers lantern, but it didn't work so we used candles. SP4 Heittman is the teacher and he does a great job. Rep helps with the translation. They worked on the alphabet and numbers.

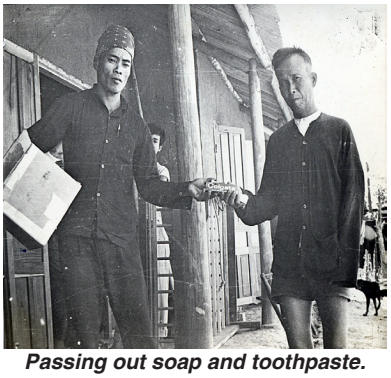
Earlier I played badminton with several kids. Badminton is a game that is not appreciated by most Americans. It is considered a game for "sissies." I know different, as I'd played since I was 14 years old and had achieved some competence by playing in tournaments. In many of the Indonesian, Korean, Chinese and Japanese countries badminton is a national sport and they are the best in the world. No one in our hamlets had ever seen the game played, so it was a new experience.

Sept 15

At most of the Vietnamese district HQs of the provinces there were Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MAC-V) teams located. In An Khe we had a team composed of LTC Roy Atkins, CPT Robert Sheriff and several enlisted. They were a good resource to have on your side.

Today, CPT Sheriff brought out a bulldozer and we graded the entrance to the village and drained swamp holes next to the dispensary. What a sight to see! The snakes, toads, and lizards that were living in the swamp.

We also passed out 2 bars of soap per house. Many people tried to get more, but we'd learned that 2 bars of soap or 2 tubes of toothpaste would be used within the family, but if they had more than two, they would use it to barter for other things. Also I went with CPT Sheriff to pass out a solation payment of $4,000 VN piaster ($40 US) to a father of a young boy who had been killed in an accident by an American Jeep. In the evening English classes were scheduled, but it rained, so we returned to camp.



Passing out soap and toothpaste.

Sept 16

We were in the village when we noticed all the people going to the village square where we showed movies. I asked Rep where they were going and he said the Korean soldiers from the Tiger Div were putting on a demonstration and it was mandatory for the villagers to attend. Come to find out, this was a Korean Karate team and for a long time they were breaking bricks, boards and doing karate moves. You could tell that it was impressing the Vietnamese. Here were men no bigger than them, doing superman stunts. For the next 2-3 weeks we had kids come to the dispensary for sore hands. I learned that the Koreans went to every village in the AO (area of operations) and put on this demonstration. The Koreans had a reputation of not taking prisoners and these demonstrations reinforced that mentality.

GREAT DEMONSTRATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE!

Sept 17

Today was busy and eventful. The hamlet of An Dan began construction on a community house and also put a walking bridge over the river so the people had an easy access to An Khe. SGT Dac, a local PF (Popular Force) NCO invited Rep, Fletcher and myself in for dinner. The PF's were marginally trained and had the mission of protecting the village if the VC came. However, their performance of duty was lack-

ing. SGT Dac used a clean blanket for the table cloth and his best china had been washed. We washed our hands before eating—maybe the classes we've had on hygiene are having an effect. We had boiled rice (Vietnamese always have rice at every meal), a salad with meat (I was afraid to ask if it was dog or pork meat), tomatoes and various vegetables, then a plate with meat covered with hot sauce. Since everyone was using chopsticks I tried, but after seeing my feeble attempts they graciously insisted that I use the large spoon they offered. We had a warm beer and finished with hot tea. It was very enjoyable.

Later in the evening we got our truck stuck again. This time it was loaded with tile for the community room. In my diary I note that while this was happening I had my boots stolen from the truck and I wasn't too happy about it. However, I can't recall this.

Cpt Coley had warned me about eating food with the villagers. He said that every time he did that, he suffered "Montazuma's Revenge" or upset stomach and diarrhea for several weeks. I went to bed that night wondering if I would fall victim to the "Revenge."

September 18

Moved the tile that we'd unloaded last night to the community house. I went to An Tuc District Chief's house, Mr. Tran Duoc Vu to determine the status of the French priest who wanted sand for his church. He (not the church) owns all the land that the An Khe shops are on. In the evening the 56th Med Det enlisted members came out to play the villagers in volleyball. Refreshments were provided afterwards.

Village Volleyball Game

September 19

FIRE! Arrived back from the village and heard this dreaded cry at the S-1 (Adjutant) office. Looked up to see the Red Hawk Inn which was the 11th Avn Gp Officers Club, in flames. The firemen arrived quickly but the building was destroyed. Apparently it was caused by an electrical short in the refrigerator wires. We had a general meeting at 1930 and decided to begin immediately tearing down and rebuilding. This was a task that would occupy my time for several months.

September 20

Morning was spent working at the club. At 1500 I attended a meeting with Mr. Vu, MAJ Atkins, COL Phelps (Div G-5) and all the village officials. The meeting lasted 3 hours and was followed by a walk thru the village. Items discussed were village population and finances, changing name of village, building of school and community hall, repairing of roads, erecting a fence around the village, making a cemetery and getting a village industry such as pig co-op. Also the village opening ceremony for Oct 8 was planned. Villagers complained that on the weekend the Army had killed all their crops by spraying the barrier line.

COL Lukens discussed the possibility of sponsoring a Montagnard village. I do not look forward to the task.

September 21

In the evening we watched volleyball and English classes. The attendance was good—about 30 out of the 35 that started last week. Passed out letters from kids in PA who had sent pencils and paper. We read each letter in Vietnamese and gave one to each child. We told them that when they brought a finished letter we would take their picture.

September 22

Today we had a meeting with COL Lukens and Mr. Vu about the opening ceremony. COL Lukens wants to invite the VN President GEN Ky, US Ambassador Lodge and GEN Westmoreland. As soon as Lukens left, Vu was out to the village. He wants a barrier put up, pig sty built, 1st brick for the community school and building and opening of a new dispensary. All of these things are not going to happen in two weeks!

September 23

Took Pat Hamilton of the American Red Cross and LT Fitt out to the village. The people, especially the women and girls couldn't get over an American girl. They were fascinated by her clean white teeth. We strolled thru the village and people all thought she was my wife. Passed out pictures taken the other night.

Watched 3 trucks loaded with men with no draft cards leave for Qui Nhon. They will be “drafted” into the Army. Tonight was a village meeting where the people decided to form a pig cooperative. They also argued about their payment of land that the government still owes them.

September 24

Got several loads of gravel for village roads from military Engineer unit. It cost SGT Fletcher 35 packs of cigarettes. I noticed action over at the Dispensary and I learned that the village chief had already torn down an existing wall and was planning to put in a temporary village hall.

September 25

Took the village chief out to look at a grave that is in the middle of a proposed helipad. The Engineers insisted that they had to have this site. The chief said the grave was of a 6 yr old and the mother was still living. He said to dig up the body would bring bad luck to family, but if the military insisted he asked for 600 bricks, 6 bags of cement, sand and 4100 piasters (about $41 US) to pay for the reburial. Told COL Lukens and he told the Engineers to look elsewhere.

Village Chief and Alsbro

September 26

Spent some time at the village hall. They have made a sign and set up the office in about two days. The police chief was painting a sign for the Post Office. Rep says every village must have a post office. It was a small mail box. We had sick call and SP4 Laird who was the Army medic saw 65 patients. In the afternoon we hauled gravel and at night I spent some time working at the Club and then back out to the Village.

I need to spend some time discussing the Police Chief. He is an extremely likeable guy. He always wears clean, pressed clothes, dresses his kids in clean clothing and always has a smile on his face. He had a new radio and modern camera and a very nice house. The village chief was also quite pleasant to work with, but he did not have the commanding presence that the police chief had. I wish that I knew what happened to these two men. They supported the US Army in everything we wanted to do and I’m sure that when we left and the VC took over the area that these men were either killed or sent to “re-education” camps for a long prison stint.

September 27

Not too much to write about. Had Vietnamese coffee. It is poured thru a bad looking strainer into a cup. The cream was like a syrup. However, it doesn’t taste half bad.

September 28

Today is Mid-Autumn Day (Aug 14 on Vietnamese Calendar). This is a Children’s Holiday and all school children celebrated by parading and erecting a tent. I visited a Boy Scout camp site. Met the An Khe scoutmaster and a scoutmaster from Qui Nhon. They had erected tents, entrances and barbecue pit. The leader from Qui Nhon brought over about 6 scouts. He would’ve brought more, but each boy had to pay $1.60 bus fare. At night they had a campfire with the scouts dressed as Indians. They did a war dance, sang campfire songs and had skits much like Scouts in the US would do.
The shoeshine boys also erected tents as well as the other school children. The presence of American soldiers has caused an educational problem. Many of the boys ages 13 and up quit school to shine American combat boots. These shoeshine boys could easily earn $5-10 a day while their parents were lucky to earn a dollar or two a day. Thus the boys were encouraged to quit school and help support the family.

September 29

Today started off with getting a grader and bulldozer from the 70th Engineers after some difficulty. The grader smoothed the road and the dozer leveled the playground area. This was needed for the dedication ceremonies. CPT Savage from Division G-5 brought back 20 baby pigs from Saigon. Tonight we went to the An Khe soccer field where there were 1500 children with Japanese lanterns. They sang songs and paraded through An Khe. It was the end of Mid Autumn Holidays.

I got into a discussion with the Group’s Chaplain LTC (Chaplain) Charlie Mills about the merits of the Plaza or Sin City as it was known by the troops. The Army had set up a barbed wire compound called

the Plaza. It was located about half a mile from An Khe and it consisted of maybe 15 or 20 buildings that served beer to the troops, some had small bands and the waitresses who served the beer would dance with the troops and for an additional amount would perform sexual favors. This was all regulated by the military. The girls were checked at the entrance for the ID cards, once a week the girls were checked for sexual diseases by an American doctor and the prices for everything were established and published. No overcharging was permitted. If a girl had venereal disease her entry card was taken and she was not allowed in the compound until cleared by the Army doctor. If a GI was caught outside of the Plaza having relations with a girl they were given an Article 15 (non judicial punishment) and the village of An Khe was off limits to the soldiers. Most soldiers in the Cav spent several months in the field at a time and when they came back to base camp it was for just a few days and it was a chance to release tensions, go to the PX, catch up on correspondence and have a few beers without getting in trouble, as alcohol was off limits in the field. The average age of the American soldier in Vietnam was probably 20 or 21. Many of the soldiers just went to listen to music, talk to a pretty Vietnamese girl and shoot the breeze with their buddies.

This arrangement was not favorably looked upon by many, especially the chaplains and someone wrote a letter that was published in a stateside newspaper about the Army sponsoring prostitution. The Commanding General who was rumored to be in line for a promotion was relieved of command and sent home for an early retirement.

The sad fact is that the venereal disease rate for the First Cavalry soldiers which had been extremely low, the lowest of any unit in Vietnam, suddenly skyrocketed when the Plaza was razed. Some of the venereal diseases were very potent and it took a soldier out of combat and into the hospital. With the new policy, the MP's had their hands full, arresting soldiers who were frequenting places in An Khe which previously had been off limits. The citizens of An Khe were upset at what was now happening in the village.

Everyone has to make their own judgment about the morality of this set up. As an officer, it was not considered a place to be if you wanted to receive good officer efficiency reports which are essential for promotion. The same with senior enlisted soldiers. Most of them stayed away from "Sin City." However, for a certain element this arrangement was a logical solution for a predictable problem that has existed in the military for centuries.

September 30

I took "slop" out to the pigs this morning. We had made an agreement with our unit mess hall that they would save the garbage for the pigs. However, we had to haul it out every day. Once we got to the village pig co-op, the woman on duty wasn't too eager to unload the slop if it was to be used for someone else's pigs. The idea of a community co-op wasn't understood yet.

October 1

Today was workday in the village. They began working on the village entrance and fencing in the playground. An Dan started their community house and put culverts in. Tan Tao had already accomplished these tasks. I learned from Mr. Vu that the dedication ceremony had been delayed and the new date is Oct 11. This news did not sit good with COL Lukens.

October 2

Another workday in the village. We hauled brick and sand for the gates. The police chief pulled a fast one and surprised us with a temporary pig pen in his back yard. The people in the village weren't too happy as the pigs were in an area shared by people in other villages and they wanted them in their own village. It was agreed to move them in the evening. Also, we lucked out with a dump truck from the Engineers. Lt Black gave us a dump truck and we spent from 1800-2400 (midnight) hauling gravel. I had two cups of Vietnamese coffee (strong) and tea in the local restaurant while waiting for SGT Fletcher.

October 3

In the morning I drove the truck, Rep helped with interpreting at sick call and Fletcher took the grader thru the village. I took the Colonel Lukens out in the afternoon to see the progress. It appears that it is going to turn out to be an American show when the Vietnamese deserve the credit. The pigs had been moved to a new location in the middle of An Dan and there was a large crowd around the pens all day.

October 4

It started raining about 0800 and didn't quit until 2000. I didn't have a vehicle as Fletcher took the

truck to Qui Nhon to pick up civic action supplies. I was in the Adjutant's office about 1600 when someone said that a plane had crashed into Hon Cong Mtn. The 11th Avn Gp was located at the base of Hon Cong and apparently in the fog an Air Force Caribou carrying about 35 had crashed into the backside of Hon Cong. A call went out over the radio for O+ blood and over 400 troops went to the hospital.

October 5

Learned that at least 13 had died in the plane crash. Went to to the village and learned that apparently a M-79 grenade had been fired from the Camp's perimeter and it had gone through a villagers house. It made a big hole in the roof of a 77 year old man causing minor wounds. Then our truck wouldn't start. After fixing that we spent time working on the playground. This is the middle of monsoon season and it has been raining every day, practically the entire day. The village dedication ceremony is getting closer and closer.

October 6

Spent the morning doing odds and ends for the ceremony. In the afternoon I went with CPT Finley, 2nd BGE to the village to apologize to the family hit by the grenade. They were very friendly and didn't want anything. Vu came back and was upset when he found the pigs had been moved, especially when one is sick. The Vietnamese vet gave the pig a shot of penicillin.

October 7

Another day closer to the dedication. Spent the morning in the village waiting for the Army vet to look at the sick pig, but he never came. It only sprinkled today so they managed to lay the foundation for the new piggery.

October 8

Found out this morning that II Corp GEN Vinh Loc wanted the ceremony moved from the 11th to the 18th so Vietnam's Chief of State could attend. Now I know what a condemned man who gets a stay of execution feels like. Told the village chief this and he said don't tell the people, they'll slow down and then he laughed for five minutes. Mr. Vu came and talked about building the community HQ. Looked at the letters that the village kids had written for the students in Pennsylvania. Some of them were real good.

October 9

The morning was spent getting lumber for the dispensary and fixing our truck's carburetor. The piggery is coming along fine. In the afternoon the Army vet came and treated the pig with an infected foot. Then in the evening back at base camp I stepped outside to take a leak and felt something strike my foot and it immediately started swelling. CPT Stewart, Asst S-1 and my hooch mate suggested a scorpion bite. As he talked the bitten area turned white and the foot was red. I went to sick call and got a shot and salve.

October 10

The games the Vietnamese children play are quite similar to the ones American kids play. Today, I played a game of pitching rubber bands. If the band lands on a 0 you lose, if on a 1 you get 1 and on a 2 you get 2. The game is like pitching nickels. The girls play jacks with sticks and a rubber ball. The boys play cards using rubber bands or money for betting. The girls play a game called hop-scotch. A favorite game is setting a can out in the middle and trying to capture the can, picking it up if you can and getting back across the line before you get tagged.

October 11

Today we played basketball. Everybody tried a shot. Police chief is pretty good. Also, put up the volleyball posts and CPT Pressley, the 11th Avn Gp Flight Surgeon worked on the dispensary. Here are some of the comments that the kids wrote in their letters: "our country is very poor," "we are at war", "my mother is pregnant so we don't know whether boy or girl." I'm sure Rep helped them with some of the words.

October 12

Well another dedication change. Vu came by this afternoon and said that it would be after the first of Nov because Premier Ky wanted to attend and he is going to Manila next week. Here are the dates that have come and gone:

8 Oct people didn't like it
9 Oct Gen Vinh Loc couldn't attend
11 Oct Gen Thieu, VN Chief of State couldn't attend
17 Oct Gen Ky couldn't attend

When Vu saw the pig sty he said it was "number one." "Number one" meant that it was the finest. "Number 10" was absolutely the worst. Nothing wrong with these terms, but unfortunately, I have been noticing lately the filthy language of the kids—they've been listening to too many GI's. Today we traded C rations to the Vietnamese for sand. Rep feels that this is helping the VC as they sell the food on the black market and use the money for weapons. We should stop, but then we wouldn't have any sand and the school wouldn't get built.

October 13

Went to Qui Nhon today and what an experience. We've been having trouble with the truck, put 3 carburetors on in 7 days. On the way to QN we had to be pushed twice, in QN once and on the way back twice. The trip is about 45 miles and it goes thru territory that is still subject to ambush. The Koreans have cut the ambushes to a minimum but it still happens. There is a long high pass called An Khe Pass that is about 5 miles east of An Khe and it has some sharp turns and a fairly steep climb. SP4 Heittman was driving and for some reason Rep and Fletcher didn't come with us. Coming up the pass the truck quit again. A deuce and half pushed us about 100 meters up to the top of the hill. Then another deuce and half hooked a very short (about 8') chain to us and started dragging us back to camp. What followed was very terrifying. Apparently the truck driver was scared and he proceeded to drive quite fast. He took us at least 30 mph, dodging holes and once I thought we were going over. Heittman was behind the wheel and he was doing a great job, steering our truck and using the brakes to avoid hitting the truck. Finally the driver slowed down. He was still traveling about 20 mph and several times I thought we were going to crash into the rear of his truck. Finally, An Khe came into view and I was very happy. Since it was almost night fall, the last thing I wanted was to spend the night in Charlie country.

October 14

COL Lukens, Vu, Atkins and myself took a tour through the village. COL Lukens was shown all the new projects. The only project not completed is the piggery, but that is coming right along.

October 15

This is supposed to be monsoon month, but today was another scorcher, the second day in a row. This is a break for our piggery. With the current weather it would be finished in another 3-4 days. Found out today that the village is paying the bricklayers 200 piasters a day ($2 US) and the unskilled 100 piasters ($1 US) per day.

October 16

Afternoon was another hot day. The village got a load of sand and tin. Went through the village chief's house and the chief sleeps in one room and his wife has her own little room in the back.

October 17

This morning we hauled 16 one hundred kilo (220 lbs) bags of rice for the chief. Rep says that in An Khe the rice costs 3,000 piasters a bag. In Saigon it costs 1500. Passed out tooth paste and brushes to each house. One old woman wanted to know why we were giving her a brush when she had no teeth. Tonight we started basketball. Ken (young boy who helps us), police chief, Rep, Heittman, myself and several others played. Everyone had a good time.

October 18

Today I became a movie actor. Dept of Army is making a movie on civic action and they chose the pig sty as one of their subjects. Of course G-5 took most of the credit, but Rep, myself and the chief did get into it a little. I asked Rep to have the chief get the head pig man and chief told Rep he was the head.

Passed out marbles (2 to each child) and cigarettes (why we passed out cigarettes, I can't recall, but based on my present values, I wouldn't do it again.) The Army Veterinarian came out and said 2 of the pigs were sick. Showed Ken how to play checkers. This evening we played basketball. The boys are getting good.

October 19

After spending time getting an outdoor latrine from Post Engineers (PA&E), the village chief didn't want one. As he was saying that there was no need for a latrine, one of the kids was urinating right in front of us. The chief wanted one with running water. I got mad and left.

Went through police chief's house. He is having a septic tank dug, running water, toilet, stove, wooden floors and waterproofed ceiling.

Stopped and had coffee at the local restaurant which is nothing more than a lean-to about 8" X 8" attached to a residence. Very crude.

October 20

In the afternoon, I went to the village. Mr. Vu came up with the proposal that if we could get desks and chairs, he would furnish the teachers for 3 class rooms in the community building. Played checkers with Ken and Fletcher. The Vietnamese are enjoying checkers.

October 21

Today, the Vietnamese thought that Fletcher and myself were crazy. It rained most of the day. However, in between the raindrops, we planted grass seed on the playground. They'd never seen grass seed before and were laughing and shaking their heads. We had the sign for the dispensary painted and delivered. The fancy piggery is really coming along. Should be finished by tomorrow, about 16 days of work. They are making a sign for it, so as Rep says the people won't mistake it for a hotel. Got a haircut from a barber in An Khe. Wasn't too bad. Saw my efficiency report written by our adjutant, MAJ Abramowitz. He is transferring to one of the cavalry units and has to write efficiency reports on several officers. The OER was very complimentary.

Oct 22

It rained all day today. This morning we had coffee and rolls at the village restaurant and then played checkers. Fletcher beat Rep, then the police chief. The village chief got a 16 year old girl to work in the dispensary. She is very shy but seems to be pretty good.

This afternoon a man came and wanted us to come to his house to see his little girl. We took her to the Vietnamese hospital and she is in very serious condition. They couldn't find a vein so had to do surgery to put an IV in. The child has pneumonia and 103.2 fever. The parents were very concerned. They had ground up leaves for medicine. Showed movies at night, Gemini IV and John Glenn Story. However, we didn't have any sound.

October 23

Found out this afternoon that the little girl passed away at 0730 this morning. Sure is a shame. Their house has been boarded up since. Opened up my clothes closet in our hooch and discovered that my clothes were all moldy. I was told to put a light in the closet. Hopefully it will work.

October 24

I took an enlisted person from PIO (Public Information Office) out to village to show him what we'd accomplished. Finished the shower for the dispensary. Played basketball this evening. Showed Lee and Ken how to do a jump shot. Went swimming in the river and got a scare. Because of the monsoon rains, the water was flowing very swiftly. I was only about 5' from the bank and the current caught me. I was lucky to get back to shore. I saw Tan Tao's hamlet chief's new baby, real cute.

October 25

Today we moved the pigs to their fancy digs. Had a guy from PIO out, but the pigs didn't squeal as much as before. Went over to PIO and did a tape for the radio program. This afternoon there was a preventive medicine team out checking mosquito breeding places for malaria larvae. They found many and had a test tube full.

October 26

Went to Qui Nhon today. Police chief, wife, son and another man went. During the day chief bought Heittman and myself four cokes and a steak dinner at the bus stop. Looking back on it, I probably should've refused, but he was very insistent and it appeared that if I refused his offer he would've been offended. Chief and his wife had rice, pork, and fish, all bathed in "nuoc mam" "Nuoc" means liquid and "mam" means rot-

ten fish anchovy. It is a very pungent fish sauce that I was never able to eat. Noticed that chief's wife walked behind him all the time and he was always going off and leaving her. Back at camp, I was on the radio talking about the village. Chaplain Mills recorded it.

October 27

This morning we found the dispensary broken into. Band aids and a small amount of money was all that was taken. Chief thinks he knows who did it. This afternoon we got the sprayer and sprayed for flies. This evening 10 of us played basketball. Lots of fun.

October 28

This morning, the village chief said Mr. Vu wanted a place for the pigs to run. It turns out he wanted a very large area that was not available. Then another villager came up and wanted another basket put in and a cement court. We put the swings in (4) made by PA&E and from 1300 to 2000 there wasn't a swing not going. Always 25-30 kids standing around. Filled the shower and SGT Fletcher started the shower program. It took a little coaxing but soon every kid wanted to take one.

In the evening while the English class was underway, I was walking down the dirt road and noticed that the village chief was standing on his porch and waving me in. Come to find out there were about 20 men, considered village elders, all sitting cross-legged on the floor with a cloth in front of them and they were getting ready for a ceremonial meal, celebrating the piggery. The chief motioned for me to sit at the front of the group. There was a couple of candles going, but it was very difficult to see what we were eating. I was handed the first dish and with everyone looking for my reaction I took a taste and almost gagged. I think it was pork fat, which is considered by them to be a delicacy but not to me. I did the best I could to try and conceal my reaction, but I'm sure I didn't do a good job. We had rice (as usual), pork and nuoc mam which I passed on. One of the reasons for our importing US bred pigs was that the Vietnamese pigs were terribly inbred. Their bellies dragged along the ground and the quality of the meat was terrible. As an aside, while we were eating, a woman was running around outside with no clothes on. She came into the village meeting and was quickly ushered out.

October 29

Today we went to the village ready to pour concrete for the swings. However, only 2 boys showed up. Rep was mad and said that we should leave the swings alone. If they didn't fix them within a period of time, then we should take them away. He said we do too much for the people. Well chief, got some people and by noon the work was done. Also, 119 families submitted claims for damages to their trees from perimeter spraying. NOTE: Now I realize this must've been Agent Orange, but at the time Agent Orange was not in our vocabulary and I thought it probably was DDT. Unfortunately Agent Orange is one of the sad chapters in our military history. It has shortened and ruined the lives of thousands of Americans and Vietnamese.

October 30

The village today was all decorated. Rep said that the flags everyone had flying in front of their homes cost about $.30. The concrete for the swings was set and they started using them today. When we came by at 2100 there were still 10 kids there. We showed films tonight. I thought I had several on Vietnam, but ended up with 4 on America. I asked Rep if it was too much and he said the people liked them. Fletcher said he'd seen so much of Kennedy and Johnson that he saw them in his sleep. In the mail I received an apple pie from Sharon. Boy, was it good. You don't know how much soldiers look forward to mail from home. If a unit has a good mess hall, troops are paid on time, and mail is passed out as soon as it arrives, you will usually have happy soldiers.

October 31

I received an invitation to attend the Vietnamese Independence Day celebration at District HQ. I was told by Rep that to be invited to this event was a very high honor.

November 1

Tonight I attended an Independence Day dinner at District HQ, hosted by Mr. Vu. Nov 1 is the Vietnam Independence Day. MAJ Atkins, Sheriff, Mr. Ackerman, the USAID (US Agriculture and Industry Dept) civilian and those US personnel that work at the An Khe Hospital were the only Americans. There must've been at least 50 village and district officials. There was pork and a fish sauce (nuoc mam) to dip it in, calves liver, bread pudding known as cow 's liver, bread sticks, Seagrams whiskey and beer to drink. It was quite enjoyable.

November 2

Today I worked on legalizing the civic action fund. We will soon be paying the workers who will be building the high school.

November 3,

Today I gave a briefing to Div G-5 who had just returned. I had a few jokes and everyone said it was well received. Mentioned about gasoline being in the food for the pigs, the shooting downtown, the way they play marbles and 11th Aviation Group's attempt to adopt a Montagnard village.

November 4

Went around and inspected those claiming to have crop damage. We eliminated many claims. In the evening I went to Mr. Vu's house to check on the dedication ceremony and his family was playing a Vietnamese game similar to chess. There were pieces called infantry, artillery, elephant, general, VC, etc. The object is to protect the general.

November 5

In the morning we left for Qui Nhon again to get corn for the pigs. When we got there they said the corn was for refugees and we couldn't get any. We spent the day driving around Qui Nhon and then about 1700 they decided we could have the corn after all. At the Officers Club I met a COL from Canada who was on the International Supervisory Commission and had just returned from 2 ½ months in Hanoi. We had an interesting conversation. On the way to Qui Nhon, we had a big scare. Coming down out of the An Khe Pass, we met a convoy heading west to Pleiku. Several of the trucks flashed their lights. As if they were warning of dangers ahead. Then down the road a large number of rifles let loose. Come to find out the Koreans were opening up a firing range. Fletches had the wheels turned to the ditch.

November 6

Came back from Qui Nhon with 46 bags of corn, 12 ten gallon cans of oil and 7 people. The ¾ ton truck barely made it up the pass. Took the corn to the pigs and found out village dedication ceremony will now be after 1 Dec, so I got permission to go to a civic action course in Saigon.

November 7

In the morning I tried to get an allocation for the course in Saigon. Went to the village in the afternoon and had staff duty officer (SDO) all night. Nothing happened. We get SDO about twice a month. Once a month we get officer of the guard (OG) for the perimeter. This entails holding guard mount at 1700 (5 pm) and then from 1800 to 0600 you had about a quarter of a mile stretch on the perimeter that you were responsible for. The foxholes were manned by garrison soldiers, like finance clerks, mechanics, etc or by the battalion that was back in base camp for stand-down. Sometimes this could get a little dicey when the VC tried to crawl thru the wires. They were known as sappers. Around 0300 sometimes your nerves would play tricks with you and you would imagine things that weren't happening.

November 8

Got a letter from SP4 Roderick Evans and he said the Kitzingen Kolts football team wasn't doing very well. They were 1-4. He said Erickson, Brehm and himself wanted me back. They were good guys and played baseball, basketball and football for me. At times I longed for being back in Kitzingen, Germany coaching Brigade football, Brigade basketball, Division track and Officer in Charge of the Division baseball team and running the Athletic and Recreation (A&R) program for Harvey Barracks. In my spare time I officiated basketball games. One of the soldiers who played football, basketball and baseball was Joe Brinkman who after getting out of the service became a major league baseball umpire and ended up officiating several World Series. He was the umpire that discovered George Brett was using a pine tar bat and called Reggie Jackson out in a controversial World Series call.

November 9

Today was election returns from US. Found out that Gov George Romney won in MI. In the morning we put the tether ball pole in, worked at the club in the afternoon and in the evening played basketball and had English classes in the village.

November 10

Played basketball and in the afternoon I had tea with the police chief in his house. He can speak fluent French and some English. I noticed that when he and I are talking he doesn't allow any of his children to be in the room. Found out that Mr. Vu has submitted me for some Vietnam award to be presented at the dedication ceremony.

November 11

The tether balls and basketballs arrived and we showed the kids how to play tether ball. Also, got a latrine from PA&E for the dispensary.

November 12

The village chief of An Dan showed me his stock of chickens and ducks. He has about 50 of them and he keeps them enclosed.

November 14

Today we gave a bubble bath to the pigs. The villagers wanted to bathe the pigs so we got some bubble bath. We took some bubble bath over to the shower at the dispensary and the kids had a great time taking bubble baths.

November 16

Today we spent 4 hours with the truck stuck (again) in a rice field. Heittman was passing out soap and the next thing I knew he was stuck. Last night the dispensary was broken into and the medic's camera and candy was taken. The chief was quite upset. Took a picture of the chief accepting the new swings from Mr. Scribner, head of PA&E.

November 17

I took CPT Layton and MAJ Powell on a tour of the village. They were impressed with what they saw.

November 18

I took Diane Love from the Red Cross to the village. The villagers were curious, the same as they were when I took Pat Hamilton to the village. Again they thought that she was my wife. We had some nice tea at the police chief's house.

November 19

Tonight I went to R&U for bingo. There were mostly Koreans, but a few Americans and Vietnamese. The numbers were called off in English and Vietnamese. A few Americans were making a considerable amount of noise and being obnoxious. Heittman won a carton of cigarettes. He doesn't smoke but can use them for trading.

At 0230 I got up and listened to the Michigan State-Notre Dame football game on AFN (Armed Forces Network). This was for the national championship and it ended in a 10-10 tie. Notre Dame was happy to settle for a tie and ran the clock out. Much to the disappointment of the MSU fans and me. There were 4 of us listening to the game. I won the football pool of $10 as I had 0-0.

November 21

Received Sharon's Christmas package and was thrilled to get the pictures of her and the kids. I've got it on my dresser and look at it every day. Also, received chocolate chip cookies from Mother and car catalogs from my brother. Today, a correspondents from UPI and Stars and Stripes came out to the village to take pictures.

November 23

Fletcher left this morning for R&R in Bangkok. During English class I got the idea of inviting the village officials for Thanksgiving to the unit mess hall on base camp. I went ahead and invited them and then came back to camp and asked COL Lukens, who had to call G-5, who had to call the Div Chief of Staff for approval. Fortunately it was approved.

November 24

Today was Thanksgiving. That means Christmas isn't far off and then February when I will meet Sharon in Hawaii for R&R. During breakfast, CPT John Owens was talking about how every day they get a call from Division asking if any of our choppers had shot at women or children, so they have to call every battalion and the answer is always "no."

Today the village chief, 2 hamlet chiefs and police chief came to the mess hall to eat dinner with us. I went out to the village to pick them up and one of the hamlet chiefs showed up in black clothing and after a remark was made about mistaking him for a VC, he quickly hurried home and changed. They seemed to enjoy all the food and tried to eat all that was placed before them. I think that the troops enjoyed having them as they have heard what good relations we have with the villagers. Many of them have been out to the village.

November 25

This morning a chopper landed on the river bank near where some women were doing laundry and several fatigues were washed down stream. It took awhile to get the problem resolved. Meanwhile, the pilot who was a LT was telling about a Vietnam wedding ceremony he had attended. Later I asked Rep if what he said was true. It seems the boy's parents and boy begin by going to the prospective bride's house for "shopping." If everyone agrees, then a relative of the boy takes a ring to the girl's house and asks her to come to the boy's house. A feast follows in which you eat, drink and talk. You can only talk about the bride and groom and say good things about them.

Nov 26

Found out this morning that I have the mumps. Apparently I never had them as a child and I must've caught it from one of the village kids. I spent the next 6 days in the First Cav hospital. I received good care and a lot of questions about how I could have contracted mumps.

December 3

Was released from the Hospital on the 2nd and I went to the village in the morning and came back to the hootch to rest in the afternoon. My strength hasn't come back yet.

December 4

About 8 am we had two loud mortar rounds go off and the sirens rang for an alert. As it turned out, it was friendly fire. Apparently, an artillery battery got the wrong grid coordinates for firing and the rockets landed in the middle of our base camp, killing an MP who was guarding the Division TOC (Tactical Operation Center). Unfortunately, casualties from friendly fire have existed since the beginning of war. It is sad, but in the urgency of the moment when you only have a couple of seconds to decide what to do, sometimes the wrong choice is made.

December 5,

Today, the village started two elementary schools—one in each hamlet. Tan Tao had 25 students and An Dan 55. Each child pays 25 piasters a month. That is less than a couple of pennies in US dollars.

December 6

This morning we went to the village and observed the classes in session. They seem to be going quite well. Also, found out that the village dedication was AGAIN put on the back shelf. They don't know when it will occur as they can't find a time that accommodates everyone.

December 8

Went to the village in the morning and stopped by R & U (Repairs and Utilities). Mr. Scribner showed me the teeter totter that they'd built. Also, said they would build some more desks and a black board. Quite a man.

December 11

Went to visit the Montagnards. There are 57 who have come in from the outlying area to build a village. They are living in tents and have frames for three houses built. The women were all bare-chested. The kids were smoking and were quite friendly. Like most Vietnamese children, they wanted candy. There was a woman there who was supposed to be 100 years old.

December 12

Left for Saigon to talk about the requirements for the high school we wanted to build. Plane was to take off at 0800 but it didn't leave until 1100. It was a C 130. We stopped in Pleiku and arrived in Saigon at 1230. Ate at the Ton Shun Nhut Officers Club and then caught a military bus for downtown Saigon and the Rex Hotel. Visited the USO and saw Melvin Laird, the Defense Secretary who was in Saigon. Went to visit MAJ Ray Spigarelli who I had played football with at Plymouth, Michigan HS. He had graduated two years ahead of me and was a Field Artillery Officer stationed in Saigon. We had a nice chat and then I had dinner at the Blue Diamond and walked around the city, especially down Nguyen Hue St and Tu Do St. I suppose I was taking a risk walking around downtown Saigon by myself, but I felt pretty safe. I noticed the large number of women who were wearing dresses and the large number of American cars. The dresses are called "ao dais." I've sent one to Sharon. I was back in my room by 2230. Americans have a curfew of 2300 and the Vietnamese 2400.

December 13

I took a plaque to be engraved to a local store. The plaque will be presented to COL Lukens at the dedication ceremony, whenever that will be. I then walked thru the city taking pictures of Independence Palace, the river, the Opera House and Legislative Bldg, and Kennedy Square. I was going to take a picture of Gia Long Palace, where the Chief of State lives, but the signs say no picture taking and every time I got my camera up, they were looking at me. I didn't want to make an international incident.

I met Ray for lunch and then after a long walk, met the director of secondary schools. After talking to him about the high school, I went to the Saigon Zoo. The cost to get in is 2 cents. The animals are some of the same as we have in our zoo. With the monkeys and chimpanzees the kids would hit the animals and tease them. It made me very mad, but I didn't try and stop it. In the evening I took the bus to the Army PX in Cholon which is the Chinese section of Saigon. On the return trip I got on the wrong bus and almost missed my curfew.

December 14

I went to the USO (United Service Org.) to call Sharon. I sat around for 1 ½ hour but too many were ahead, so I took a walk to the Central Market and bought some cloth and shoes. The market is very interesting. You can buy practically anything. In the evening I met Col. Samuel Reid at the Rex. He was the DIVARTY Commander in Kitzingen Germany. We had a nice chat. Then at 1700 I went to the "Five O Clock Follies" which is the daily press conference conducted by the US military. Unfortunately, some reporters never went to the field but relied on information obtained from this briefing which at times was suspect. Today, the author John Steinbeck was present. The briefing was given by 3 individuals, a U.S. embassy official, an Army and an Air Force officer. The reporters quizzed the Air Force LTC about a possible error in bombing downtown Hanoi. However, he couldn't say anything. I went to the Air Terminal and slept on a hard bench as the plane was scheduled to leave around 0400, before the busses were running.

December 15

Got up at 0345 and signed in for the flight. At 0430 they took us out to the plane, only to find that it hadn't been serviced. Back to the terminal. At 0700 we were loaded back on the bus and went to the plane. However, once on the plane we sat for 2 hours, while they fixed the engine. Really gives you a comforting feeling about the upcoming flight. Finally, left at 0930, stopped at Nha Trang, Qui Nhon and arrived at An Khe at 1230. Came back to the tent and dictated a cassette tape for Sharon and the kids.

December 16

Went to the village and was surprised at the fence for the pigs and their size. They are really growing. Went to G-5 and volunteered to help in the settlement of the Montagnards. G-5 would prefer that they relocate from the area they're presently in, to a location in the downtown An Khe area. Spent the afternoon driving around An Khe looking for a resettlement spot. I briefed COL Lukens on my activities in Saigon and the latest on the Montagnards. At night I played a tape Sharon sent—she'd recorded it at too fast a speed, but it was great to hear her voice and Steve and Lynn's voices.

December 20

Today was a big day for the pigs. We moved them into the pig pen outside and had to shove each one out. However, once they got out there, did they have a ball running, rooting, rolling and fighting. Had staff duty officer again tonight and wrote 8 letters. Nothing exciting happened.

December 21

I received a letter from Sharon and she said that the choice of staying in or getting out of the Army was up to me. Some of her statements about the Army really surprised me. I didn't realize that she enjoyed most aspects of military life. Of course, neither of us enjoyed the separations, but in some ways it was good as it reminded you how much you miss each other. If an officer gets out of the military it is usually because the wife doesn't like the military. I've seen studies on the divorce rate for officers and it is surprisingly low. I've always been impressed with the maturity of their children. They've been around the world.

When I was the Athletic Officer for the 3rd Infantry Division, MG A. O. Connor was the Commanding General of the 3rd Infantry (Marne) Division and he asked me if I was interested in staying in the military. I told him that I had plans to get out of the service and get a high school teaching and coaching position. He told me that he thought I had a bright future in Special Services, namely athletics and recreation (A&R) and he also thought he could get me a position teaching at West Point. He told me that if I did decide to make the military a career, I should branch transfer to the Adjutant General Corp which controlled A&R. He said that he could arrange the branch transfer. He told me to think it over and to let him know if I ever decided to do it. For three years I was officer in charge of the 3rd Infantry Division baseball team and coach of the 3rd Inf Division track team. Great duty as we traveled all over Europe.

What a great man Gen Connor was and his wife was also special. While I was the sports officer for the Division in Wurzburg Germany and 2nd Brigade in Kitzingen during the years 1963-66, I had the opportunity as a 2nd and lst LT to work closely with COL Harris W. Hollis who later became a MG, and General Connor, who went from the CG of 3rd Inf to CG of Officer Personnel in the Pentagon, I also sat next to General Creighton Abrams who later became the Army Chief of Staff. I found all of the generals to be extremely intelligent, demanding, but friendly and dedicated to the welfare of their soldiers. It was very seldom that I encountered a senior officer who yearned for war. Most had seen the horrors of WWII or Korea and they felt that keeping a strong peace time Army was the best way to avoid war.

Anyways, during the fall in Vietnam I continued to think about what General Connor had told me and finally I wrote a letter to Sharon asking for her thoughts about my staying in the military. I thought that she would tell me the same thing that many of the wives of the service members had told their spouses, i.e. "it's either me or the military. If you decide to stay in, I'll be leaving." Or if they didn't say that, they made the officer feel guilty if he decided to stay in. I was very surprised when she said "that the choice was up to me." and that she enjoyed the life of the military. More about this later.

December 22

Today the police chief invited Rep, Fletcher, Heittman and myself to a family dinner at his brother's house. What a feast. To begin with, there were plates of chicken, barbecued pork, and Chinese food. Then, a big soup bowl that looked like chicken soup, but tasted like pea soup. Then we had sweet potato with meat in it. Then rice (always), salad with a hot leaf in it and dessert was a banana and rice cake, which really didn't look too tempting. We finished it off with tea. Also, had two cokes. Real fine meal and I ate it with chop sticks.

December 23

Today was very slow. It rained all day and there was little we could do. We were working in the Officers Club getting it ready for Christmas and in the meantime I played 11 games of ping pong with Ben (I can't remember his last name) winning 6-5. Tomorrow is the start of the Christmas truce. Wonder if it will be observed?

December 24

Christmas Eve. Attended the church services and then went to the Division Bowl to listen to Billy Graham. What a speaker! First time I'd heard him. He started with a couple of jokes, then a short sermon about the Christmas story. He said that to go to Heaven you must do three things: a. Repent your sins, b. Believe and accept God, and c. Practice your faith.

December 25

Christmas came on a Sunday and it was very similar to most Sundays. Got up at 0745, had breakfast, opened presents—manicure set from Sharon and other small gifts, went to church 11-12, made tapes from 12-1 and then had a big Christmas dinner. Spent the afternoon painting walls at the Club (we are still recovering from the fire). In the evening I wrote several letters. This spending a Christmas away from loved ones is sure different, hopefully next year it will be much better.

December 26

Today, we had the Bob Hope Show. Yesterday it was Billy Graham and on Wednesday it will be Cardinal Spellman. What a lineup! There was such a large crowd for Bob Hope, 6-7,000 that we were so far away that without binoculars it was hopeless. He had the Korean Kittens, Miss World, Anita Bryant, Vic Damone, Joey Heatherton and Phyllis Diller, Bob Hope was at his best, cracking jokes that cut down the officers.

December 27

Found out this morning that Landing Zone (LZ) Byrd had been overrun during the night. Apparently a force of about 400 NVA attacked the 125 man LZ and after penetrating the perimeter were only driven off after the artillery was used as a direct fire weapon. We had 26 Americans KIA and 60 wounded. They had 70 killed. We had a Pathfinder from our 11th Aviation Pathfinder Company located with us who was killed. He was from Belleville MI. When I went to Plymouth High School, in Michigan, we played Belleville in our Suburban 6A League. I've often wondered who that individual was.

December 28

Today was Christmas (American Style) for An Dan and Tan Tao. LT Harry Halloway dressed up as Santa Clause and COL Lukens flew him in. We had about 400 kids watching the chopper land. We went house to house and passed out over 1,000 toys that had been sent by RSVP (Rally Support Vietnam Personnel) from Columbia, SC. The organization donating the toys was the Columbia Rotary Club.

There is a Rotarian, John Wharton from Columbia who started RSVP and he had sent large CONEX containers of soap, clothing, toys, toothbrushes and much more. In March he even sent us three large cement mixers for our upcoming high school project. More about that later.

Santa arriving by copter.

Mr. Dang Phung, village chief sent the following letter to Mr. Wharton, "I, chief of An Dan-Tan Tao villages, represent for all villagers to send these thanking words to all of you, who have helped our people in the construction of our village and have given clothes, food to us and toys, books, desks and benches for children. I sincerely send to you our respect and thanking." I'm sure that SGT Rep had a big hand in composing the letter as the chief to my knowledge didn't speak any English.

Rep would write on a piece of paper what sex and ages the kids in the house were and they'd come to the truck for their present. Rep got mad at some of the people for lying and some wanted presents for their adult children. The kids didn't know what to think about Santa Claus and some were frightened. Also, they were frightened of teddy bears.

December 29

Today was a bad day. The dispensary was broken into again (3rd time) and some aspirin and blankets were taken. The thief broke into the village HQ and climbed over the wall that separated the village HQ and dispensary and out the back door. Also, found that we'd lost a box of the best toys that we were saving and then Heittman burned by mistake a box of balloons. SGT Rep felt that we should close down the dispensary and not open it up until the village chief and police chief found out who was responsible for the break ins. We've been seeing 65-85 patients a day, so it will be interesting to see what happens.

December 30

A very hectic day. We decided to close down the dispensary for a week. Then the village chief told me that Mr. Vu had told him that the village dedication would be tomorrow. We finally found MAJ Atkins and he verified this. I told COL Lukens and he exploded, saying they could shove it with such short notice. Well, after some trouble we found Mr. Vu and LTC Phelps, G-5 and got it cancelled. I had seen Vu earlier in the week and told him that we wanted the dedication as soon as possible. Well, he went ahead and was only trying to please us. Can't Win For Trying!

December 31

This is the last day of 1966. Now I will start writing in the front of the diary with 215 days left. We set the date for the village opening for next Saturday. We had a party at the Officers Club. Some had too much to drink. Others played cards or ping pong. At midnight, aerial illumination rounds went off lighting up the base camp and machine guns and rifles went off all over the place—even though the directive had gone out against such displays.

January 1, 1967

I am now writing in the front of the diary. Not much done today. Went to church and then we had a party at the Officers Club for two Red Cross "donut dollies" that were going home. I admire the donut dollies. Everyday they get on a chopper and go out to the fire bases to meet the troops.

January 2,

Spent the day making arrangements for the village dedication and then cancelling. AGAIN. MAJ Atkins asked that we have it on 3 Jan before Mr. Vu goes to Saigon on the 4th. So after considerable persuasion COL Lukens agreed to the 3rd. Arranged for 1st Cav Commanding General, G-5, division band, PA, stand, chairs, etc. Then Vu said it was too soon.

Spent the afternoon sending out the civic action newsletter to everyone who has sent gifts to the civic action program. We've had the Rollier's from Phoenix, John Wharton from Columbia SC and many more. In the evening I gave another presentation on the village to the 11th General Support Company.

January 4

Saw Mr. Vu off to Saigon and went to MACV where they had a going away party for Mr. Ackerman, the USAID representative, who is leaving for reassignment.

January 5

The morning was spent in getting a check cashed to pay the workers who are building the high school. In the afternoon we found out that Lee was the one who broke into the dispensary. He claims that he didn't take any aspirins. He is probably about 15 or 16 and apparently he had a girlfriend with him and he wanted a blanket for a planned date by the river. The weather, particularly in the evenings, has been quite cold. Chief jokingly blamed me because I'd showed him where the blankets were. Lee had been a real help around the dispensary and he was a very talented athlete. However, he was very embarrassed and stopped coming around. We re-opened the dispensary.

January 7

Found out that a rat had chewed through the plastic tie of the cookie jar that Sharon had sent chocolate chip cookies and gotten into them. I was going to still eat them, but changed my mind.

January 8

I must lead a charmed life! Today, Rep and I left An Khe on a chopper for LZ Hammond where the 229 Avn Bn was located. We had some left over toys that they could use with the local kids. Rep suggested that we go to the leprosarium just south of Qui Nhon. We flew there and upon landing we were met by a Catholic nun. She showed us through the place. The chapel was out of this world with marble all over. Then we had cokes and a banana pastry. We told them what we wanted to do and they gathered all the children together. We gave each child candy and a toy and took some pictures. There are 11 nuns here from Vietnam, France, Germany and England. The mother superior was from England and had spent 21 years in China and 13 years in Vietnam. Everyone was so friendly and the children and people were the cleanest and best dressed of anyone I've seen in Vietnam. The school was beautiful with marble desks. I saw and talked to some of the lepers, but they didn't come too close. Once a family contracts leprosy the entire family is moved to the leprosarium. NOTE: Sadly, I learned a few years later that in 1972 the NVA burned the leprosarium to the ground and killed all the nuns. What a shame!

We flew back to LZ Hammonds and started looking for a courier flight that would be going back to An Khe. There was one preparing to leave and Rep and I ran down the runway to jump on the back of the plane as it was taxiing for take off. It was the last one of the day going to An Khe. I mentioned to Rep how lucky we were to make this plane. Since it was a courier flight we had several stops to make before An Khe. Our first stop was LZ English which was an area infested with VC that the First Cav had been fighting in since I arrived in August.

We were flying on a C 17 Caribou which was designed for short runways and was handy for landing at Special Forces camps. When we left Hammonds, I initially sat down in a seat and started to buckle up. I heard a voice in my head tell me not to sit there. I heard it a second time and I looked up and saw a vacant seat across the aisle, plus it had a window to look out. I unbuckled and moved across the aisle.

When we left LZ English we started to climb when I heard a noise that sounded like a shot. I thought someone in the cabin had accidently discharged their weapon. I then saw some red liquid coming out. We yelled for the Air Force crew chief. He came back and ran back to the front and started pumping. The more he

pumped, the faster the liquid flowed. I learned later that the Caribou has a single hydraulic line in the ceiling running down the length of the plane. It controls the brakes, steering, and hydraulics. It meant that we had no brakes, steering and hydraulics, or very little.

The plane had started downward. I hadn't noticed that the pilot had turned the plane back to the runway. All I saw was a rice paddy and it appeared that was where we were headed. I swear that in those few seconds, my life flashed in front of me and I remember the thought that I would never again see Sharon and the kids.

Everyone yelled to fasten seat belts. I said a short prayer and then with a very hard hit we landed on the runway. The pilot, with no hydraulics, managed to bring the plane to a halt just at the end of the short runway. We all got up shaking and went outside. The pilot said it was the most difficult and hardest landing he'd ever made. We made a walk around the plane and discovered that the bullet had passed through the center of the canvas seat that I'd originally sat in and continued to the ceiling. If I hadn't moved, I would not be here today, Alan our third child would never have been born and I wouldn't have had the wonderful life that I've had. THANK GOD! I've always been a fervent believer that God has a master plan for all of us. He knows when it is our time and there isn't much we can do, except be prepared to meet our maker. For those who die at an early age, they must be needed in Heaven. It may be a simplistic belief, but it has stayed with me thru the several close calls I've had. I know that voice came from above!

Because the plane was incapacitated we had to spend the night at LZ English, which looked to be very insecure. I spoke with a Quartermaster MAJ who was stationed on the LZ and he said that we would be protected by a platoon of Vietnamese Popular Force's (PF). This is the lowest level of the South Vietnamese militia. Knowing their lack of training and commitment to the mission it was not a comforting thought. I did not sleep at all, as I heard small arms fire through the night. Matter of fact, that day our plane was the third plane that had been hit by a sniper who was firing from a hut at the end of the runway. During the night they eliminated the hut and everything in it. We made it through the night and caught an early plane to An Khe.

January 9

When I got back to base camp I went to the hootch (tent– living quarters) and walking to my bunker I detected an odor coming from my dresser. I found that the light that I'd placed in the dresser to combat mold, had fallen on my boot and was smoldering. In a very short time the shoe probably would've gone up in flames setting fire to everything in our General Purpose (GP) Medium tent. GP Medium tents are probably 30' long and 20' wide. We had six junior grade (CPT and below) officers living in our hootch and my bunk mates wouldn't have appreciated their belongings going up in smoke. Thank goodness, I came back to the bunk before going out to the field.

Also, today I received a letter from GEN Connor saying that if I desired a branch transfer to send it directly to him at the Pentagon and it would be approved. I guess this is what I've really wanted because I became quite excited about it. I sent a letter to Sharon and when I get her approval I'm going to send it in ASAP.

January 13

Friday the 13th and so far nothing bad has happened and its 2300. Today has been quite cold, Last night it got down to 56 which is the lowest its been. I nearly froze. When you're used to warm weather your blood thins out and we did not have much clothing for cold weather. In the evening we took 16 pounds of ice to the village. The kids really enjoyed it. Unfortunately, its been almost a week since I've been out to the village. Finally, I received my orders to attend the civic action class in Saigon. I leave Sunday morning. It will be a nice break.

January 14

This morning I visited the Montagnards while sick call was being held. I took many pictures. Then went to the village and helped the teacher lead an exercise class. He had about 50 kids lined up doing exercises. Then went down and watched the pigs run around outside. They had a ball. This afternoon we found that someone at the high school construction site had stolen re-bar which was steel bars needed for reinforcing the foundation. Told MAJ Atkins at MACV.

MAJ Atkins and I got into a discussion about the Vietnamese people. It was my conviction that to develop a nation the key is practical education. Not English or history, but auto mechanics, sanitation, electricity and agriculture. This is what these people need to pull themselves up. The key is vocational education.

Last week we placed a big latrine at the textile mill. The workers dug a large hole for the latrine, but when I looked at it today, there was feces all over the seat and floor. Very disgusting. Also, concerning the steel, MAJ Atkins said that several weeks ago there had been some steel stolen, so they booby trapped it

and a man lost his hand, but the stealing was continuing. The sad part is that the Vietnamese steal from each other, not all, but a high percentage.

January 15

Left An Khe at 0915 and after stops at Kontum and Pleiku we arrived at Tan Son Nhut at 1130. Waited for the luggage and then went to see CPT Joe Mann who was stationed with me in Kitzingen. He was Special Forces and a chemical officer. When I knew him in Germany he was planning to make a career of the military. However, he told me that he'd submitted his application to get out and it was disapproved. I went to the PX and saw a Sony 530 Tape Deck which I've been wanting. It was $179. I got a room at the Nations Hotel in downtown Saigon, changed clothes and went out to take pictures. For dinner I went to the Rex Officers Club which was on the 15th floor of the Rex Hotel in downtown Saigon. Many of the high ranking officers and senior enlisted lived there. I listened to a good rock and roll band with an attractive female singer. Then had a steak filet, wrapped in bacon for $2.50. I ate with a COL who I had just met and he was a veteran of WWII and Korea. He said what a strange war the Vietnam War was. While we were on the roof, eating steak, listening to good music, if you walked over to the edge of the building you could see rocket and aerial bursts going off out in the rice paddies surrounding Saigon. Probably less than 10 miles away soldiers were in foxholes and on patrol, while we were having a very pleasant evening. I finished the evening by walking around the streets, probably not a wise thing to do.

January 16

Today I'm under 200 days, getting short, Ha Ha. The class started today and we had some interesting speakers. To attend the course you had to have at least a Secret clearance which was checked every time you entered the auditorium. They spoke on the current political and economical situation, explained Revolutionary Development and also the VC infrastructure. As one official pointed out, the VN government is faced with two monumental tasks. One, locating and destroying the VC, and two, nation building. He also talked about how Gen Ky, who no one thought would last in power, had been in power for 19 months and he told of some of the predicaments that the government had survived. In the afternoon I rode in a pedicab for the first time. What an experience with all the downtown Saigon rush hour traffic.

January 17

Today we listened to a class on Revolutionary Development. Someone asked a question about the black market. Why could you walk down the Saigon streets and purchase cigarettes, jewelry and clothing at very low prices? It was an often voiced feeling by Americans that they had somehow procured this merchandise by dubious means. The speaker said that the US and VN government intentionally gave some of this merchandise to the street vendors at low or no cost. The idea was they would sell it and raise money for their family that would be circulated to other merchants. It was better than giving them hand outs. It made sense.

In the afternoon I went to the Cholon PX and saw a beautiful mink stole and diamond ring that I would like to buy Sharon. In the evening we had a party at the Rex for the class. Talked with a CPT stationed in the Delta. He is in charge of a Regional Force and Popular Force (RF and PF) company composed of Cambodians. He is only 50 miles from the border. He said that the VC had placed a bounty of 50,000 VN on his head, 30,000 VN on the medic and 25,000 VN on his NCO.

January 18

Called Sharon this morning. After we got the radio procedure down it wasn't too bad. I even understood Lynn and Steve. Sharon and I talked about Hawaii and staying in the military. The only way we can talk to each other is through MARS (Military Affiliated Radio Station). You never know if the radio operator is located in CA, MI,KA or even AK. It is wherever they can make a patch. It depends on the cloud cover, time of day, etc. Then you always have to say "over" and the radio operator has to switch it.

Today we had briefings in psychological warfare, economic warfare and an intelligence briefing. The director of Joint US Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) spoke and was very good. The speaker of economic warfare mentioned that Charlie produces 10 million metric tons of rice a year and only needs 70,000 tons so he isn't hurting for food and won't. I attended the "5 o'clock Press Follies" again and was shocked by how little information is made available to the news media. No wonder the people back in the US aren't getting the straight story.

January 19

Today we had a talk by a British public health official about public health. Very dry humor, typical

British. Also received a very thorough intelligence briefing on the US operations conducted in 1966. He talked about a “Road Runner” operation that drew a lot of criticism from some of the attendees. He talked about how the US had Special Forces and Montagnards dressing up like Vietnamese, ambushing patrols on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Apparently it is a very classified operation and while this was supposed to be a highly screened audience, the criticizers felt that there were people in the room that couldn’t be trusted and that the speaker had no business talking about such a highly classified operation. I would have to agree.

January 20

Today was the finish of the class. They summarized what we’d learned, answered questions and sent us on our way. I did have the scare of my life. At noon I walked by a car parked at the Constitutional Assembly Bldg. A man started his car and a loud explosion followed. It was parked about 10’ away and scared the daylights out of me. Everyone came running out to see what had happened. Apparently the car had backfired and nothing happened. I met CPT Rodney Wright at the PX. Rod and I graduated from WMU ROTC in the same class and I hadn’t seen him since graduation four years ago. That’s what I enjoy about the military. Even though it is a huge organization, wherever you go, there is someone there you know from the past.

January 21

I had one more day in Saigon and spent the day sight seeing and in the evening at the International Club in Saigon. The meal was good and cheap. It had a stateside atmosphere. There were at least 200 Americans there and you needed a card to get in. During the day I’d gone to the Cholon PX and checked on car and ring prices. Met Rodney Wright again and we rode back on the bus.

January 22

Returned to An Khe by C-130 and landed about 1730. Raining as usual. CPT Sosnowski who was our unit chemical officer showed me an article in which Sec of State Robert MacNamara stated that reserve officers being involuntarily held would be released by June 30. There are 240 in Vietnam and I’m one of them. I discussed with Ski, CPT Buckley, Commander of the Pathfinders, and CW2 Steel about the advantages and disadvantages of staying in the military. I thought about it a long time.

January 23

I visited the village. It’s been some time since I’d been there. The village chief had bought a used Lambretta (mo-ped) for 25,000 piasters. He was having the time of his life riding it through the village. I set a record for letters as I received 13 of them. 6 were from Sharon, 1 from Jim Longshore in Kitzengen, Germany, and 1 from Robbie a friend of my mothers, 1 from my mother and several others.

I have a big decision to make: whether to stay in the Army or get out. I like the service, course who wouldn’t after spending three years traveling throughout Europe with athletic teams. I knew that I didn’t want to stay in the Infantry, but the Adjutant General Corp looked like a good option, especially if I was able to get into Special Services working in the Recreation and Athletic field. Sharon says that she liked the service. The big disadvantage was the family separations. I talked with LTC Taylor at Div AG and he said that there were probably 200 out of the 3,000 AG officers in VN. Those seemed pretty good odds. Also, I talked to CPT Brewer and finally decided that it would be foolish not to give the military an extended try. So, the big decision was made.

January 24

I spent most of the afternoon typing my 1049 which is a personnel action form requesting branch transfer from INF to AGC. I mailed it directly to MG O’Connor as he requested. I sent Sharon a letter telling her what I’d done and I asked her about the rings that I’d seen in Saigon.

January 25

Tonight while I was sitting in the classroom getting ready for the English class, a woman came running in and said that a woman was having a miscarriage. I got the truck and drove her to the hospital. As we were leaving the village I saw a Vietnamese ¾ truck in front of SGT Dac’s house. It had cases of coke and beer. I told MAJ Atkins about it.

January 26

Tonight was the night that the VC were supposed to hit us according to agent reports. Also, LT Blizzard was SDO tonight and the last time we got mortared in Sept he was SDO then. However, it is 2300 and

so far, so good. However, the VC usually tried things between 0100 and 0400.

January 27

Today was a big day for the boar at the piggery. We have one boar and 19 sows. Hopefully he is fertile. He was released among the sows and had himself a ball. If everything goes all right in 3 months we should be having little ones. Having grown up in the city, these agricultural facts were fascinating me. Also, Rep bought himself a motorbike for 42,000 piasters. I spent the afternoon transporting the second basket to the village and the evening in writing letters.

January 28

I had a meeting with R & U concerning the high school and we decided to go first class. I just finished a book "Private" that was a factual WWII account of the battles in France and Germany. What a terrible experience those men went thru.

January 29

We took a hike up Hon Cong mountain, next to our unit. It sure was good exercise as we had to rest several times and were really winded when we reached the top. However, it only took about 35 minutes. A Chinook helicopter came up and offered us a ride back. Since I'd never been in a Chinook before, I accepted. It is quite an aircraft with two large blades, one in the front and another in the rear.

January 30

I returned from Qui Nhon where we brought back 120 bags of cement and steel for the high school. What a rough trip—3 hours each way. I found out that the high school which will be two stories high with12 classrooms in it, 6 up and 6 down, will cost about $11,000 US which really isn't too bad We played a 2 on 2 basketball game. However, after just a couple of baskets I was winded. I didn't realize how out of shape I'd become.

January 31

I had SDO tonight and caught up on some writing. I talked with Bob Spencer about the possibility of getting chickens to begin a chicken coop, similar to the pig coop. In the afternoon we put up the second basket on the playground. Now we can have full court games.

Construction of high school.

February 1

I took MAJ Williams and MAJ Johnson on a tour of the village and the high school today. MAJ Williams is the new Group Adjutant. CPT John Owens went along for the ride. This is his last day. We laughed at the boar as the sows were continually chasing him around and when they caught him, he didn't seem to know what to do. Hamlet chiefs daughter and another girl got their hair waved. It sure makes them look different. During English classes I lost 20 piasters playing a game that is sweeping the village. All the time you see kids gambling. This time they have a plastic cloth with 6 figures on it. You put your money on a picture and then shake the dice in a pan and if your picture comes up, you win.

February 2

Spent today running around about the high school. Decided that we needed a meeting of all concerned as we have much potential, but need to get it channeled. In the afternoon I had to go to Division G1 (Personnel) and get approval to cash the check to pay the workers. I also got back my checkbook which I'd left in Saigon. Watched "North by Northwest" with Cary Grant. I was disappointed as we got a lot of mail in, but I didn't get any from Sharon. It's been 3 days since the last letter.

February 3

I'm very depressed. I took a courier flight to LZ Hammonds and finally got a chance to present the plans to COL Lukens for the new high school. COL Turner had made a statement that Division was taking over the project and I assured him that this wasn't so. Well, upon getting back to An Khe I find a meeting has been set up for Sunday regarding the school and other projects, but I'm not invited. What's going to happen is that I've done all the groundwork in getting things set up and now G5 is going to take the credit.

February 4

Six months ago today I left Travis AFB. In retrospect it sure seems like a long time ago. Today I found out that COL Murphy, G5 was giving the 11th Avn Group the shaft on the school. We do all the work and they get the credit. I feel like turning the money over to them and telling them to do it. I expect that COL Lukens wouldn't like that. No mail today—5 days now. You can't imagine how much mail means to a person away from his family.

February 5

I went to church today and heard Chaplain David of 228 ASH give a very good sermon on people who are lost. He has an excellent voice and can really hold an audience. I think it is one of the best sermons I've ever heard. That's one thing different from civilian life. The Army has Protestant, Catholic and Jewish chaplains. While the Protestant chaplains try to be nondenominational in their services, you can still see some of the differences, particularly when you're listening to a Southern Baptist chaplain. I believe that because Southern Baptists make up the largest grouping in the Army, they have the most chaplains. Also you can't get too attached to one chaplain as they are continually changing due to reassignments. Last night it got down to 54 degrees, the coldest since I've been here. However, it is warm during the day, ideal weather. 6 days and no mail.

February 6

I finally got a letter and found out the reason for no mail. Kalamazoo got 28" of snow in 2 days. 18" the first day and they were snowed in for 4 days. Sharon sent news clippings. This afternoon we passed out vitamins to the refugees. Be interesting to see if any take them. It's been 7 days since payday and I've yet to spend a cent. Pretty good record. There isn't much to spend money on except food and beverages at the PX and clubs

February 7

Received two beautiful plants with yellow flowers. The police chief gave them to me and I put them in the mess hall. Rep said that they cost about 1,000 piasters each. In the afternoon I listened to the Clay-Terrell fight on AFN. Had Staff Duty Officer tonight and because it is the eve of Tet we expected some action. However, it was very peaceful.

Feb 8

I helped celebrate Tet which to the Vietnamese is Christmas, New Years and Birthday, all in one. All the kids had on new clothes. The girls got their hair fixed up. We took kool-aid out to the village and passed out 700 cups of kool-aid and candy. Then we went down to the community house where everyone was betting. There were 4 poker games underway. I won about 50 cents. Some were betting as much as $2.00 (US) each time. Every house had a lantern in the front—I think to keep the devil away. In the afternoon we took clothing and food out to an elderly blind woman. She lives by herself and even has her casket in her living room.

February 9

Today was the big day. Everyone had on new clothing and there were 6-7 gambling games going on in the community room. I first visited the police chiefs home where I had coke, tea and cookies. Then to the village chief's house where I had the same, then to the two hamlet chief's houses and finally to SGT Dac's house where I had something different. It was a white milky liquid that was sweet tasting and made me sick. All told, I had at least 10 different kinds of cookies. The women really put a lot of time and effort into cooking. Except for the police and village chief's homes where they have a generator, the rest of the homes have no electricity and must cook with firewood, which is also hard to come by. All of the homes have altars in them and food for the ancestors is placed on them. Had a very nice dinner at the chiefs house. It was nice that the chiefs allowed us to share in their holiday.

February 10

What a celebration Tet is! The Germans have Octoberfest and the Vietnamese have Tet. Today the entire day was spent in gambling and drinking. This was serious gambling, unlike the past several days. The police chief had a crap table set up and a mat in which they played odd or even. Men came in business suits and played. In one game of cards there must've been $500 (US) on the table. They bet fantastic sums of money. They will bet $5-$50 on a blackjack game. The chief's house had lights and the gambling went on all night. One man is reported to have won $5,000. One man who had too much to drink drowned in the river.

February 11

Another day for Tet (4th day). It was misty in the morning so the gambling didn't take place until the afternoon. Watched a game of black jack at the chief's house. All cards are dealt from the bottom of the deck and are dealt face down. If a person goes over 21 he doesn't have to tell the dealer. Tonight one of the very poor families in the village had me in for dinner. They put on a very delicious feast—chicken, fish, pork, beef, Chinese noodles, lettuce, greens, rice, rice cakes, liquor, tea, bananas and cookies. The Vietnamese are very likeable people. They are very sensitive and try to help in every possible way. Tonight we were going to show movies, but the projector didn't work.

February 12

I had dinner at Mr. Ho's house. He used to be the village chief from 1950-63 but lost the job because he can not read or write Vietnamese, only Chinese, which was used in the old days. He is 66 years old and he thanked me for getting him a job at R&U. We had rice wine to start. Then a plate with chicken, beef and pork was brought out. Then a salad with tomatoes, lettuce and beef in some hot sauce. These meats were dipped in a hot, fish sauce called nuoc mam. Also, we had rice cakes with beer and tea and finished with rice pudding. It was very well prepared and delicious. I left full.

NOTE: it is now December 25, 2006 and I'm trying to decipher what I wrote 40 years ago. I don't recall eating a lot of Vietnamese food, but according to my diary I did. Apparently, it didn't interfere with my stomach. I know that I ate a lot of Army meals also, as I gained several pounds while I was in Vietnam.

February 13

Yesterday I came across a book in the PX on isometrics. The name of the book was "Increase Your Muscle Strength Without Moving It." The principle of isometrics is that you contract a muscle and hold for 6-10 seconds in a static position. It is the principle supposedly that Charles Atlas used to develop muscular strength. This morning I tested myself on push ups and chin ups and in one month will retest. The program calls for a 20-30 min isometric routine three days a week. On my pre test I did 5 chins, 31 pushups and 50 sit ups. Pretty bad for me. Unfortunately, physical fitness has been forced to take a back seat. Oh well, I'll retest Mar 13 after I've done isometrics and nothing else.

February 14

Received notification today that the branch transfer from INF to AGC will be effective Aug 3. Since I had only submitted it Jan 24, 3 weeks was certainly quick turn around. I will always remember Gen A.O. Connor and unfortunately in 1967 I believe his only son was killed in Vietnam. His son was stationed with the 1/15 Infantry in Kitzingen while we were there. He was a West Point grad and very popular. I went to Qui Nhon to check into a textile mill for An Khe. We took 12 Vietnamese civilians along and brought 14 back. I think we accomplished something as Binh Dinh Province is sending representatives to An Khe next week to set up a charter for the textile mill. Today is Valentines day. I hope the flowers and card I sent home have arrived.

It is hoped that the 300 refugees living in the concrete buildings will take to organizing a textile factory, the same as the villagers have taken to operating the pig cooperative. The textile mill would give the refugees a chance to make some money, instead of sitting around with nothing to do.

We had a scare coming back. I was reading a newspaper, sitting in the front of the truck, and all of a sudden I heard machine gun fire. My first thought was an ambush, but it was the Koreans on the rifle range next to the road opening fire.

Feb 15

Today was spent checking into the high school. The workers want more money, need containers for water, need rock, gravel and wire ASAP. Gave a ping pong set to police chief who was delighted. Had SDO again last night. Nothing happened.

February 16

I saw a sign yesterday that reminded me of the workers at the high school. "We've done so much, with so little, for so long, that now we do anything, with nothing, almost instantaneously."

February 17

Went to Qui Nhon today. Flew down after ½ hour delay. I was supposed to meet a truck from 27

Maintenance BN to pick up wire for the high school. However, it never showed up, so I stood on the corner until a truck going to An Khe came along. On the way back, traffic was held up for an hour or so, as they had a pipeline fire. The pipeline containing JP4 (aviation fuel) runs next to the Highway 19 for about 5 miles. There were 3-5 Vietnamese killed by the explosion.

February 18

I received a letter from GEN A.O. Connor today informing me that the branch transfer would be effective 3 August and I would be attending the AGC Career Course at Ft Benjamin Harrison in Oct. I hope this is the long course. That was certainly nice of the general to send me a personal letter. I had a disappointment today that I didn't get a March quota for R&R to Hawaii. There were only 3 for the Group. Oh well, maybe April. The amazing fact is I sent a personal letter to Gen. Connor from the UN on Jan. 24, and three weeks later I received the answer!

February 19

Played 3 games of ping pong with police chief, 2 with Rep, and 2 with Heittman. Won them all. Tonight I watched a C-130 make 4 passes over the Golf Course (Runway) before he was able to set it down. I don't know what the problem was.

February 20

Great news. I stopped by the Special Services office to see if they had any extra R&R quotas. They had one leaving An Khe the 24th of March which is ideal. You can't imagine my elation. I wrote a letter right away. This is the exact date that we wanted to go. I will meet Sharon in Hawaii!

February 21

I attended a meeting today with officials concerning the textile mill. What a mess. It is tough to talk business when everything must go thru an interpreter. The people don't seem too eager to get the project going. The afternoon was spent trying to get an accurate list of materials needed for the high school. Qui Nhon did the first plan, but didn't specify materials to be used. A Philippine drew up the plans and a Vietnamese foreman with limited education is trying to interpret them.

February 22

Got up at 0530 to go to Military Affiliated Radio Station (MARS) to call Sharon. Stopped by the mess hall first and got to MARS by 6:15. There were already 3 ahead of me. The operator got Alaska about 0700 and several made their calls. However, the connection went bad and at 0930 it looked like there wouldn't be any more calls. However, it got better all of a sudden and at 1020 I called. It was great hearing her voice. It was real clear. Told her to get a plane ticket and hotel reservations. CPT in front of me was leaving Feb 25 and his wife didn't know. He was sweating it.

February 23

Not too much happened. In the morning we were in the village and in the afternoon the grader came. LTC Reisacker, XO of the 11th AVN GP stopped by and wanted me to help him find a tiger's tooth and a Montangnard bracelet. Found the tiger tooth but not the bracelet.

February 25

Got a letter from John Wharton, Columbia SC RSVP. They've located three large cement mixers which is great news. I spent the morning running around trying to get the materials for the high school estimated. Finally got the foreman and an architect from PA&E together. Got another teeter totter from R&U for the playground.

February 27

Had to go to Qui Nhon to see if we could get gravel for the high school. I hated the thought of bouncing over the roads. It's a 4 hour round trip so I checked with MAJ Hedrick of 11th GS and they had a chopper going at 1400. After dropping MAJ Sawyer off at LZ Two Bits we dropped down to the gravel pit. There was no place to land so they had to set down in the middle which created a big dust storm. Mr. Miller said we could get some. The chopper set off another dust storm in leaving.

March 1

We had a basketball game in the village and a young Vietnamese boy from An Khe showed up and boy was he good. He learned the game in Saigon. We played full court and everyone was dragging. Also, got our swing set from R&U that was fixed and set it up in the village.

March 2

I found out that I won't be giving the briefing on Saturday to the An Tuc Advisory Council concerning the high school. COL Lukens will really hit the ceiling when he hears this. Everyone wants to get in on the act and the credit for building the school. We've done all the work. I'd like to give the money to G-5 and let them do the work. Got an estimate from R&U and now it will be about $30-40,000 to complete the project. A big jump from $10,000.

March 3

Had a thrilling chopper ride today. It is called "nap of the earth" or profile flying. Had to go to LZ Two Bits to see COL Lukens. 11th GS had a UH-1C going to Qui Nhon first. As soon as we cleared the Pass, the pilot took it down and started low level flying. At times I thought we were going to touch the ground. The purpose was to show a new WO pilot how the plane handled. We were going 105 knots and flattened people and cattle. CPT Ellis said "I put the skids in the mans ears."

I saw COL Lukens and told him we weren't invited to the briefing. Surprisingly, his reaction was very mild. Tonight we played basketball in the village. There are 6-7 kids from An Khe who have played before and are real good.

March 4

I received a scare today. I was driving down Hwy 19 outside of An Khe when out of the corner of my eye I saw a truck clip a motorcycle and then swerve toward me. I headed for the shoulder and the truck felt like it was going to flip as I wheeled back. I brought it to a stop and ran back. It was a girl. Luckily she only received several scrapes. However, she was in tears as it was a new Honda and she'd borrowed it. Played basketball this evening. We had 10 players, several of them pretty good. The basketball court is getting a reputation of a place where you can have a good pickup game.

March 5

Took COL Vandeveer and six officers from the An Khe Army Airfield (AKAAC) on a tour of the village. Police chief invited us in for tea. This morning a Chinook crashed about a mile from the barriers. All 8 aboard from 228 ASH Bn were killed. Fletcher and Rep went to Qui Nhon to get some rock for the high school. Lately we've been having to go at night as the Engineers trucks are all in use during the day. Rep hates to travel at night as he knows the dangers. Fletcher could care less. What an amazing man! He is typical of the career SGTS that I've met in the Army. They haven't had a lot of formal education but they are full of "street" smarts and they know how to do their Army job. They are truly the ones that run the Army, not the officers. Just like the janitors and secretaries in the schools.

March 6

It turned cold all of a sudden. Played basketball in the village and again there was a fist fight erupt. This time two boys, probably about 10, got into a fight. SGT Fletcher brought back a load of rock from Qui Nhon.

March 7

The village chief had a dinner honoring the dead and invited many of the villagers and the civic action team. They fixed up a bowl for me, containing lettuce, beans, bean sprouts, noodles, egg, and several other things. Also, had rice (always), rice cakes, rice pudding (sugar and rice), bananas and coke. As I look at this diary I notice that I've eaten a lot of meals in the village.

Tonight we showed a Vietnam movie, "Journey to Tomorrow," a mystery. SGT Dac furnished the generator and projector. First the generator wouldn't work. We found that in order for it to work, two wires must be held together. Then the take up reel wouldn't work and finally the switch wouldn't stay on without someone holding it. It took 3 of us to show the movie, one holding the wire, another holding down the switch and the third winding the reel. HeitTman found a kid to wind the reel.

March 8

Not too much happened today. I got my familiar cramps today which follow a Vietnamese meal. This afternoon we got sand and arranged to get rock tomorrow. The driver of the district dump truck wanted a load of sand and gas for hauling several loads for the high school. Sadly, this is typical of soldiers and government officials. They expect extra payment for doing the work they're being paid to do and sadly we usually give in to them, since we want the job accomplished.

March 9

I needed to get to LZ Two Bits. COL Lukens wanted to talk to me about the lack of action on the village dedication. MAJ Hammond was flying. a UH-1D. However, because of the fog we didn't leave until 1100. It was my first ride in a D Model Huey. The seats are on the side and everyone sits next to the door which is open. A real interesting ride. Because of the low clouds we really flew close to the ground, especially over the pass. I kept thinking about Charlie. Once I got to the LZ I couldn't get a ride back. Finally went to the air strip for a Caribou courier. It was due at 1700 but didn't get there until 1815. Two Bits was fogged in and I thought we'd have to spend the night there. It was an unpleasant thought. They try not to keep any aircraft at Two Bits because of the fear of mortars.

March 10

I went to MAJ Atkins and explained COL Lukens ultimatum about the village dedication. He wanted it ASAP. We set off for Qui Nhon to find Mr. Vu, the district chief. However, we met him in the pass so we turned around. He set March 16 as the date. I got on the 1300 courier flight to LZ Two Bits. Talked to COL Lukens. He liked the 16th and had me draft up an itinerary for the General. He wanted me to stay overnight to get an answer. However, I typed up an itinerary and got an answer by 1700. Then headed for the airstrip and made it back to An Khe.

March 11

This morning I made more arrangements for the dedication. Then looked at the high school. Today we had 24 workers and they've poured 6 columns already. It is coming along quite well.

March 12

I tested myself on the effects of isometrics. If you'll recall on Feb 12 I purchased a book that claimed by doing 20 minutes of isometrics, 3 days a week, you could increase your strength significantly. Well, I went from 5 chins to 10 and 31 push ups to 50. So I almost doubled my strength. I can feel increased strength in my arms and chest. That was with doing no other physical activity. Isometrics do work! Today as MAJ Williams and I were in the village preparing for the dedication, we saw a huge black cloud in base camp. We found out that a C-130 had gone off the runway and burned. Fortunately, the 67 passengers and 5 crewmen all escaped.

March 13

SGT Fletcher and Rep left this morning for lumber. They were going to Pleiku but might have to go to Kontum which is really in VC territory. It is now 2300 and they haven't gotten back. I pray to God that nothing happened to them. I'd never forgive myself if something did happen. I had told them not to try it unless they were in a convoy. But knowing Fletcher, he won't let the lack of a convoy get in his way of accomplishing the mission. I took some pictures of the C-130 that crashed and burned yesterday. What a miracle that no one was killed. The fuselage is broken in two and one engine is about 25 yds away. It is all burned up.

March 14

As we were coming back from the village to base camp, I passed Fletcher and Rep. You can't imagine my relief that they'd made it back safely. They had to go to Kontum and traveled through an unsecured area at 1800-1900 last night without a convoy. In addition, Fletcher was driving our ¾ ton truck. Well he had stacked mahogany wood as high as he could on the truck and must've had two tons on the truck. Remember this is a ¾ ton truck. It is a wonder that the springs on the truck didn't give out. They had to stop in the unsecured area several times because the load kept shifting. Never again will I let them go alone like that. Fletcher said that Rep was sweating the entire time because he knew the danger they were in.

This morning Mr. Vu said that about 10 officials were coming from Binh Dinh Province. We went to the village and went through the ceremony. So far everything seems to be under control and I pray that it stays that way. There is so much riding on this dedication. To think that we've spent 6 months and about five

cancellations trying to get this completed.

March 15

What a day!! Trying to combine an Oriental and American protocol into one ceremony is a challenging task. Yesterday, after asking Mr. Vu the district chief about the itinerary we had it printed up and passed out to COL Lukens and BG Blanchard who is the First Cavalry's ADC (Asst Div Commander). However, at 1500 a Vietnamese LT from Qui Nhon shows up. He is the province protocol officer. Then we started making one change after another to suit his desires. The sequence of awards was changed, as was the method of "trooping" the line by the American and Vietnamese reviewing officers and the playing of the Vietnamese national anthem. Came back and briefed COL Lukens on the changes. I just hope everything comes out alright.

March 16

What a day! I'm sure beat. Left post at 0715 and when we got to the village the people were already busy. All went well, but we got word that the Province Chief was coming by vehicle and would be late. MAJ Williams tried to get the CG to let him know of the delay, but couldn't. Gen. Blanchard arrived early at District HQ. However, we were able to leave for the village by 1045. The ceremony was scheduled for 1100 and general officers like to arrive on time and depart on time. The speeches went well. Mr. Vu was very nervous. Rep did a good job in translating Lukens and Blanchard's speeches. I received an award. We had a walking tour of the village and Gen Blanchard asked me to narrate for him. He strikes me as a very friendly person. After the tour we went to the High School where the Province Chief seemed to be quite impressed. Lt Vinh, Vietnamese Protocol Officer invited me to his place in Qui Nhon. He said that I did a fine job and I told him the same thing. However, I'm sure glad this day is over. Spent the afternoon at the beach sunning and getting ready for Hawaii.

March 17

Had another scare today as I couldn't find my wallet containing my ID card, ration card and shot record. This is critical as Friday I leave and the shot record must be up to date. Anyways SP Cermak found it the next day. Played basketball in the village. Bob Spencer played with us. Then some soldiers came over and played. We had quite a few villagers standing around watching us.

March 18

This morning the fruit cake sent by John Wharton of Columbia SC arrived. It's soaked in bourbon (Old Crow). It came to the S-1 Shop, so I gave COL Lukens, CPT Joe Holmond, MAJ Williams and others a piece. You could clearly smell and taste the alcohol. Since this was Saturday, I decided to not go out to the village. I sat in the sun for a couple of hours. My sun tan program is going quite well. Tonight I went to the 15 Supply & Services Officer Club where they had a really good floor show. I was talking to a field grade officer who said that the General had fears concerning the new Russian made rockets that had ranges of 9,000 meters (about 6 miles), that they might be used against the Cav. That explains why they've been scattering the aircraft every evening.

March 19

At lunch today in the mess hall I had an interesting conversation with Ann Bryant, an Overseas Weekly reporter. Tonight while we were playing basketball in the village, Mia (village chief's daughter) asked us to take her baby sister to the hospital. The child has been sick for two weeks but they waited until now. When we got to the hospital, the medics were upset because a baby had just died and the mother had waited for two weeks before seeking help. Why don't they learn?

March 20

What a day! ! Woke up with two cold sores—catastrophe with Hawaii coming up. Got some medicine immediately. Fortunately we have the Group Flight Surgeon, MAJ Pressley in our area and sick call is conducted quite informally. All we have to do is stop in and say we need something and usually he has it. Flew out to LZ Two Bits (Bong Son) this morning. While waiting at 1145 for the return trip I watched a bombing raid by 5 F-101's. They really saturated an area about 2,000 meters south of the runway. Then I found out that Asst Div CO, BG Moody died last night. He was out to the village on Thursday and didn't look too good. What a shame.

March 21

Went to Qui Nhon today. What a jolting ride. It takes 2-3 hours to drive and ½ hour to fly. The roads are so bad that it's just one continuous bump. I took the high school foreman to QN so he could see a high school that is the same design as ours. While we were there we met several Vietnamese teachers. One, a 28 year old male, spoke perfect English. He went to the University in Hue and learned from an Englishman. Said he'd like to go to the States but can't because of the draft. Too bad. On the way down, the foreman got sick. It's a rough ride in the back of the truck.

March 22

The big news today is the refusal of my cold sores to go away. Jim Rice gave me some salve last night and it seems to be helping. Got a letter from Office of Personnel Operations (Gen A.O. Connor's office) saying that I'd be going to the AGC Career Course in Oct for 7 months and then a 24-30 month tour in CO-NUS. That's great if it's true.

March 23

Went to Kontum today on a Chinook to pick up lumber. We'd sent a note by Vietnamese bus on Saturday ordering the lumber but apparently it never made it so we made the trip for nothing. The lumber mill owner had us in for a beer and wanted a ride to An Khe. We went back to the Chinook and the pilots had gone downtown. We hitched a ride to town and the lumber mill owner bought us dinner. Had beef steak, French fries, salad, coke, tea, and some funny kind of fruit in a glass with ice. All I could think about was if something happened to the plane or if I would get a case of the runs. Hawaii is just one day away.

March 24

Today is the day for leaving! Hooray! I went out to the An Khe airfield at 0715 to wait for the plane. Caught one at 0945. We had to get on a cargo ship with the possibility of being bumped off at Nha Trang. However, 63 of us, plus the mail, continued to Camh Rahn Bay where after several hours at the terminal we were bused to the 22nd Replacement Bn. I bought a pearl ring for Sharon at the PX. In the evening I went to the Air Force Officers Club. Unfortunately, the Air Force seems to always out do the Army in the area of billets and officers clubs. Tonight I saw the Roy Acuff show and then back to the air conditioned billets awaiting 0430 to come as we were scheduled for an early morning take off.

March 25

Woke up at 0415. Slept very little. After getting briefed, signing cards and baggage check, we got on the busses at 0815. Loaded the plane at 0825 and took off at 0830. Very efficient. Took 4 1/5 hours and we landed in Guam, taxiing past the revetments containing the huge B-52's. They are huge. The infantry soldiers are appreciative of what they can do. After one hour wait and a 7 hour flight we landed in Hawaii. Stood in customs awaiting baggage and some of the wives were looking thru the window. Since I knew because of the time zone changes, we wouldn't be getting in until after midnight I had told Sharon that I would meet her at the hotel, The Ilikai. Some of the wives were crying and screaming. Two wives husbands didn't show up which was a tremendous shock. After customs they bussed us to Fort DeRussy and after a briefing we were free to go.

March 26

Got up to the hotel room about 0430 and Sharon was waiting in a very sexy nightgown. What a wonderful feeling to be in the arms of a person you love after not seeing each other for over 8 months. We walked to Ft DeRussy in the morning, had breakfast and walked along Waikiki Beach. Then we went to lunch and watched the radio show, "Hawaii Calls." In the afternoon we went to Sears and bought much in the way of clothes. Tonight we went to the Officers Club and had a fine steak dinner followed by a Polynesian floor show. Sharon gave me my birthday and anniversary present—a diamond ring. WOW

March 27

Got up at 0915 this morning, very tired. Went to Easter Services at the Ilikai. Called the folks back home at 1015 (1715 their time). Everybody sounded good. Then we went to the Officers Club for brunch and to the International Market to watch the hula dances. Came back to the hotel and laid in the sun by the hotel pool. Sharon picked up a good burn. In the evening we went to the Officers Club for the buffet and then to the Hong Kong Night Club in the Ilikai to see the Brothers IV. However, I didn't enjoy their performance.

March 28

The weather was bad again today. We went to the perfume shop and looked over the brands. Then went next door and bought $28 worth of clothing. Then went to a place and bought a salad set of monkey pod wood. Walked back along the beach and went to see the movie "Hawaii". It was pretty good. Sharon liked it because she'd read Michener's book, "Hawaii." Then came back and went to Chucks Cellar to eat. They featured prime ribs and it was the most delicious meat I've ever had. The meat just melted in your mouth. Also, the salad was good. Only $3.50 each. Sat along Waikiki Beach for a few minutes—very romantic.

March 29

Another lousy day for sun. We rented a car for $5.99 a day, plus $.06 a mile. Took the camera to be repaired and laundry for washing. After eating, we took a drive to the Punchbowl Cemetery which is the National Cemetery for the Pacific Campaign of WWII and Korea. A very beautiful place. Then took a drive along the Pali Hwy to the top of Pali and Nauana Pali. Then drove around the island, stopping at Bellows AFB for a snack and then to the Sea Life Park where they had a porpoise and whale show. It was tremendous. Then continued the drive around by Diamond Head. We had dinner at Wo Fat, a 9 course Chinese dinner and then went to the Officer's Club to see a floor show. Saw Linda and Gene Wilson who we knew from Kitzingen.

March 30

Went on a tour through the Dole Pineapple plant. Very interesting. After that we drove out to Pearl Harbor and took the Navy cruise. The speaker was a Navy seaman and gave a very interesting talk. Took pictures of the Arizona Memorial and the Utah. Then had a great lunch at the Fisherman's Wharf. After viewing the Iolani Palace we then laid on the beach at Ft DeRussy. For dinner we went to the Cannon Club which is an officers club on Diamond Head Mtn. What a beautiful view and delicious meal. I had Mahi Mahi and Sharon had chicken. Came back and watched the Arthur Lyman show.

March 31

Today is our last day and we spent most of it on the beach. After breakfast at the club we walked along the beach to the Royal Hawaiian. There at the rental place I signed up for a $5.00 surf lesson. Had to wait an hour so we laid on the beach. Then 11:30 and after a dry run on the beach I went in the water. It's not as easy as it looks. However, I stood up the first time and I think with some practice I could become fairly proficient at it. It doesn't seem a whole lot different than water skiing. However, the paddling out to catch the waves sure tires you out. In the afternoon we laid around the pool getting some sun and then went to Sears to pick up the camera. Had dinner at the Officers Club (Boy we sure ate a lot of meals at the officers club. Probably because we were on a limited budget and you can't beat the prices at the Officer clubs.) Afterwards we sat along the beach at Ft De Russy and then back to the room to view our slides. After some champagne we turned in about midnight. Very sad, knowing that in a few hours you're leaving and won't see each other for months.

April 1

I had the operator call me at 0345 and quickly went down to the R&R Center. MAJ Williams who was coming in for R&R was there and he had the ring which had come after I'd left VN. I took it back to the room. It is utterly fabulous. Sharon was very pleased with it. Then we got dressed and went to the R&R Center. Left there at 0530 and got to the airport where I checked in my bags and stood around waiting to say good-bye. It was sad. However, there were so many other people around that you didn't have the time to think of yourself, plus you know that you've only got 4 months left. Got to go up in the cockpit and watch the navigator fly the Pan Am jet. The return flight was fabulous. Sun all the way and 3 delicious meals. We arrived back in Vietnam at 1400. What a let down after Hawaii. You have to have been in the military to understand it. The good byes and arrivals are such emotional highs and lows. Seven days of paradise!

April 2

We woke up at 0430 to catch the plane from Cam Ranh to An Khe at 0900. While I was at breakfast MAJ David Wade who used to be an ROTC instructor at Western walked in. I hadn't seen him in over five years. He was a CPT at Western. He has really gained the weight and I didn't recognize him. However, he remembered my name. He had just gotten in—poor guy, 364 days left. Got back to the 11th Avn Gp by 1030. In the afternoon I went to the high school where I saw great progress.

April 3

Today I had to cash two checks to pay the workers for the school. During the process while I was paying them, someone stole the checkbooks. That really irritates me. Someone is always trying to take something. Certainly not everyone, but all it takes is one apple to spoil the bushel. It seems like it's always "gimme, gimme." Maybe I've been doing civil affairs too long. While I was gone, someone in the village tried to commit suicide and I guess our medic revived him and took him to the hospital. Got up at 0600 reveille for PT. While I was gone they started a daily PT program.

April 4

Flew forward today to LZ Two Bits for a meeting. COL Lukens discussed RSVP with Bn CO's. This was a result of John Wharton and a Mr. Palmer from Columbia SC writing letters to him. The COL has big plans such as sending a soldier back with pictures, sending souvenirs and certificates. He set up a board to handle correspondence. However, I was left off. I don't know whether to consider that a slap or not. Wharton wrote them and was very complimentary about my help. Oh well, I'm getting so short it doesn't matter.

April 5

Went forward again today about RSVP. Boy as I look back on this diary I probably should've put in for an Air Medal which calls for 30 or more flights over enemy territory. I know of officers who have flown the courier flights back and forth who have submitted, but that makes a travesty of the medal. It is designed for the "grunts" and airmen who are putting their lives on the line and not for those flying what is called "ash and trash" flights.

SGM Connelly has big plans such as sending a Vietnamese girl and her mother and an American soldier to Columbia SC and having an American girl come over here. Talk about pipe dreams. I'm glad that I'm out of the picture. Got a letter from Sharon,.which was mailed 1 April from Hawaii. She wrote from the hotel and had spent the day sunning. SSG Fletcher went before the promotion board for E-7 this morning. I sure hope he makes it. Rep and Heitman went to Qui Nhon to get more cement.

April 6

The days are starting to drag by. However, I'm going to have to start getting interested in my work as I'm really not that short—still have 118 days. However, I'm finding it difficult to work up enthusiasm like I used to have. I spent the entire afternoon trying to get sand for the high school. Seems like all I do is scrounge vehicles, sand, cement, steel, etc.

April 7

This morning we found a black sow in the pig pen. The main reason for starting the pig coop was to improve the quality of the Vietnamese pigs. They have been in bred for centuries and the quality of meat had suffered. This black pig belonged to one of the village workers at the pig co-op. The villagers decided to put her in the pen with the white boar and see what happened. Maybe it would help in the improvement of the Vietnamese pig. The boar wanted nothing to do with this strange looking animal and jumped over the side, I don't think he realized that it was a pig.

April 8

At 0300 the air was split by the alert siren. I laid in bed for several minutes not comprehending. CPT Ben Buckley, the Pathfinder CO thought he was at LZ Two Bits and asked "what's the siren at Two Bit's going off for." CPT Jim Rice ran outside and came back screaming, "Get your gas masks, they're attacking Hon Cong" which was behind us. This moved me into action. CPT Crandall who was the HQ Commander was saying he didn't have a mask. Then we came to our senses and realized the absurdity of Jim's statements. He didn't have his glasses on when he went outside, heard a hissing sound and saw fog around the lights of Hon Cong and mistook it for gas. The alert lasted for 2 hours but the razzing that Jim took lasted for days.

April 9

Another mortar attack. At 0100 there were some loud explosions. I had gone to bed at 2100. I looked outside and saw explosions on the airplane runway or Golf Course as it was called. That was about 100 yards from our hooch. I grabbed my uniform, steel helmet, gas mask and made it to the bunker. I was the first there, followed by Jim Rice and our Chaplain MAJ Charley Mills, a good old Southern Baptist preacher. Charley had been in WWII as an enlisted in the Army Air Corp and spent a few years in the Air Force before transferring to the Army. The mortars only lasted for about 5 minutes but there were at least 75 rounds, all falling on the Golf

Course. The next morning showed that they had destroyed 6 Chinooks and one Crane (the largest helicopter the Army had and it was used for lifting heavy objects). After the attack, the VC overran LZ Charlie about 2 miles north of camp and killed 9 and wounded 15. Made me realize that I should be taking my weapon with me, whenever leaving camp, even to the village. Our civic action team had become very careless when it came to carrying weapons. There were many situations where weapons would be very awkward and if, heaven forbid, you were to lose a weapon, you could kiss your military career goodbye. Many nights we are out to the village showing movies, eating, teaching classes until 2100 or 2200.

April 10

One of the things that has bothered me about the Vietnamese is that they always want more and some, not all, will try to "screw" you at every opportunity. I supposed if I'd lived a life as hard as they had and then saw an opportunity to get ahead I'd probably act the same way. I've suspected for some time that the Vietnamese foreman at the high school was falsifying the time sheets so this past week I've been counting the workers present. Today when he turned in sheets stating that everyone was present, I ordered a roll call and there were 3 out of 25 missing. The rest of the day the foreman avoided me. Then when we were getting sand from the Vietnamese District dump truck, the driver hit me up for gas. The other day he tried to drop a load at his house, but I stopped him just as he was getting ready to dump it. I took him to Mr. Vu the District Chief, but that didn't result in any punishment.

April 11

Today is a day that I'll NEVER forget. To me it sums up how the U.S. media turned our country against the war. The American soldiers NEVER lost a battle, but the politicians and media lost a lot of them. I was having lunch in the mess hall and across the table was a photographer from one of the major magazines, I believe it was Newsweek. He had a beard and was an interesting guy, as he'd been out in the field and up with the Marines in Khe Sanh and was on his way to Saigon.

He asked me what I did and I told him that I was in civic action and began telling him how we'd moved these two villages and built a new one, built a pig co-op, stopped diseases, built a dispensary and playground, conducted classes and were building a high school. He asked if he could come with me in the afternoon to look at what we'd done and I said sure. I took him to the village and as we were walking through the village he kept saying, "I can't believe all that you've done" and "this is amazing." Finally I said to him, "Why don't you take a picture and send it back to your editors in New York." He shook his head and said sadly, "This is not what my editors want." And a few weeks later on the front cover of the magazine was a picture of a GI with a cigarette lighter setting fire to an Vietnamese straw house. THAT WAS WHAT THE MEDIA WANTED AND WHAT THEY GAVE THE AMERICAN PUBLIC! The media led by Walter Cronkite and the other liberal newscasters played a big part in changing how the Americans viewed the war!!

April 12

What a day! I went to 54th Trans Bn to get a truck to go to Qui Nhon. They didn't have one, so I went to 27th Maint Bn. They had one leaving with 2 PFC's on it, so I jumped in. It was going to the Salvage Yard at Qui Nhon and by the time we got to the steel depot it was lunch. We ate in the 526th Mess Hall and met the CO, a CPT who used to be stationed in Hawaii. Had a nice chat. We then went to USAAID to make arrangements to pick up the steel. Then we went to another depot and picked up 3 ¾ truck engines. It was 1830 when we left for An Khe. I knew that it would be dark when we went thru the pass. It was 2000 and black as it could be when we were going thru the pass. It was another experience that I'll always remembers. What a wonderful sight to see the lights of Camp Radcliffe.

April 13

Ran around all day trying to find out how to convert G-5 payroll checks into piasters at the unofficial rate of 18:1. The checks were for a considerable amount. Mr. Owens, R&U said he could take it to the black market and get 150:1. That was taking too big of a chance. This afternoon Division Finance got a MACV directive authorizing the unofficial rate but you have to go to a commercial bank which meant Saigon. This means another trip to Saigon—I leave tomorrow.

In the meantime I asked Rep his thoughts about COL Luken's idea of sending a Vietnamese girl, her mother and him to the United States. He was quite excited about it, as he's always wanted to see the US. Also, went to the PX and saw a San Sui 1000 Amplifier that I wanted in the worst way. It would go with my Pioneer speakers that I'd bought a couple of months before. I think every soldier that served in Vietnam sent home a stereo set.

April 14
Left for Saigon. Got to the airfield about 0730 and it was 1030 before we left. After a stop at Pleiku we got in about 1315. I booked a return flight for the morning of April 16 and then hustled to the Chase Manhattan Bank. Got there about 1415. Had a little trouble in cashing the check from G-5 because MAJ Johnson's signature wasn't on their authorization card. Finally, got it, then took a ride out to Cholon PX and then to downtown and the Rex for dinner. Sat at the same table as Lt Sayers, who was with the 66th Ordnance Co in Kitzingen when I was there. We talked about old times and then went to the Oriental Hotel and got a room for 1200 piasters.

April 15
I went back to Cholon PX to browse. Good thing I didn't have any money as I'd have spent it all on electronic gear. Had lunch at the Rex patio, then checked out of the Oriental Hotel, into the Martin Hotel. 600 p. for a room with 6 beds in it. I was trying to save as much money as possible, because I was not on TDY or per diem. This was an official, unofficial trip at my own expense. I was trying to save money for the high school project.

Then went back to the Rex and watched the NCAA championship game between UCLA and Dayton with Lew Alcindor (later known as Kareem Jabbar) and then a game between Philadelphia with Wilt Chamberlain and the Celtics with Bill Russell. I was in 7th heaven as it had been months since I'd seen a live basketball game. Then I ate dinner at the officers club on the roof of the Rex. Ran into Rodney Wright again and we talked about the old days at Western and watched the floor show.

April 16
I told the clerk at the Martin Hotel to wake me up at 0300 as I had a taxi scheduled for 0330 and check in for the flight was 0400. I guess that I should've told him that I'd give him a nice tip, because he never woke me. I awoke at 0500. Ran downstairs and after cussing him out I ran out on the street to flag down a taxi. I asked him how much and surprisingly he said 100 p. which was very cheap. I told him I'd give him 200 p if he was fast. He went thru 4 red lights and over a bridge so fast that the hood flew up, but it was too late and I had to make the reservation for the next morning. I went back to the Rex and got talking to a Navy pilot. Found out his name was Mike McGee and that we graduated together from WMU. We had a great time talking about mutual friends. Then had a steak and Mike saw another familiar face. It was Mel Chapman who I also knew. As teenagers Mel and I both went to Camp Birkett, an Ann Arbor YMCA camp located at Silver Lake, MI. Mel was sitting with another guy from Ann Arbor so it was like old home week. That is one thing I love about the Army, you can always find someone you know.

April 17
Went out to the terminal and slept on a hard bench all night so I wouldn't miss the flight. We checked in at 0330 and left 0530. Got into An Khe at 0900 and had the money out to R&U by 1000. Found out that there is a proposal to give credit for time spent at Jungle School. That means I could leave 21 days earlier which would be great. However, it is not official so I won't get my hopes up. Got several letters from Sharon.

April 18
Tried out my tape deck and speakers last night so I was a little late in getting up this morning. Took some clothes out to the refugees. Then a Vietnamese Lt., who has been loaning us his dump truck, took me to meet his commander, Cpt Khai and his American counterpart. Cpt Khai has been to the US and speaks good Englilsh. He said he could send us several dump trucks which would be great. I just heard on AFN news that Cassius Clay has run out of appeals. It will be interesting to see if he is inducted 28 April.

April 19
Set out for Qui Nhon this morning. However, we got to the school and the foreman and night watchman were there wanting to go to R&U. After getting there I had to send for the Vietnamese LT for interpreting as Rep left this morning for Saigon. It was learned that 4 men robbed the watchman of his watch and 9 pieces of steel. There were red marks on his neck and scratches on his hands. He was shook up. Went to the police station where they said he must submit a paper requesting an investigation. What a waste! We were going to Qui Nhon but CPT Khai said he had steel due in today and he would sell it at the same price so this saved a trip. Went out this evening to see if a PF was guarding the school site, but there was no one.

April 20

I saw a San Sui amp in the PX today and just had to get it. When you see an electronic item in the PX it never lasts for more than a day or two, especially if the Korean soldiers see it. They can buy Pioneer speakers made in Korea at PX prices which is much less than what they sell for in Korea. This amp normally sells in the US for $350 and in the PX it was $140. I only had $70 so I borrowed $40 from COL Smith, $10 from Heittman and $20 from MAJ Williams and got it. Today we hauled 3 loads of lumber to the school and got the water trailer filled.

April 21

Went to the school and found that 38 pieces of re-bar were taken this time. Apparently there was no PF guarding or if there was, they took it. CPT Sheriff of MACV wrote a real strong letter to the PF commander, LT Ty. The foreman had the workers bury the rest of the steel in two of the rooms. An ingenious idea. Then Fletcher, Heittman and Dolson went out about 2100 to check on it. In the afternoon I took SGT MAJ out to the village and we sat around and chatted. Also, got 8 loads of rock for the school which should last for some time.

April 22

I took COL Smith who is the Group's aviation officer out to the village and school. He was quite impressed with what has been done. Something was wrong with the truck and we didn't know if we'd make it back to camp.

April 23

I spoke to MAJ Williams about me taking over as the Club Officer. I wouldn't mind the job, something different, but Jim Rice the present club officer is holding things up as there is some problem with the records. Got three letters from Sharon dated April 17, 18, and 6. I can't figure where the April 6 letter has been.

April 24

Got a letter from Sharon and she's received 3 letters after the one describing the mortar attack on April 9, but not that one. I checked with Rice, Holmond, Williams and Buckley and none of their wives had received letters about the mortar attack. It makes me wonder if they're censoring the mail. Fletcher worked on the new Quonset hut for senior enlisted. So did Heittman after being fined by the company commander for being involved in a ruckus between 4-5 EM's. It's hard to believe that Heittman was involved as he has never shown an inclination of being physical. However, alcohol can change a person.

April 25

Got word today that GEN Marshall has raised $2,000. This will take us to July at least, so it's a great relief. Got the ARVN dump truck today and in three hours he hauled 9 loads of sand. Scared the daylights out of Heittman as he drove like a demon. We always send an American soldier with the drivers to make sure that the sand gets back to the school. Rep returned a day early from his leave which is a welcome change. Big excitement was SGT Major's well. He was looking for a water source and found an abandoned well by the commo tent. However, it was found to contain radios, batteries, tools, etc. They had two magnets and pulled stuff out by the wheelbarrow. No one claimed ownership of the items.

Primitive Wheelbarrow

April 26

I don't know when I've been so mad. NOTHING has gone right. This morning at PT I told CPT Holmond to shut up and MAJ Williams thought I was talking to him. MAJ Williams is my rater and I certainly wouldn't tell him to shut up. I had SDO last night and it rained the entire night. I haven't received a letter from Sharon in 3 days and I found out that I'm taking over the club. However, the records have not be reconciled and I don't know a thing about accounting. Heittman has KP today and Fletcher is off, so I've got to collect garbage and haul it out to the pigs. Passed out soap, candy, crayons, coloring books and toys in the village. People are always trying to steal something or get more than their share.

April 27

Today was a continuation of yesterday. I had to take the slop out again to the pigs and ended up in a

ditch. A loader pulled us out. Then went to R&U to get cement and steel and found out they had no transportation and had issued the steel to another project. Went to G-5 to request a truck with no luck Then this afternoon we drove around trying to locate a tractor and trailer to go to Qui Nhon and then found out there was no cement. The Chieu Hois moved into their new village. These are refugees who were VC and have returned to South Vietnam control.

April 28

Went to Qui Nihon today to get steel for the school. Fletcher advised not going as the engine is about to go. However, I decided to take the chance. On the way down the engine all of a sudden went crazy. After some investigation it was found that the accelerator was broken. We fixed it and continued. Finally, got the coolies to load 144 pieces of re-bar and left about 1520. However, we had a knock in the motor so we had to take it easy. Took 4 hours to get back and there were some anxious moments, especially going up the pass. Got back at 1930. As I look back on our many trips to Qui Nhon the man up above must've been looking out for us. We sure had our troubles.

April 29

It's 2330 and WO Peterson just came into the tent and said that Operation Dazzle Em has gone into effect and that everyone is to sleep with their clothes on. They must be expecting something. Found out this morning, that we were mighty lucky that the rod didn't go through the engine block as we had no oil pressure since the pump wasn't working. I guess the Good Lord was looking out for us. The truck was sent to 27th Maint Bn for a new engine.

April 30

Another pay day. Only 3 left, possibly 2. Went to LZ Two Bits today for an awards ceremony. Got back about 1700. Received a letter from AG saying that I'd be reporting 11 Sept to Ft Benjamin Harrison and the AG Career course starts 7 Oct.

May 1

Jim had the Inspector General check the club records and they passed with flying colors. However, they couldn't have checked the accuracy as I found several errors and noted them. I'm checking everything real close, so there won't be any problem in 90 days when I have to transfer them. Fletcher took care of the village and school. Today was May Day which is a big Communist holiday so the town was off limits.

May 2

Fletcher borrowed a truck from the Engineers and went to Qui Nhon and had all sorts of problems. He had 5 flats, missed lunch and dinner, had no side boards on the trailer and ran out of gas. Despite these difficulties he brought back 300 bags of cement and 144 pieces of steel. He is one of the finest men I've met in the service and deserves to be promoted and given a Bronze Star for meritorious service. I checked over his records today and will do my best to submit a recommendation for an award.

May 3

Jim and I spent the day checking records and transferring property records. They are transferring CPT Rice to 15th Admin Company. In the Army you always want to see what you're signing for. If you don't see it but take the person's word for it, you're asking for trouble. If you can't find it when you're transferring property to the next person you have to file a report of survey and chances are very good that you're going to end up paying for it. We didn't complete the transfer of property. It will have to wait for another day.

May 4

I was asked by COL Lukens to come forward and see if our Civic Action team could help at Bong Son. Thus I caught an early flight to Bong Son to see what we've been tasked to do. The Cav has started Operation Pershing and the 11th Avn Gp has been tasked to repair the elementary schools in the Bong Son area. HQ has the elementary school in Bong Son. It is a 10 room, 1300 pupil school. I took the Jeep and looked at it. It sits in the middle of Bong Son, right next to the district chief's HQ and MACV HQ. The school is a mess. G-5 wants inside and out painted, window frames fixed, latrine built and playground equipment installed. There is no place for a latrine or swings. The roofs are falling apart—what a mess. Met a MACV CPT who has been here 11 months and is very bitter. Says he's never seen such inferior troops and they've made no progress in the time he's been here. I hope that the COL doesn't ask our team to take over this project. We

have our hands full with the An Khe HS.

May 5

Today is another day that I'll never forget. I was in the S-1 office when we heard a sound like a rifle shot. We looked out and saw a helicopter spinning around, We ran outside and all you could do was stand there and watch with fear as after taking off the craft shot up probably about 100' and then over and straight down. As soon as it hit there were flames. But it was only a couple of minutes before the ambulance and fire truck was on the scene. It happened about 50 yds from our office but there was a big gulch between our office and the fuel station where the chopper had come to get refueled. There was no way we could get there to help. It was an 11th Avn Gen Spt ship with CPT Turner (who I knew), a WO and 2 EM. The door gunner, Torres was killed instantly and the rest all had broken bones, including a broken back, but they would live. They were very fortunate. The tail rotor broke, causing the chopper to go into the tail spin. I've been told that tail rotors have a life of about 15,000 hours and so every time I get into a chopper I wonder how many hours this tail rotor has on it. If the plane had been going over 50 mph when it happened, they could have auto rotated the plane to a safe landing, but since this chopper had just taken off there was no way to do that. While we were watching, safety officer MAJ Burkett said that accidents happen in threes, because earlier in the day a Guns a Go Go (Chinook with heavy armament) blew up in mid air killing 8 and also a trooper from 1/9th Cav walked into a rotor blade severing him.

May 7

Today CPT Rice came over and we went up to the Club to continue the inventory. The smell that we've been smelling all week was unbearable. We thought it was a dead rat under the refrigerator. We started looking for it and found that it was the drip pan under the fridge that was full of dried blood. I almost threw up and Jim and I each tried to get the other to take it outside.

May 8

Went forward to LZ English and CPT Jim Danielson from G-5 and I went to Bong Son to oversee the project. The assistant principal of the school seems very enthusiastic. Got back to An Khe and at night wrote up an operations order for rehabbing the school. Then about midnight, the Duty NCO came in and said that 11th GS had had another chopper fatality. This makes two crashes in four days for them. Apparently the chopper had to make a forced landing and the trooper ran into the blade as he was exiting the craft.

May 9

I got up at 0530 and had the operations order typed and took it forward. However, GS didn't have space on their ship so I had to go to the Canfield Golf Course and try to catch a courier flight which didn't come in until 1015. That got us to Bong Son by 1045 and by the time I discussed the plan with G-5, I had to hustle to catch the last flight back to An Khe at 1415. It was just loading. However, on the way back there was a horn and the pilot cut back on the engines and we started to descend. Everyone looked at everyone else, wondering what was happening. It was an eerie feeling. Then before you knew it, we landed at An Khe Army Airfield—only 20 min. for the flight. We never did find out the reason for the horn, but it was the fastest flight from Bong Son that I'd ever had.

May 10

Spent the morning trying to get the new TV at the club working. We bought one 4-5 days ago and it has not produced a good picture. LT Blizzard brought up a voltage regulator and the picture was beautiful. When the TV is operating we really have a big crowd in the club. I can say one thing about pilots, most of them really like to drink and they use the club as a means of relieving stress. Many of the pilots are flying 40-50 hours a week, when they really should be flying 20 or less.

Then went down to the high school. I spent the afternoon rounding up trucks to go to Qui Nhon to get cement. However, I did get two hours of sunning in. I have to keep the tan I had from Hawaii.

May 11

Went to LZ Two Bits this morning to take pictures and turn in the request for cement and supplies for the high school. Heittman, Rep and I flew out with some civilians who are staying in An Khe for awhile. They're from DECCA (civilian aviation firm) and they have a computer that traces the plane's path on a map. We caught the 0935 courier back and were back at Group HQ by 1100.

May 12

Had a farewell party at the club for Margo and Diane, two Red Cross girls. Chased an Army dump truck to get some scrap lumber for the school.

May 13

Fletcher came through again. He left yesterday morning at 0730 with 3 trucks and a S&P (Stake and Platform) truck to pick up cement and steel at Qui Nhon. The trucks had brake trouble. GS's truck arrived about 2000 last night, but it wasn't until 1030 today the other two arrived. Fletcher was up until midnight loading the S&P as he had to locate a Vietnamese unit that could help load. He slept in some unit and then the truck broke down several times on the way back to An Khe. However, he made it back with 570 bags of cement. What a man! Talked with an American civilian at R&U. They make $20,000 a year. What a racket!

May 14

Today is Mother's Day. I wished that I'd gotten mother some flowers but forgot. I did send cards earlier and wrote a letter tonight. At 0400 we were awaken by the siren. What a sound to wake up to. I always have to figure out where I am. We stayed outside for an hour and then went to bed.

May 15

I found out this morning that the drop for jungle school has come through. That means instead of 80, I've only got 58. You can't imagine how happy I am. I told Holloway and he dropped from 35 to 17. This afternoon I received an anniversary card. That really makes me feel bad because I'd completely forgotten all about it. Our anniversary isn't until May 18 and it will be our 4th. Boy when I think back on all that has happened since May 18, 1963 my head spins. Then tonight I received a call from MAJ Ray, G-5 and he gave me a deadline of 15 June to complete the Bong Son school.

May 16

Had SDO tonight and we had a guest sleeping in the S-1 shop under orders. It was PFC Crowder who the previous night put a call through to Gen Westmoreland. He has been a trouble maker ever since joining 11th Avn Gp. I had several run ins with him when he thought he should be served in the Officers Club and one night he stole a military vehicle and went downtown. According to a newscast tonight, a crewman from 228th ASB (Chinook) had climbed out of the Chinook at 4,000 ft to pull a sand bag out of the engine, thus preventing a crash. The Chinook was carrying a load of ammunition. It was a very heroic feat.

May 17

I went forward to LZ Two Bits and came the closest to Charlie that I want to. I went with G-5 to look at the school several miles outside of Bong Son. Next to the road was an ARVN battalion sweeping through the rice paddies. Then there was some noise and suddenly 5 VC in black clothes and weapons took off running about 50 yds from the road. The driver just pressed down on the gas and sped by them. Thank goodness, they didn't take time to fire. MAJ Cherry got back from Hong Kong with my turntable. This completes my stereo set, speakers, amp, turntable, tape deck, and head phones. It will really look great in our living room.

May 18

Today is the eve of Ho Chi Minh's birthday and the town went off limits at noon. Went to an audition of two shows to see if they would be a good fit for our club. One was a Korean rock and roll band with a girl singer and an exotic dancer and the other was some local GI's who were really good. Arranged for trucks to go to Qui Nhon tomorrow. Went to MARS at 0545 and waited 3 ½ hours trying to call Sharon. Today is our 4th anniversary and I wanted to surprise her. However, they were not able to put any calls through.

May 19

Today is Ho Chi Minh's birthday and we've been on red alert all day. That probably means that we'll have to sleep with our clothes on. Today was probably our most productive day of our tour. We got two 2 ½ ton trucks, Fletcher drove one. We delivered the slop to the village and then drove to Qui Nhon in 2 hours and 15 min. Got 2 loads of cement (180 bags) and 1 ton of steel. Then got 20 bags of corn for our pigs and paint for the school at Bong Son. We stopped at 22th Engineer BN and got a dump truck for next week. Also, got a load of sand and moved some steel. Also transported from R&U desks and textbooks.

May 20

Today is my 27th birthday, I'm getting to be an old man. Received a card from Burr, Lynn and Steve.

I had received a card from Sharon several days ago. Wasn't much happening on my birthday. Since it was a Saturday, it was still a work day. Got a letter from Sharon and it looks like our hopes for a new arrival have been dashed as Sharon had her period. She thought it was a miscarriage, but luckily not. Oh well, we'll have plenty more chances. Also found I'll be going to Tokyo on R&R 16 June thru 24. There was an extra quota and when S-1 asked if I wanted it, I said sure. I probably won't get another chance to see Japan.

May 21

Received official word from Div that my DEROS has been adjusted. What great news. Also had big news in the village. Arrived about 1330 and they had just had the birth of 9 piglets—our first litter. Many of the villagers were there. They were all healthy and good looking. Not bad for the first litter. The village woman on duty assisted with the deliveries. Found out another check has arrived from G-5 so I'll be going to Saigon Wed to cash it.

May 22

Went to Bong Son at 0645 and picked up cement, lumber, fence wire and parts for the school. I delivered the materials to the school and they're supposed to begin work on Wed. This evening I was writing down my favorite songs:
Moon River
Moments to Remember
Don't be Cruel
Born to Lose
Love is a Many Splendored Thing
Stranger on Shore
Climb Every Mountain
Maria—by Johnny Mathis
2nd Time Around
Kiddio

May 23

Took COL Lukens and a Vietnamese LTC (Reps boss) out to the village today. We viewed the high school and then went to the pig sty to see the new litter. All healthy so far. This morning I spent several hours trying to locate a vehicle to take the slop out. We had a CMMI (Command Maintenance and Management Inspection) and available vehicles were hard to find.

May 24

I left for Saigon on the 24th at 0900 and arrived 1200. Went downtown, got a room and went to the Rex for dinner. I'm becoming quite familiar with the routine. Ate at a table with Don Tartony who went to Livonia Bentley and I'd played football against. We had a great time talking about the past.

May 25

Went to the USO and called Sharon. It took ½ hour to get thru. Then went to Chase Manhattan Bank, market place and had lunch with Ray Spigarelli. I met a CPT who is an advisor to NCO Academy at Nha Trang. I've never had a chance to visit Nha Trang. I've heard that it is a beautiful place. Spent the afternoon sunning at Rex and went to Cholon PX to pay for a sapphire ring that had caught my eye. Met Don at the Rex and we watched the movie and then Don took me to the Eden Roc where I was exposed to the Saigon bar girls. No harm, as I didn't have any money, and no interest. Only enough to buy one drink. Went to the airport at 2300 and slept there waiting for the plane at 0300. I ran into a Red Cross girl, Effie who used to be at Harvey Kaserne, in Kitzingen. She was with a Mrs. Baker who suggested that when I get to Ft Harrison I should see MAJ Sambol and try to go to the AG Special Services Course. Not a bad idea. NOTE: Turns out that MAJ Don Sambol was our class advisor at the Career Course.

May 26

Arrived at An Khe at 0830. Went to G-5 to deliver the paperwork, then to my hootch to shave. Got a cake from home that was squashed. Too bad. Took the check to R & U. In the afternoon I went to the dentist, no cavities and no cleaning needed. Spent the afternoon getting the club cleaned for a party that evening. We had another litter of pigs at the village and this time it was 14 (11 living). Received a letter from Div saying they had my orders. I have to say that the Cav has done a fantastic job keeping me informed.

May 27

Fletcher and I went to Qui Nhon to get a going away basket for COL Lukens and forms to obtain additional cement. Flew with CPT Israel and again was scared to death. There were 8 of us in the Huey and 500 lbs of commo equipment. The pilot said if the load was too heavy we couldn't go. Well, he took off, got to the pass and came back making a low pass on the Air Strip. I couldn't figure it out, but CPT Israel said he was testing the airfield's radar. Got to QN at 0900 and bought everything by 1030. We decided to hitchhike back and 4 hours and 4 rides later, we made it. Tonight I spent several hours trying to fix the slot machine at the club. Electronic repair is not my fortitude, but fortunately, there were several civilians who were.

May 28

Went to the village this morn and found that 4 piglets had died during the week and that we had another litter. This makes 38, however 31 are living. One of the sows can't give milk so 4 of her litter died. The people split her remaining 3 up to other sows. Being a city boy, all this agriculture is new to me. Listened to the Army radio tonight and I was on the radio giving a report on the high school.

May 29

Well they called for an operation tomorrow and tonight I've spent trying to get ammo, men, operations order and my gear squared away. I got to bed at midnight. Originally, the plan was to have a sweep inside the barrier. Now the plan is to have it outside the barrier and all day. Apparently, they feel that the VC are planning a sneak attack.

May 30

Today was Memorial Day, but like all other holidays, just another duty day. The platoon assembled at 0645 at the SP (Starting Point) and finally moved out by 0730. Started the search and clear and it was quite interesting, although tiring. We moved out and went 2,000 meters to the 4 ring where we waited for an hour trying to locate a lost man. Then moved out and ate lunch on our objective. We returned to the SP and by staying on high ground we were back by 1530. I had trouble getting the men to maintain a proper interval.

May 31

Another pay day down. I'm sitting in the hootch at 2251 listening to the Indy 500. They'd had 18 laps yesterday before it rained. The Indy 500 was always my dad's favorite sport event. He grew up in Novi MI which is where the Novi race cars were made that were driven by Duke Nalon and Chet Miller in the 500. Received 5 letters from Sharon and spent the evening working on the lights at the club.

June 1

Went out to LZ Two Bits to check on the progress of the school. I was disappointed to see a lack of progress. I briefed LTC Hamlet who is the interim XO of the Group on the project. Picked up 10 school desks and delivered to the school. Took a Caribou back to An Khe and it was a very rough ride as the wind was quite strong. Then, just as we were about to touch down, he applied power and did a go around. That shook everyone up.

June 2

Tonight was the Colonel's farewell party. I spent the entire day making sure the club was clean and that plenty of booze was available. Went to Class VI three times and finally had to borrow from the NCO Club. The party was a big success. Must've been 150 people and there was plenty of food for everyone. We'll use the steaks that were left for tomorrow night. I was upset that the COL never acknowledged all the work that went into getting the club ready.

June 3

The new Group CO will be COL Gude who arrived today. He will have a week or two before taking command. Unfortunately we didn't have ice at the club—first time in a long time. It didn't bother him, but it did LTC Pumprey who is the new XO. Went out to the village and school today for the first time in a long time.

June 4

Went forward to LZ Two Bits this morning for a staff meeting. On the Caribou was a beautiful woman columnist who looked rather worried during the rough flight. Upon landing she said she'd like to view civic action so I asked her if she wanted to view our civic action project. However, she was scheduled to go else-

where. As we were walking to the tent we came across a soldier at the urine tube—was he surprised. These tubes are out in the open. I had to take the signal courier back to An Khe as the choppers at Group were too loaded. It was a rough ride and needless to say I was on edge. The shorter I get, the more worried I become.

June 5

I sat on my first court marital today. It involved PVT Crowder who was charged with disobeying an order. A lawyer from Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) defended him, but he was convicted before the trial began. It was a technical point, whether he was given an order or not, but you had to take the word of the First SGT. He was sentenced to 3 months confinement, forfeiture of 2/3 pay. However, COL Lukens suspended the confinement so he got off very easy. Tonight Israel and the Arabs have started a war. I hope they fight it out among themselves, but we'll probably be in it.

June 6

Went to Qui Nhon by Caribou and got some paint for the school. Started hitching back at 1030 and stopped at the snack bar. I rode in the back of a 2 ½ truck and got back at 1430. What a rough ride. There were about 10 replacements. Found my orders waiting when I got back. Also found out that the POL and AMMO dump exploded at LZ English causing heavy damage. It started at 0400 and shells were still going off at noon. It damaged 47 choppers and leveled most of English.

June 7

Finally got my hi fi equipment shipped. Sure hope it gets home okay. I spent the afternoon working on the club's financial report. In the morning I tried to get out to Bong Son but there were too many people waiting, so Rep would never have made it and I needed him for interpreting.

June 8

I went out to the airfield to catch a Caribou to Two Bits. Waited until 1030 while they repaired the 0900 courier. We got on the plane and found out it wasn't fixed so we never made it. The soon to be new commander COL Gude was at the club. He sure is different than COL Lukens, so relaxed that you never know he's there.

June 9

Went forward to LZ Two Bits to see the progress of the school. The deadline of June 15 is less than a week away. What I saw was not encouraging. There wasn't any work being done. I had Rep get them to agree to start doing everything Monday so I've got to get the paint at An Khe and get it out here. Spent the night at Two Bits and slept in CPT Israel's bed.

June 10

Had change of command ceremony today. COL Lukens received the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medals. COL Gude took over and I believe that he is going to be a real likeable commander. Certainly 180 degrees different from Lukens. From what I've seen, he seldom gets mad and asks instead of directing. After the ceremony Gen Blanchard who is the Asst Div CG asked me how many pigs we had and if they had a replacement for me. He is sure interested in the village. I told him my ideas about having District pick up garbage. Also, I received an ear notcher kit for the pigs from John Wharton. Bless his heart—he's the greatest. John is retired from the Navy.

John lives in Columbia SC and put together RSVP which I've mentioned earlier. It was because of him that we have been able to pass out clothing, toys, tooth brushes, soap and school supplies. In my newsletters I'd mentioned the need for cement mixers and several months ago, John located 3 cement mixers and through his Naval connections he was able to arrange passage on a Naval transport ship. They were scheduled to arrive early May at Qui Nhon. John has sent me several letters asking if they've arrived and I have had to say no. I hope they get here before I have to leave.

June 11

Spent the day trying to get a ride to Two Bits on a Chinook to take the lime for white washing the school. However, they didn't have anything going, so I went out to the village. I was amazed at the size of the pigs and at how much work the people have done. They've sure caught the fever and are doubling the facilities.

June 12

Went forward today. Had to get up at 0500 to get the lime to the Chinook by 0600. Boy, were the pilots mad when they saw I had whitewash. They were afraid that it would spill all over the inside of the Chinook. We drained the water away and luckily none spilled as it was a smooth ride. They started painting and fixing the cement work today. Went to District and got 5 prisoners to help. In the afternoon I went down to the river for a dip. Caught the last courier plane and had SDO tonight.

June 13

Today I went to Bong Son (again). They're coming along good on the paint but I had to go to LZ English to pick up lime in garbage cans. English and Two Bits are two LZ's for Bong Son. They are only a couple of miles apart. John DeLoach took me in his Jeep with trailer. By the time we delivered the lime, the trailer was covered with lime and we had to take it to the river. Tonight all hell broke loose. Just as I'd resigned myself to completing my entire tour (1 year) living in a GP Medium tent, COL Hamlet called a meeting and said he wanted all tents down ASAP and the junior officers (WO, LT and CPT) moved into the billets which were wooden buildings on slabs of concrete. They had just been completed. So after getting back from Bong Son at 1800 we spent from 1900-2300 moving. I hadn't realized how bad that tent was. It had a wooden floor and when we tore it up lizards, iguanas, and snakes came out from under it. I wouldn't be surprised if they were poisonous.

June 14

After moving last night we spent the morning tearing the tent down and by 1100 nothing was left but a big bare spot. It did seem good to get into a permanent building. Then tonight the chapel was tore down, grass cut and cement was poured for two pads. Found out today that MAJ Jennings had asked MAJ Atkins to get Fletcher and myself an award. During the day I took CPT John Dean, new flight surgeon, to the village and he is very interested in working with us.

June 15

Spent the evening trying to get packed and get lists of what everyone wants from Japan. Deloach, Rep, Sgt Maj, Hammons and Fletcher all want something. I've got $870 (paper money), all in $10 paper bills. I'm leaving in the morning. Tonight one of the enlisted men cracked up. Apparently someone killed his snake and when he returned to his bunk and saw what happened he started screaming "someone killed my snake" and had to be physically restrained.

June 16

I'm sitting at the R&R Center in Camh Rahn Bay in the same building I was in almost 3 months ago processing to go to Hawaii. Tomorrow at 1300 we process out for Tokyo. Today after waiting from 0730 to 1230 for a plane we arrived at CRB at 1430. I happened to meet CPT Dave Decca from South Bend IN and Qui Nhon. Prior to Vietnam, he had spent a ROTC tour at University of MI so we had a lot to talk about.

June 17

Dave and I went to the beach this morning for a couple of hours, came back and ate and was ready for processing at 1300. They weren't very efficient and we didn't get out of there until 1600. Then the Pan Am jet's gyro was broke, so we had to fly to Saigon where they picked up a new one and refueled. Listened to music, watched a movie and had a nice steak dinner. We landed at Tachikowa AB about 0145 and after a terrifying bus ride we started processing at 0300 and was done by 0345. I'm staying at Camp Zama and was in bed by 0400. Dave's wife got here alright and he talked to her during the briefing.

June 18

Slept for several hours and got up at 0800 so I could make the PX bus which left at 0930. Ate breakfast at the Officers Club and then went to Yocusca and Yokoman PX's. The spellings of all these places is probably wrong. The bus only stayed ½ hour to 1 hour at each place so I was in a continual rush. We got back at 1800 and went to dinner at Zama Officers Club where they had a Fathers Day buffet. Camp Zama is the first place that soldiers injured in Vietnam and too bad to stay there are brought for stabilization and further shipment to the US or back to Vietnam after recovery. Also, if they are really seriously hurt they'll bring them here to stabilize before shipping to US. Met some LTs who were on convalescent leave after recovering from Vietnam wounds and joined their little party.

June 19

Went on the Tokyo Day and Night Tour. Stopped at the Olympic Stadium, Meiju Shrine, Imperial Palace, Tokyo Tower, USO and saw the Holiday on Ice show. The tour only cost $4.00 and was great. Left the ice show and walked around the Korakuen Amusement Park. They had a 2 story, 36 lane bowling alley and pool hall, roller skating rink, rides and penny arcade. Also, a Japanese major league baseball game was in progress but it was sold out. What amazed me about Tokyo is that it is the cleanest city I've EVER seen. There are no slums. Even at the amusement park, people never throw paper on the ground. Even the tiniest shack is spic and spam.

June 20

Today the tour went to Hakane National Park. On the way, we stopped at the Castle, then took a bus ride up the mountainside, ate dinner at a nice restaurant, took the ferry boat across Lake Asaka. Went to UNESCO International Village where houses from 26 countries are. Then to the world's longest ropeway in the world—two miles. They had little gondola cars. At several spots we were over 400' above the ground. At the top we took a cable car down and after a 2 hour bus ride we were back by 1900. Ate at the O club and played bingo. Used the first community bathroom I've ever seen—for both men and women. One side of the big room was women and the other side men. It was very clean. On the bus ride the guide who spoke excellent English got to discussing the difference between American and Japanese women. In Japan the woman walks 3 steps behind the man, they have water waiting for a bath when the man gets home from work, gives a massage, do all house work, and speak only when spoken to. There are certain things I like about the Japanese system, but I'm inclined to like our system better. He said the average worker with a family makes about $120 a month. Insurance costs $45 for two years—government backed.

June 21

Another thing that amazes me about the Japanese is their emphasis on athletics. Everywhere you see baseball being played, or a driving range or golf course, and volleyball nets. A baseball game is on TV every night.

Today the tour went to Toyko to see the strip, but I decided to go to the PX as I had a lot of things to buy for the guys back at An Khe. I bought Dick, my brother, a San Sui amp that he wanted. Also bought Sharon a human hair blond wig for $49.95. In the afternoon I went to the concession arcade and couldn't resist buying a jewelry box, ash tray, bracelet, etc. What a time!

June 22

Went on tour to Enoshume and Kamakuna. Visited the yacht harbor, saw a porpoise show, an aquarium and to the Darbatna to see the Giant Buddha. Had lunch in a Chinese restaurant and sat on the floor and had a 5 course meal of egg roll, fried rice, sweet and sour pork, chicken and green tea. Also sampled saki which is quite potent. The afternoon we went to several other shrines. George was the tour guide and he was great. Always trying to help out, taking everyone's pictures. I can't say too much for the Japanese people. I've yet to meet a rude person. Everyone is so nice and the country is so clean. We sure can take a lesson from them. Had a steam bath and she walked on my back, cracking every bone.

June 23

I must leave this beautiful place tomorrow. I've fallen in love with it and would love to come back. This morning I caught a train and went downtown. Stopped at the Sony Bldg, USO and went to Noritake China. This afternoon went to Cinerama to see "Grand Prix" with Paul Newman. Felt you were right in the driver's seat. Caught the evening train back in midst of rush hour. The cars were packed but there was no pushing and shoving. Each subway car was spic and span as well as the stations. I've been on the subways in London, Paris, Berlin, New York and Rome and they couldn't compare with these for cleanliness and efficiency.

Some random thoughts as I leave. Charlie, our Japanese guide, said 3 of the finest things in the world are Japanese wife, American house and Chinese food. Average man makes about $120 a month. Homes cost about $8,000 for a 2 bedroom, kitchen and living room. The rooms are very small. The government is building many projects and the people will pay so much down and $25-30 a month until it is paid. Wherever you go you see athletic games in progress and all the school children are dressed in very cute blue and black pants or skirts and white blouses. Cars cost anywhere from $1,000 to $6,000 for a Honda roadster. The average is about $1500, insurance costs $45 for 2 years and is backed by the government. Can't forget the driving which is the worst I've seen. In Europe the English were probably the sanest drivers. I thought Germans were bad, until we drove in France. To top it off, the Italians were the absolute worst. However, the Japanese top

them all. That first night on the bus ride I just closed my eyes as the driver was going down streets that had a couple of inches on each side and in several cases, I swore that we weren't going to make it. It got even worse when you rode with the taxi drivers. They must've gone to kamikaze school!

June 25

Got back to An Khe and found that CPT Dwyer from GS had been killed in a crash. He used to come to the club quite frequently. Also, a C-130 crashed at the end of the runway, killing 34. I saw the plane, it was terrible.

Went downtown to view the progress of the high school. They are getting ready to pour the second floor. When I drove up, the men started coming toward me and handed me a long note asking for a wage increase. They are only getting 12 piasters an hour and really deserve more. I explained to them that we were running out of money but when we got more money I'd see about getting more.

Today 5 pigs died and we got the vet. He dissected one and said it looked bad. All 70 of our piglets have it, diaherra. They dehydrate themselves until they die. He asked Heittman to take one to Saigon and we proceeded to give everyone a shot and medicine.

I received another letter from John Wharton asking if the cement mixers have arrived. They haven't and I made a decision today that I was not leaving until I was able to finish the project at Bong Son, and determine where the cement mixers were and get them to An Khe. This probably means that I'll have to stay an extra 4-5 days as I'm scheduled to leave July 7. I know that Sharon won't be very happy about this decision, but I've spent an entire year of my life working on this project and to not see it to a completion, at least as far as I can take it, would be something I'd remember all my life. John Wharton has put so much into this.

June 26

Went forward today to check on progress on Bong Son elementary school. They've built the wall and painted the outside. However, they haven't started the inside. Took a short swim and went to the G-5 meeting in the afternoon. I had asked COL Gude yesterday if they had my replacement yet and the answer was negative. I happened to mention this to G-5. I took the 1615 courier back and it starting raining. We circled for awhile, shaking me up. I'm getting too short for scares! The pass was closed so the Caribou was diverted to Phu Cat AFB which was a new Air Force Base about 30 miles from An Khe. I'd never been to it, so this was interesting. Even though we had to buy our meals, $.85 each and $1.00 for billeting. The officers club was real nice, as usual for Air Force bases.

June 27

Caught the first Caribou out of Phu Cat for An Khe which was 0700. Was back at camp by 0745 and the big move was already underway as the field grade moved into their new BOQ. I felt guilty as COL Hamlet was hustling around and I was shaving to get ready for the 0900 flight to Bong Son for a civic action sick call. COL Hamlet, in the early 1970's became a Brigadier General and then a Major General and was commander of the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, CO. We had to postpone the flight to Bong Son as the doctor didn't have any medicines. Went to the village this afternoon. The pigs are looking much better, so far we've only lost 9. The people are faithfully giving them the medicine. Tomorrow they're having a farewell party for us. Found out that I've been submitted for the Vietnamese Legion of Merit—the highest award but it won't be presented until 10 July if it is approved. NOTE: I never received anything.

June 28

It is a shame that Fletcher, Heittman and myself are all leaving at the same time or within a couple of weeks. They had a farewell party at the village and they prepared an excellent meal. All of the members of the pig co-op were there. We drank tea first and then had beef that was barbecued, French fries, rolls dipped in cooking oil, salad, coke and beer. They must've spent a lot of money.

Afterwards the manager of the pig co-op spoke and the village chief thanked us for our help. I told the people how much they'd accomplished in a year and that when I came back I hoped to see a prosperous village. The people were happy that the pig disease had stopped.

June 29

Went to Bong Son and held sick call. We couldn't get on the first courier so it was 1000 before we got there. By the time we got a vehicle and everything rounded up it was 1130. Went down by the water point and ate C's and started sick call about 1230. We roped off an area with engineer tape and saw a lot of cases. Took 3 to the hospital. One was a 19 month baby that had a scalp disease that made you sick. Also, it was

blind and its arms and feet were the size of a newborn. It was so weak it couldn't cry. The doctor said the mother had syphilis. What a shame. Caught the last courier flight to An Khe.

June 30

Today was Saturday. I went downtown and checked on the pig sty. In the evening I caught the courier to Phu Cat and spent the night so I could catch the morning flight to Da Nang. I had made up my mind to see for myself where the cement mixers were. John Wharton had sent me the shipping numbers and after checking at Qui Nhon the mixers had never arrived and were still at Da Nang.

July 1

Got up at 0445 as the Da Nang flight left at 0545. We got to Da Nang about 0730 and called a Navy Taxi which took me to the Harbor Pier. From there I found I had to go to the Deep Water Pier where they had 2 of the 3 mixers. Spent the morning trying to track down the missing one which belonged to us. Went to Tien Shu for lunch and came back. I was walking around the Naval storage lot and finally asked a low ranking Navy enlisted guard if he'd seen a third cement mixer. First he said, "no" and then he said that he remembered a Marine unit looking at it several weeks ago and then he noticed that it was gone. I asked him where the Marine unit was located and he pointed to a large hill by the storage lot called Monkey Mountain. I located an Army ¾ ton truck and told the company commander what I wanted. He agreed to loan the truck and driver to me. We set off up the hill. What a road—we had to walk the last 200 yards. When we got to the Marine signal unit a Marine LT came running up, saying, "Can I help you sir?" Since I was a CPT I had a little leverage. I said that I was looking for a cement mixer that belonged to our unit and I was told that it might be up here. He said, "oh no, you must be mistaken." I then asked him if I could look around and started walking toward a big storage building. The LT blurted out, "Sir, I think I know what you're looking for." Sure enough the mixer was in the building. I told the LT that I was taking it. What a ride down that mountain! We jackknifed one time. The cement mixer was a large mixer with 4 big tires and no brakes. I later found out that they'd had several people killed on this road.

We got it moved back to the Navy Storage yard. It was 1700 by this time so I went back to the Navy ship that had offered me a bunk earlier in the day when I told them my mission. I had chow and a bed. Boy the Navy sure lives good, especially the officers. Air conditioning, good chow, and silverware. They went to a party while I got on the phone and tried to get thru to An Khe. I could get to Pleiku, but no further. Finally got thru and asked for a transportation number so I could get the three mixers loaded on a LST and shipped to Qui Nhon.

July 2

Got up at 0600 and went to TMP (Transportation Motor Pool) to set up transportation. They have a LST leaving in a day or two for Qui Nhon so I went to the White Elephant where they made paper work out. Once I was assured that everything had been done, I went to the Air Field and got on a Caribou to Phu Cat. We stopped at Gia-VUC, a special forces camp. Boy, they are out in the boonies. I couldn't stand being up in the middle of nowhere. Perfect target for the VC and NVN. My hats are off to those Special Forces. It was a very steep landing and take off. Got to Phu Cat, went to the BOQ Office and found a bunk and found out I'd have to be at the airstrip by 0600.

July 3

Got back about 0730 and spent the morning inventorying the officers club so Mr. Kelly can take it over. COL Hamlet congratulated me on the mixers. I reaffirmed with S-1 that I was extending for four days so that I can finish my projects. I just can't leave here with projects undone and no replacement. I hope I won't regret the decision. However, I've already had several close calls this year and it is only by God's grace that I'm still here and I'm sure that he will protect me for the next few days. Went to the pig co-op this afternoon. They sure have done a lot of work.

July 4

Happy Independence Day. Went to Qui Nhon to check on the cement mixers and to get school supplies. Picked up 10 desks and benches and 1000 books. Wasn't able to get corn. The mixers have not come in yet. We got back to An Khe by 1600 so we didn't waste any time. Tonight was the big promotion party for 6 new LTC's: Beekman, Hammons, Kauchel, Jones, Mills and Spillinger. It was good as they had lots of steaks and drinks. LTC Speedman and I beat everyone at ping pong. A couple of the COL's got into a wrestling match but they insisted it was all in fun. MAJ Gordon Spillinger who is an Air Force Weather Officer and

I were together in Germany and then again at Ft Sheridan in 1968-70. As I've said throughout this story, the Army is a small world.

JULY 5

Went to MARS this morning to try and call Sharon. No luck and left about 0900 to go to PX to get Steve's picture. This afternoon I picked up the swings, blackboards from R&U for the school at Bong Son. I called COL Nadeu, CO of 228 Avn Bn for a Chinook. We went to R&U at 1900 and after some trouble we managed to get loaded by 2130. We decided to leave at 0500 tomorrow morning.

JULY 6

Got up at 0400 and we took off at 0500 and landed at 0545. What a time—3 and half hours of sleep. After breakfast we lined up two ¾ ton trucks and by 0900 we had all the desks, benches, paper, books, blackboards, see-saws and swings delivered. The kids really enjoyed the swings and teeter totter. This completes my Bong Son project. This is one of the reasons that I extended 4 days. I can't say I'm convinced it was right. The teachers seemed to take our gifts for granted. It really tees me off. I expected at least a simple thanks. Oh well. Caught the courier back to An Khe.

JULY 7

Got back to camp and found that they'd scheduled a People to People meeting for tomorrow that they wanted me to attend at Bong Son. So, caught the 0800 courier back to Bong Son. No one showed up, except the person from G-5. Thus, I went down to the beach and got 3 hours of sun. Had lunch and caught the flight back. What a waste of time. Stopped at AG Awards and found out they'd lost my Recommendation for a Bronze Star that had been submitted several weeks ago so I spent the afternoon retyping it and turning in my gear.

JULY 8

Finally got a replacement. I guess LT Gallagher G-5 told Gen Blanchard that there was no replacement and it didn't take long to get one. LT Emerson came in from the field and I wasted no time in taking him to the village and the school. In the afternoon we went to see Mr. Khai at R& U. He thanked me for all my work. Stopped by district to see Mr. Vu but he's on vacation. Found out that the mixers came into Qui Nhon today. Things seem to be coming together. I'm glad that I took these four days so that I can see things to a completion. I hope that LT Emerson takes a sincere interest in the projects.

JULY 9

Didn't do much today. Spent some time at the Club making sure that the transfer was going OK and then the afternoon at the beach. Bought a jacket for Mike and picked up Steve's picture. It turned out pretty good.

JULY 10

Took my recommendation for Bronze Star down to Awards and gave it to CPT Jim Rice. He said to come back in the evening. Went down to Finance and got paid and then went around and said good byes. Went out to the village for the last time. Fletcher went to Qui Nhon to pick up the cement mixers and returned about 1800 with all three mixers loaded on a low Boy. What a picture that made. Again Fletcher came thru and I sure am going to miss him. I don't think I'll ever run into another NCO that has his qualities. He doesn't care what it takes, he will accomplish the mission. Went down to Admin to pick up my award and say goodbye to Jim.

JULY 11

Set three alarms for 0500 to make sure I woke up. Wouldn't you know it, they didn't go off. Got up at 0545 and PFC Kimbro showed up at 0550 to take me to the airfield. The CQ (Charge of Quarters) wasn't around so technically I couldn't sign out. I left a note and got down to processing at 0605 and picked up my records. However, in the haste of out processing I hadn't cleared my 201 (personnel) file which was supposed to be done yesterday. It took quite a while to find someone. Then went to the airport and sat for several hours before getting on a C-130. We flew about 15 minutes and then returned to An Khe. Pleiku was fogged in and rainy. Sat on the airstrip for 3 hours, ate C's and finally about 1500 got to Pleiku. We were scheduled tomorrow to take off for CONUS. Slept in mud.

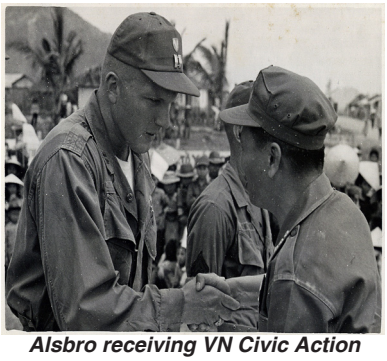
JULY 12

The day I've been looking forward to—D Day (Departure Day). Got up at 0600 and we sat at the air strip for 6 hours. There was a real bad fog and it looked like no planes would be able to get in to the strip today. We could hear the planes overhead. Then at 1200 the skies parted and three C-141's swooped down and they had us quickly loaded and by 1300 we were taking off, just as the bad weather started to return. Thank goodness for the divine intervention. It was a two hour flight to the Philippines, 6 hours to Japan where we had a 6 hour layover for a mechanical problem. As we were loading the plane for the final leg to CONUS I asked one of the crew members what the mechanical problem was. He said that on final approach the warning light had come on. I asked him if they found the problem and he said he hoped so. Really reassuring and I couldn't help but remember his words as we're landing at Travis. Got to Travis about 2245, on the bus to San Francisco by 2300, to SF Airport by 0030 and on a United jet by 0045. It was a 3 ½ hour flight to Chicago, a one hour wait for a plane to Kalamazoo and by 0900 I was in the arms of my lovely wife. Because of the time zone changes I was back to civilization in under 24 hours. No wonder for some people, particularly the lower ranking enlisted combat soldiers, it was an adjustment that was difficult to make. NOTE: I arrived in Detroit the next day amidst the Detroit Race Riots of 1967.

REFLECTIONS ON THE YEAR AND THE VIETNAM WAR

I consider this year to be one of the highlights of my life. I am proud of what I accomplished and someday hope to return. Even though my diary reflects some disappointments and low times, on the whole I have tremendous respect for the Vietnamese people and what they've gone through. I am proud of America's involvement in Vietnam. If you will study history, the 1960's were a time of expansion by the Russians and Chinese and there was a very real fear that all of Asia would become Communist and that could be followed by the rest of the continents (Domino Theory). In the 60's Premier Nikita Khruschev said to the United Nations, "We will bury you (U.S.)" and he meant it. The Vietnam War stopped this expansion and gave the free world time to win the Cold War. NOTE: In April 2009 I led a group of 15 on a 21 day trip to Vietnam. It was very interesting, but that is another story.

Civic Action Team receiving award



Alsbro receiving VN Civic Action Award

VIETNAM "NAMSPEAK"

Wars tend to develop a language of their own and the Vietnam War was no exception. The following are some of the words that reflect the "Language of the American GI in VN".

NOTE: The list is not complete (an impossible task and much too large) and a few of the terms with inappropriate words have been omitted for obvious reasons.

201: Army personnel file
AC: Aircraft commander
Ace: Aerial warfare downing five enemy aircraft qualifies as an "ace" pilot.
Acid: LSD, hallucinogenic drug
AFVN: Armed Forces Vietnam Network radio station
Agent Orange: A terrible legacy of the Vietnam War. Used as a herbicide and sprayed by USAF in Operation called Ranch Hand from 1962-70. During this period, approximately 18.85 million gallons were sprayed by airplanes in an attempt to kill vegetation and deny cover to enemy forces.
Air Cavalry or Airmobile: One of the major battlefield innovations of the Vietnam War. It used the concept of using helicopters both to transport soldiers to the battlefield and to provide battlefield fire support.

AK 47 Rifle:—Soviet: The Soviet assault rifle that was the standard infantry weapon of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army. It was far superior to the WWII vintage American weapons used by the South Vietnamese Army. In 1968, the South Vietnamese Army received large quantities of the American M-16 that leveled the battlefield.
Ammo Dump: Location where live or expended ammo is stored.
Arc Light: Code name for the use of B 52 bombing missions along the Cambodian border to support ground tactical operations
AO: Area of Operation
ARVN: Army of the Republic of Vietnam
A Team: Basic 12 man team of US Special Forces
Bac-si (bach see) : Vietnamese for doctor, also used to refer to US Army medic
Bad: Good
Base Camp—US: The difference between the VN war and other conflicts is that the logistical base areas were located in country. In Vietnam there were 27 major base camps throughout Vietnam.
Beehive Ammunition: A special US artillery shell for howitzers, aerial rockets and recoilless rifles. It produced a massive blast similar to a shotgun with 8,500 tiny steel arrows or flechettes. It proved deadly against VC and NV ground attacks.
Big Red One: Nickname for lst Infantry Division
Bird: Any aircraft
Blood: A black, from blood brother
Body Bag: Plastic bag used to transport dead bodies from the field
Boom-boom: Sex
Boondoggle: Military operation not thought out, i.e. absurd or useless
Boonies: The boondocks, a remote rural area, also infantry term for the field
Booby Traps: Ranged from pungi stakes consisting of sharpened bamboo stakes to more sophisticated devices such as grenades, mines and rigged aerial bombs. Accounted for 11 percent of American deaths.
Bouncing Betty: A trip wire activated mine designed to explode at groin height
Bro: a black soldier referring to another black soldier
Brown Water Navy: US Naval units operating in the Mekong Delta
Bush: Away from base camp where the enemy might be located
Cammies: Camouflaged fatigues
CAP: Marine Civil Action Program
Caribou: Small transport plane for moving men and materials. The landing and take off of the Caribou could be done on very short, unimproved runways, which is why this plane was used to resupply the Special Forces camps.
Charlie: The Viet Cong
Chao (chow): hello or goodbye
Check Fire: A signal for the artillery to immediately halt firing
Cherry: New Guy
Chieu Hoi: Literally “open arms” chieu hoi was an amnesty program to lower the morale of VC forces. From 1963 to 1973 the program resulted in 159,741 VC deserters.
Chinook: A large two engine transport helicopter
Chop chop: Vietnamese slang for food
Chopper: Helicopter
CIDG: South Vietnamese Civilian Irregular Defense Group
Clacker: Hand held firing device for setting off claymore mines
CG: Commanding general
Commo: short for communications
Concertina: A tangle of coiled barbed wire with blade edges
CO: Commanding officer
CONUS: Continental United States
Contact: Firing on or being fired upon by the enemy
Corpsman: Medic
CP: Command post
C rations: Canned meals for use in the field. Usually consisted of a basic course such as ham and lima beans, can of fruit, type of dessert, powdered cocoa, small number of cigarettes and 2 sticks of gum
Dai-uy (die we): Vietnamese for Captain

DEROS: Date Eligible to Return from OverSeas." For the Army the standard tour was 12 months and for Marines 13 months.
Didi (dee dee): Vietnamese slang for to leave or to go
Didi mau (mo): go quickly
Dong: Unit of North Vietnamese money. Used to be worth about a penny in the 60's. In 2009 it is 17,000 dong = 1 dollar
Donut Dollies: American females who visited the troops in the field. They were usually USO workers
Dink: Derogatory term for a Vietnamese
Doper: A marijuana smoker
Dove: Someone against the war
Dust Off: Nickname for medical evacuation helicopters. Of the wounded that reached medical facilities about 97.5 percent survived.
Early Out: Drop or reduction in the term of military service
11B: The MOS (military occupation specialty) for an infantryman
EOD units: Explosive Ordnance Disposal experts who defused mines, booby traps, satchel charges, and explosive devices. They operated under great pressure and time constraints.
ETS: Expiration of term of service or enlistment
FAC: Forward air controller, a forward observer in an aircraft
FDC: Fire direction Center, artillery term
Firebase: A temporary artillery base to support ground operations.
Firefight: An exchange of small arms fire
Fire For Effect: The continuous firing of a battery's cannon, sustained until a "cease fire" or "check fire" is called.
Five: Radio call sign for the executive officer
FO: Forward observer, traveled with the infantry and coordinated artillery missions or an airborne FAC
Fragging: The tossing of fragmentation hand grenades usually into sleeping areas to murder fellow soldiers, usually officers. Although receiving much attention, the actual number of cases was comparatively small. Surfaced in the late 1960's and the rate of incidents per thousand soldiers ranged from 0.35 in 1969 to 1.75 in 1971.
Free Fire Zone: An area supposedly cleared of civilians where artillery could be fired without prior clearance.
Freedom Bird: Plane that took the soldiers from Vietnam back to the World (US)
Gook: Derogatory term for Vietnamese
Grunt: Infantryman
Gunny: Marine gunnery sergeant
Gunship: A combat helicopter armed with various weapons
H&I: Harassment and Interdiction fire by the artillery designed to deny enemy use of beneficial terrain
Hawk: Someone who supported the war
Hooch: Living accommodations
Hoochgirl: Vietnamese women employed by the American military as a maid or laundress
Hot: An area under fire
Huey Helicopter: the UH-1 Huey was used as a utility helicopter to transport troops and supplies, as an evacuation helicopter to evacuate wounded from the battlefield, as an assault helicopter to land combat forces, and, when modified with weapons, as an attack helicopter gunship. The UH-1 Huey was truly the workhorse of the Vietnam War.
Hump: To carry pack, equipment; usually referred to activity by an infantryman
In Country: To be in Vietnam
Insert: To be dropped into an area by helicopter
Iron Triangle: A VC stronghold, located between the Thi-Tinh and Saigon Rivers, next to the Cu Chi District, near and NW of Saigon
Jody: The person who wins your lover or spouse away while you're in Vietnam
Jolly Green Giant: A USAF rescue helicopter
Kill Zone: An area around an explosive device in which 95 percent kill are predicted or the center / key target area for an ambush
Kit Carson Scout: A VC defector working for the Americans
Lager: Night defensive position
Lifer: Career military man
LBJ: Long Binh Stockade located on the Long Binh Base

LP: Listening post
LRRP: Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols mainly organized by Special Forces
Lurps: Members of long range patrols (LRRP)
M 16 Rifle: Became the standard US infantry rifle in Vietnam in 1967. It replaced the M-14 rifle.
M 79 Grenade Launcher: Fired a 40 mm grenade cartridge with a range of 375 yards.
Mamma-san: Used by American GI's for any older Vietnamese woman
MARS: Military Affiliated Radio System: Used in base camps to call loved ones in the US. It required radio transmissions and was not very dependable.
Medivac: Medical evacuation from field by chopper
Million Dollar Wound: Non-crippling wound serious enough to warrant return to US
Montagnards: Hill people. They were not treated very well by the Vietnamese government.
MPC: Military payment currency, paper money that US soldiers were paid in. Also referred to as script.
Nam: Vietnam
Next: The man who was next to be rotated home, i.e. short timer
Number One: The best
Number Ten: The worst
Number Ten Thousand: A description of how bad things can be
P 38: Tiny collapsible can opener
Papa-san: US service term for any older Vietnamese man
Peacenik: An anti-war demonstrator
Piss tube: a vertical tube buried 2/3 into the ground for urinating into
Point: Forward man on a patrol
Popular Forces: Local militia organized within the village. Commonly referred to as "PFs"
PTSD: Development of characteristic symptoms after experiencing of a psychological traumatic event outside the range of human experiences considered to be normal.
PRC-25: Portable back pack carried radio/transmitter with a range of 5-10 kilometers
Puff the Magic Dragon: An AC-47 gunship also called "Spooky"
Rack: Bed or cot
Ranch Hands: The special Air Force unit that flew defoliation missions
R & R: Rest and Recreation. Could be back at base camp but usually referred to out of country trips
Recon: Reconnaissance
Red Ball: Enemy high speed trail or road
Regional Forces: Semi professional local troops, referred to as "RFs" and one step above on the Vietnamese organizational chart to the "PFs"
RTO: Radio Telephone Operator.
Sapper: A VC soldier who infiltrated a camp for sabotage
Search and Destroy: Operation in which Americans searched an area and destroyed anything that might aid the enemy
Short Round: An artillery round which falls short of its target
Short Timer Stick or Calendar: Devices soldiers would use to count their last days in VN
Short Timer: Someone with less than 30 days left in Vietnam
Sit Rep: Situation report
Slick: A Huey carrying troops into battle
SOI: Book with all the call signals and frequencies of units in Vietnam
Stand Down: A return to base camp for a short rest period
Steel Pot: Standard US Army helmet, outer metal cover
TOC: Tactical Operation Center
Tet: Vietnamese New Year
The World: United States
Triage: Process of deciding the order in which to treat casualties
Tunnel Rats: US troops who flushed out the Viet Cong from their underground hideouts
Victor Charlie: Military language for the Viet Cong
Waste: To Kill
Willie Peter/Pete: White phosphorus grenade or round
World: Anywhere but Vietnam
Yard: Montagnard ethnic group found mostly in the Central Highlands

Lest We Forget
Vietnam 1968-1969
James M. Griffiths

Lest I Forget

My name is James M. Griffiths. My date of birth was 3/19/1948 and my place of birth was Benton Harbor Michigan. Benton Harbor is located on the shores of Lake Michigan in the southwest corner of the State of Michigan and during my early years had a population of approximately 19,000 people. Benton Harbor was my hometown.

My hometown was a wonderful place to grow up. Despite its small size it was extremely cosmopolitan racially, ethnically, religiously, and culturally. It also had a beautiful park system and a wonderful youth summer baseball program that was the highlight of my early life. My participation included Little League 9-12 years old, Babe Ruth League 13-15 years old, and one year of American Legion baseball at age 16. I am eternally grateful to the city for providing the fabulous facilities for these endeavors and the wonderful adults that volunteered their time and efforts in running the programs. Many life long lessons were learned on the baseball fields of Benton Harbor.

I attended Columbus Elementary School (on Columbus Ave.) which was the oldest elementary school building in the city. During my Kindergarten year the school had a brand new gymnasium added to it, the first gym the school had. I was the recipient of an excellent elementary education and taught by a group of highly effective and dedicated group of teachers K-6th grades. This basic educational foundation served me well in my future years.

Grades 7-9 were spent at Benton Harbor Junior High on Broadway Street. Besides continuing the learning process in Junior High I was introduced to and participated in my first interscholastic sports, football and basketball. Once again I received a great education both in the classroom and on the athletic field. Teachers and coaches, especially Coach Herb Quade made a lasting impact on my life. Coach Quade became a sort of father figure to me as my father had passed away when I was in 5th grade.

I continued on through school and graduated from Benton Harbor High School in 1966. I enjoyed the social atmosphere in high school and was offered an excellent education during grades 10-12. I absorbed plenty of learning (by osmosis) in my high school classrooms. During my high school years I loved to attend school but was not self motivated to put in the effort to excel academically. I was enrolled in the more difficult, academic classes but chose not to benefit completely from the great education that was offered to me. I got by and emerged from high school with a solid enough academic foundation that would eventually allow me to earn Bachelors and Masters Degrees in the future and have a career as a teacher.

Graduating in 1966 marked the beginning of a period of turmoil in my life. Turmoil and troubled waters began to permeate the nation also as American involvement in the War in Vietnam began to escalate. Turmoil occurred in my personal life as I had no solid idea what I wanted do with my future. This national macro and personal micro turmoil dovetailed in my life as it did with many of my generation. I worked in a factory that produced electronic equipment, refereed adult and church league basketball games, and sporadically attended classes at the local junior college. During this “stumbling around” period of my life I also had registered, as legally required, for the draft.

My father had served two hitches in the United States Army including participation in World War II and my brother had served a 4 year hitch in the Marine Corps and I never entertained any idea of dodging the draft. A college deferment would have been acceptable in my milieu but I was not interested in hitting the books at that point in my life. I chose to continue stumbling around and allow the chips to fall where they may.

August 1967 I was called to Detroit for a pre-draft physical which I passed with flying colors. At this juncture, if I desired to avoid or postpone going into the military, it would be necessary to take some action to obtain a deferment of some kind. I chose to “allow” myself to be drafted when the time came. They were drafting people chronologically by date of birth and you could call the draft board and get an estimate when your time would occur. They were drafting twice a month, beginning and mid month and I was told I would most likely be drafted in mid month December, 1967 or beginning of January, 1968. I got the call to report in January 1968.

Potential Berrien County draftees were ordered to report to the old YMCA on Michigan Ave. in Benton Harbor on January 2, 1968 (Happy New Year!). From that location we were bussed to Detroit and were sworn into the Army the next morning at Ft. Wayne there and flown to Ft. Knox for Basic Combat Training that eve-

ning. Things moved pretty rapidly.

In Basic Training I became a member of 4th Platoon, B Company, 17th Battalion, 5th Training Brigade. It was interesting because approximately fifteen of the forty members of my platoon were from my county. This kept home feelings in touch but also could be embarrassing if you fouled up in front of people you already knew. My platoon (4th) was commanded and trained under the tutelage of Drill Sgt. (E-6) Theodore P. Garrett. Garrett was a tough but fair minded taskmaster as a Drill Sgt. who took great pride into shaping us into the best platoon in the company (we got the earliest and most weekend passes). The task of Basic Training, I later understood, was that of transforming a soldier's individualism into group orientation. It is necessary in the military for the soldier to be more cognizant of group needs and goals than individual needs and goals. I had already had a taste of this from playing team sports so my transition was not too difficult.

During basic we did a great deal of dismounted drill (with the M-14), physical training, and marksmanship at the firing ranges. I remember these the most. I enjoyed the rifle range the most although it was a long march out there and it also was pretty cold at times in January at the range.

We learned a myriad of other military topics but the worst thing I recall in training was going into the gas chamber. We were trained to mask and unmask with our gas masks and to do so mechanically and without panic. The final test was in the gas chamber when we were exposed to CS gas with our masks on. Each individual member then was required to unmask, state his name, rank, and serial number before exiting the gas chamber. The key was to not panic. When I unmasked it felt like my face was caving in but the trick was to exhale and calmly say your name rank and serial number and exit without breathing in. If anybody had sinus problems they were cleaned out doing this!

In the early days of basic we were given a day long battery of aptitude and achievement/intelligence tests. After evening chow a small number of us were told to fall out for more testing. This took about 3 more hours and I really noticed, especially the math, to be much more difficult than the tests during the day. I surmised that some of us were selected to take more advanced tests because of scoring well on the tests during the day. Later this converted into being offered a variety of specialized schools to attend after basic. Many times some of us were asked to remain after the formation was dismissed and told we qualified for various schools to train in. I remember one for sure that a few of us were offered was helicopter school. There were others that I can't specifically recall.

One offer I vividly recall because it was a major opportunity. One day while we were at the rifle range, I was called aside with one other soldier and given a pep talk and an offer saying I qualified for West Point Preparatory School. If I chose to accept the offer I would finish basic then advanced training and then go to the preparatory school. If I succeeded in the prep school I would than be admitted as a cadet at West Point. I did not take the offer because it added up to a 10 year commitment to the military. Given that, and my realization that I had nowhere near the self discipline to succeed at West Point caused my decision to decline.

The offer did boost my self esteem a bit (ego) and it served to delude me to a degree also. To wit, I thought that if I was so smart the Army would surely have a relatively safe job for me after basic. So smart, so dumb as has been said. I never figured into my deluded calculations that all the schools, training, etc. entailed more time in the Army than the two years a draftee spent. Highly skilled positions take a great deal of time to train a person. The Army was not going to train me for eighteen months and only be able to use my skills for 6 more. Duh!

I trained January to mid March and graduated from Basic. About a week before graduation we received orders as to where our next training, Advanced Individual Training (AIT) would be. My assignment was to U.S. Army Training Center Infantry, at Ft. Lewis, Washington. My delusion was totally shattered. My Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) was to be 11 Bravo, Light Weapons Infantry. I was going to be a grunt!

I flew from Louisville into Seattle and traveled by bus to nearby Ft. Lewis. I noticed immediately how green it was in Washington and also how cloudy. Later I felt that it was much more cloudy and rainy there than my home state of Michigan which can be also wet and cloudy. I arrived at my unit for the next 9 weeks and settled in. There was a gloominess at Ft. Lewis and the second day of training we were informed that all of us would be going to Vietnam so it would behoove us to "listen up" and shape up to hone our survival skills for a combat zone. These words made an impact.

I noticed immediately that the cadre that was training us treated us with more respect than we had been accorded in basic and we were subjected to less verbal harassment. Along with this, however, the performance demands placed on us were extremely tougher. We doubled timed (ran) almost everywhere and had what was called a 15 minute run scheduled at the end of each day's training. All this was done in full pack. We went on forced marches with full gear starting at 4 miles, then 7 miles, and finally 12 miles. Toward the end of training we went on a week bivouac of simulated combat called our RVN (Republic of Vietnam) week. We were pushed to the hilt mentally and physically and I was in the best physical shape of my life when

I finished infantry AIT.

We also trained and fired with the M-16, the weapon that was used in Vietnam. In addition we learned to fire, breakdown and clean new weapons including the M-60 machine gun,.50 caliber machine gun, and the M-79 grenade launcher. We learned about setting up claymore mines and some simple demolition with plastic explosives as well as trip flares and the then brand new starlight scope night vision apparatus.

As we neared the end of the training cycle at the beginning of May we all began to wonder what our orders would say and how many days leave we would receive before going to our next duty assignment. The orders finally came and I found out that our training cadre had told us a minor lie. They said the whole training company was going to Vietnam. They were wrong as one of us was to be sent to Korea and another of us was to be sent to Germany. One hundred fifty eight of us were going to Vietnam and 2 of us were not! I received orders for Vietnam and was allowed 15 days leave to go home before reporting to Oakland, California. I was as well trained and as ready as I could have been to begin my 1 year tour of duty in Vietnam.

Fifteen days passed very quickly and I reported to Oakland (CA) Army Terminal to await flight to Vietnam. The flight took about twelve hours with one stop at Tokyo International Airport (where we were not allowed to leave the plane) and landed at Bien Hoa Airbase in Vietnam. I remember the descent of the plane as it dropped great distances rapidly as not to be a target lingering in the air.

FACTUAL OVERVIEW AND SYNOPSIS

At this point I will give a factual synopsis and overview of my tour of duty in Vietnam and some basic facts to refer to and understand in an effort to make the anecdotal narrative that follows more understandable and easier to comprehend for the reader.

My tour of duty lasted from June, 1968 through June of 1969. A year was the standard time period of duty in Vietnam for the U.S. Army. I served with 2nd platoon, F Troop, 2nd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (11th ACR or 11th Cav). Also known as the Blackhorse Regiment, it was the only independent, completely armored unit in the Vietnam War. It also was a trailblazing outfit sent to Vietnam to determine whether armor could be used effectively in the terrain of Vietnam. The following is the unit patch of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

The Regiment consisted of 3 squadrons, each of which consisted of 3 Troops of approximately thirty Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicles which were modified M-113 Armored Personnel Carriers, 1 tank company of approximately twenty M-48 tanks (90 millimeter main gun), a Howitzer battery consisting of approximately 6 self propelled 155 millimeter artillery vehicles, and approximately 30 helicopters of varying types. The Regiment also had an Air Cavalry Troop for quick troop insertion into hot landing zones via helicopter and attached engineer and medical companies. (all these figures are quite accurate approximations). The commanding officer of the Regiment was a “full bird Colonel”. During my tour of duty we were commanded by Colonel (later Major General) George S. Patton, who was the son of the famous WWII General George S. Patton.Jr.

I served first as a machine gunner (M-60) and then scout driver of an Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicle. This vehicle was an M-113 Personnel Carrier modified as a fighting platform for armored cavalry. It was armed with two mounted M-60 7.62mm machine guns and a.50-caliber heavy machine gun surrounded by an added cupola. Each vehicle also had an M-79 grenade launcher (40mm) that was the assigned weapon of its driver. It was a tracked vehicle that weighed 13 tons (as compared to the 52 ton tanks in the regiment). The ACAV was manned by a track commander, driver, and 2 machine gunners and carried in excess of 12,000 rounds of ammo. A platoon of ACAV’s had the firepower of an infantry company and was considered as one of the deadliest units of the Vietnam War. The term ACAV and “track” were used interchangeably and most of the time we referred to our vehicle as our track. My track number was 24 (meaning one of the 8 vehicles in the 2nd Platoon with a 2 in front of it.

I was trained for the Military Occupational Special (MOS) of 11 Bravo, light weapons infantry. Around 25 % of the people assigned to ACAV’s were 11Bravos. As a machine gunner I was operating in an MOS that I had been trained for. When I became the driver of the vehicle I took on the MOS of 11 Delta, Armored Reconnaissance Scout. I had no military training for operating the vehicle other than climbing in the driver’s hatch and learning on the job. I preferred being vehicle driver to being machine gunner even though it was considered more dangerous. The track commander and gunners rode on top of the vehicle and the driver drove from inside the vehicle making him more vulnerable to injury from land mines, an omnipresent hazard.

Being on an armored vehicle gave us great range to perform a great variety of mission types. Our area of operation (AO) was in the III Corps Tactical Zone (Vietnam was divided into 4 operating corps) which encompassed Saigon. Our provinces were mainly Long Khanh, Binh Long, and Binh Duong. Binh Duong contained the infamous Iron Triangle. We performed a variety of tasks including Search and Destroy missions where we “busted” through the jungle covering an assigned swath trying to find and engage the enemy as

well as posting along the roads to protect convoys from enemy attack. We secured engineers in their Rome Plows as they cleared trees and other vegetation away from roads so enemy ambushes were made less likely.

Some of our search and destroy missions (later referred to as reconnaissance in force (RIF's) consisted of searching jungle areas where B- 52 bombing strikes had been made the night before. We searched for damage to enemy bunker complexes, body counts, straggling prisoners, and dud bombs that we blew in place so the enemy was denied their use as explosives against us.

We also set up dismounted and mounted (on our vehicles) ambush patrols at night to deter and interdict enemy infiltration routes and at times would race to a village early in the morning and surround it so the Vietnamese National Police could go in and search the village for Viet Cong insurgents.

When we engaged the enemy they might be Viet Cong (South Vietnamese Communists or VC) as well as North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars that had infiltrated down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They also could consist of a mixed group where the local VC would guide the Northerners in terrain not familiar to them.

More peaceful efforts consisted of securing areas while South Vietnamese farmers harvested their rice thereby preventing the communists from taking it from them and assistance in Medcaps. Medcaps (medical assistance programs) were when we would surround a village and secure a landing zone where doctors and medics would come in and give medical services to the Vietnamese villagers.

Primarily, our overall mission was to serve as a blocking force to stop attacks on Saigon (the capitol) and the Long Binh-Bien Hoa military complex and act as a reaction force to an attack on these places, as well as others wherever they might occur such as the An Loc, Loc Ninh, and Quan Loi areas near the Cambodian border. We also defended the area of Xuan Loc, the provincial capitol of Long Khan province and home of our Blackhorse base camp. These areas were also known as War Zones C and D.

While serving my tour of duty in Vietnam June 1968-1969 I was awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB), The Vietnam Service Medal w/3 Bronze Service Stars, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, and The Army Commendation Medal. I attained the rank of Specialist 4th Class. Campaigns I was involved in included Counteroffensive Phase V, Counteroffensive Phase VI, and Tet/69 Counteroffensive.

ANECDOTAL STORIES AND REMINISCENCES

On the flight over to Vietnam I had conjured all typed of imagined scenarios of what it would be like when I first arrived. I didn't know if you got off the plane and were tossed a weapon and low crawled immediately or what. It was not like that. We disembarked from the plane and walked to a pavilion with just a roof overhead. Sitting there was a group of G.I.'s that started to cheer when we approached. I later figured out that they were cheering us so much because they knew that they would go home on the plane that just landed with us. I noticed immediately as I stepped off the plane how oppressive the heat was

From Bien Hoa Airbase we were bussed through town (the sights and sounds of an Asian town really caught my attention) to the nearby 90th Replacement Battalion at Long Binh Army complex. I stayed 2 nights here as this was where they figured out where we would be sent. There were two formations per day and they read off lists of names and where to report to go to their future units. If your name was not called you were then assigned to some kind of work detail. Here I was introduced to the detail of human excrement burning as we were directed to go to the latrine (outhouses) and remove the half fifty gallon barrels that served as toilets to a burn point and burn the contents with diesel fuel. What a pungent odor it created!

I also worked on a weed chopping detail and worked up a thirst in the heat. Another acclimation process involved the amount of water I was drinking. I was thirsty most of the time so drank a great deal of water and it was like a swimming pool it had so much chlorine in it. We all eventually got used to needing less water and the chlorine taste.

The afternoon of the second day my name was called and I was told to report for shipment to the 11th ACR which I had never heard of. A group of us met at a point, went back to the airbase, and flew on a rattletrap Caribou transport plane to Blackhorse base camp which was on Highway 2 just south of Xuan Loc. Once there I was processed through 2nd Squadron and sent to F Troop, my home for the next year.

I was issued an M-16 (which received little use because of using other weapons) and spent 7 days in Blackhorse base camp further acclimating to the environment of Vietnam. I also spent time in what was called "dumb-dumb" school which was a synopsis of many of the things I learned in infantry training. One new and interesting lesson concerned snakes which had been captured and put in jars. One was of significant interest, the bamboo viper, also called the step and a half snake because that was how far you got after it bit you.

The day to go to the field and join my troop finally arrived. I went out on a Chinook resupply helicopter to the forward headquarters of F Troop called a Nighttime Defensive Position (NDP). The term can be used interchangeably with Landing Zone (LZ) and Fire Support Base (FSB). Sometimes it was just called the pe-

rimeter also. When I reached the position, which I guessed was somewhere in War Zone D I found that only the 1st and 3rd Platoons were there and the platoon I was going to, the 2nd was elsewhere so I kind of stood around with not much to do.

When the 1st Platoon returned from its mission that day it brought back 2 suspected Vietcong detainees. They were to be sent to the rear in Bien Hoa to S-3 for interrogation. They needed two guards to escort them in the helicopter so I was told I would be riding back in a Huey Slick helicopter with the prisoners. I had never flown in this type helicopter. It only held 4 passengers, 2 door gunners and a pilot. Another G.I. and I sat on the outside of 4 abreast in the seat with the two VC in the middle. The pilot then decided to take a wild ride to scare the the VC and soften them up before interrogation. It was quite a ride for me as well. The doors were open in the chopper (helicopter) and I could lean right over my shoulder and spit outside. The pilot banked the chopper at an angle that made me feel I would fall out. He also went full throttle straight at a tree line and swooped upward at the last minute. The flight back to Bien Hoa was like that the whole fifteen minute trip.

We made it there and dropped the prisoners off and the flight back was quite a bit more serene. This ride made the worst roller coaster I was ever on seem mild mannered but I believe it frightened the enemy more than it did me. I did assume the pilot knew what he was doing.

Back at the NDP they put me on one of the ACAV's manning the perimeter (outer defensive circle) as a machine gunner and things got a little exciting that night as we had some incoming mortar rounds and a small enemy probe of the perimeter that was repelled. One more thing occurred on my learning curve. A tank with a 90 mm main gun was sitting next to us on the perimeter. I was infantry trained and had never heard a tank fire its main gun. We had some incoming enemy mortar rounds come in and the tank fired its main gun and the noise really startled me as I didn't know if it was enemy incoming or our outgoing that made the huge boom. I learned to distinguish these things.

The next day I was helicoptered to a different fire support base and linked up with my platoon to be the second platoon. I was introduced to the other members of my ACAV and was assigned to be right side M-60 machine gunner. The newest guy always gets the right gun because the exhaust from the vehicle is on the right side and it is the "privilege" of the newest guy to get the brunt of diesel exhaust in his face while moving. The left gun also is behind where the driver of the vehicle's head protrudes out of the driver's hatch so the left gunner must be more experienced and disciplined so as not to shoot the driver during action.

We were operating out of a firebase near the village of Tan Binh (which I have also seen named as Cau Dinh) when word was received that there was some enemy activity in the village. We mounted up and charged into the village to see if we could spot the enemy. We did not travel down the road in the village but went right through the crop fields in front of their homes knocking down fences and ruining some crops. Many of the villagers were quite angry but I learned another lesson here. The road probably had land mines planted in it and the enemy was trying to draw us into them. War is hard!

Another day we mine swept the road and posted road security along the sides of it to protect a convoy coming through. All of a sudden there was an explosion along the side of the road. A Vietnamese farmer's water buffalo pulling a cart on the side of the road had stepped on a land mine that obviously was intended for us.

It was also around this village where bullets first came at me. The 1st Infantry Division had troops sharing the NDP at the west end of town with us. They sent out dismounted ambushes to attack enemy troop movements. We were a reaction force that would respond if they needed help. They popped the ambush and we roared to their position and for the first time I heard the sharp bark of the AK-47 (communist bloc) rifle coming at me and saw the tracers coming our direction. This lasted about fifteen minutes and we returned to the NDP perimeter. I guess the ambush had a body count and I remember my platoon Lieutenant saying to me that I had earned the Combat Infantryman's Badge for my first firefight. The fight wasn't much that time.

We spent most of June and July in that area going out many days busting jungle looking for the enemy.

On the 4th of July we had been crashing jungle all day and when evening approached we were out there in the thick of it. We had tanks with us so we decided to set up an NDP right where we were. The tanks drove around in circles knocking down trees to clear 50 meters in front of the perimeter we set up so we had a clear field of fire. Food was then brought in by helicopters for our evening chow (meal).

On my way to the center of the perimeter I saw a group of guys gathered around something and jabbering away. It turned out that there was a huge snake that had been run over by the tanks knocking down the jungle. It was a constrictor of some sort that was about twelve feet long. Its mouth was squashed open and it was huge.

Later on I heard some talk that we were sending out listening posts (LP's) that night. LP's go about

twenty five meters outside the perimeter to detect any enemy forces trying to sneak up on you. The guys were joking around about wondering who had LP that night because “surely there must be more than one snake around!” Well, I had LP that night and the thought of sitting out there on the ground after seeing that snake was not real appealing.

At dusk, 4 of us went out on the LP and settled in for what we figured would be a miserable night. The bad part about LP was if the enemy attacked and we returned fire the guys on the LP might get caught in the crossfire. Add that to thinking about huge snakes and you get a recipe for misery. Luckily (I say this tongue in cheek) about 2 hours into the night we had incoming rockets fired at us and they pulled the LP’s in after that. It was quite an exciting 4th of July for me. The rocket’s red glare erased the chance of the snake’s ugly stare for me. Nobody was injured by the rockets and we had no further contact with the enemy that night.

Sometimes when searching through the jungle we would come across an enemy bunker complex. Occasionally we would have a brief skirmish but most of the time the enemy fled because we had much greater firepower. Their bunker complexes were amazingly constructed in series of tunnels and bunkers.

In late July and August we moved north, up Highway 13 which is also known as Thunder Road for its violent combat reputation. It was about a 6 hour trip to Loc Ninh which is so close to the Cambodian border, there is a feeling you could spit at the North Vietnamese Army across the border in their sanctuaries. We also operated around Quan Loi, and near An Loc at times. We were the cavalry and we termed this area “Indian-Country” because the enemy was very strong and well disciplined here.

Somewhere to the south of Loc Ninh we turned west and went into the Xa Cat Rubber Plantation which was French owned. We were at company size (3 platoons) together as we went through a plantation town. The people were out watching us as we went through and they didn’t appear too friendly. We set up a company size perimeter laagered in rubber trees.

That night all hell broke loose about 3 hrs after dark. The North Vietnamese peppered our position with rocket propelled grenades (RPG’s) and we responded ferociously with the massive firepower we had. This went on and off for about 2 hours and they broke off contact. I had never seen so many RPG’s fired at us at once. Luckily, we only had 3 or 4 wounded and later Military Intelligence said we got about forty of them. My job during the firefight was to fire the M-60 machine gun and simultaneously keep the track commander supplied with.50 caliber machine gun ammunition. As he ran out I would hand him up another can fetched from down in the ACAV.

The next morning we traveled back through the village. We had had our wounded “dusted off” (evacuated by helicopter) and as we went through the village my track commander (T.C.) remarked to me “look at Papasan over there.” He was an old guy and my T.C. said he was taking a body count. He had been out there the night before and he was there in the morning to see how many casualties our number was reduced by.

We moved up further north to Loc Ninh and set up by an airstrip near a Special Forces camp. The next morning we went out on patrol north of Loc Ninh and I was in store for another new experience. I was on vehicle F-24 traveling right behind the platoon leader’s track F-26. All of a sudden I heard a loud explosion and looked forward to see the crew of F-26 flying around in slow motion it appeared as they had hit a land mine. Gun shields were spinning around and guys were bouncing off each other. Luckily the crew sustained only minor injuries but I would see our vehicles hit land mines 5 more times in the future during my tour of duty. Our platoon leader did hurt his knee pretty severely and they sent him back to the rear where he argued successfully with them to not perform knee surgery.

We (2nd Platoon) went back to the area near where we had been RPG’d earlier and the 1st and 3rd Platoons got in a 3 day running battle with the North Vietnamese where we took quite a few casualties. We gave a lot more casualties than we took and our Company Commander won the Distinguished Service Cross for actions those three days. Those of us in 2nd Platoon wanted to rush to their assistance but we were ordered to stay put because it was thought something big was about to happen near us. It didn’t come to pass. I think it was because us being there and the other 2 platoons fighting so valiantly made the enemy alter its plans.

An armored unit is comprised of machines and these machines need “stand down” time to make repairs and have routine maintenance so we took a 2 day trek back to our Blackhorse base camp in Long Khan Province. Our base camp was a pretty secure area so we were able to sleep at night without pulling any guard and work on the vehicles during the day to get them into shape.

October through early December we pulled missions out of base camp at Blackhorse. One type of mission was to post road security for convoys traveling on Highway 1. To get to Highway 1 we had to travel about 5 miles on Highway 2 to the town of Xuan Loc. The road was usually mine swept before we traveled on it but sometimes we couldn’t wait and we would “thunder run” it without it being mine swept. That meant we would drive our vehicles absolutely as fast as possible down the road. The theory was that if you went fast

enough the vehicle would be past the mine before it blew up from detonation. We never detonated a mine doing this.

One day upon returning from road security one of our vehicles stopped because a mine was spotted. This was after the road had been swept and trafficked all day. The enemy had placed a land mine in a puddle of water wrapped in a poncho so mine detectors would not spot it. The puddle evaporated during the day and the ponchoed mine became visible. Luckily nobody had run over it causing detonation.

One night I was on a dismounted ambush patrol south down Highway 2 toward the town of Cam My. This meant that we walked about 5 kilometers down the road and set up on a hill overlooking a creek culvert that had been mined previously and we hoped to prevent mining that night by the enemy. 8 of us set up in a small circle to defend and place Claymore mines out to protect our position. The mines are command detonated, and blow steel ball bearings toward the enemy if they tried to attack.

About an hour after dark there was a huge explosion. We figured the enemy had spotted us and our squad leader got on the radio for the reaction force tanks to come down and help us. After a pause, one guy sheepishly said “I think I accidentally leaned on the detonator and set off my claymore.” We were not nor did we come under attack that night. It was funny after it was all over! As a point of information, during these ambushes was one of the rare occasions for the M-16 to be my primary weapon

Being near enough to Bien Hoa Airbase we were at the ready at all times to react if the base came under attack. A couple of times Command was proactive and had us come down to the Army base next to the airbase to deter an attack. One time we actually sat right on the perimeter road by the runways to defend Bien Hoa. This was easy duty as there were numerous rows of concertina barbed wire surrounding the base. There were huge searchlights on all night pointing outward and even guard dogs with handlers around the perimeter. The Air Force guys even came around with coffee and burgers to give us snacks. This was far superior to setting up in the boondocks and the jungle.

Sadly, during this time period on September 26, 1968 my platoon incurred its single worst day of my tour as we lost 3 men KIA to an estimated two hundred fifty pound bomb that had been made into a land mine. We were patrolling off Highway 2 north of Xuan Loc when the ACAV hit this mine. This was absolutely the most devastating land mine I ever witnessed

The remainder of my combat duty entailed a return for the next 4 months to the area I first operated in when I went to the field. That would be in War Zone D, Binh Duong Province stretching in a fifty mile wide corridor between Ben Cat and Phouc Vinh. Fires support bases that we operated out of were Bandit Hill (near Tan Binh) and FSB Holiday Inn (near Binh My).

General Creighton Abrams had replaced General William Westmoreland as commander in Vietnam and the tactics we began to employ showed that. Abrams favored small group tactics and a constant small group interdiction presence around the countryside as opposed to Westmoreland’s massive multi-unit offensive search and destroy missions.

We began to operate in smaller platoon sized operations including more night ambushes using our vehicles. For example, at Holiday Inn we would send out 8 vehicles around dusk and drop off four at an ambush point. The remaining 4 would return to the FSB and because of the darkness and noise the enemy was not supposed to know where we were.

One night they did know where we were and we spotted a small group of them, with our night vision starlight scopes, maneuvering in our direction. We had radios in our vehicles and were in contact with our mortar section back at Holiday Inn. We could call mortars in on the enemy or most of the time wait for the enemy to get close enough and have mortars send an illumination round in the sky to light up the area and that would signal us to open fire popping the ambush. This time we did that as the Platoon Sergeant felt they were close enough. We exchanged some rounds with them and contact broke off. The next morning we began to search for results which were difficult to confirm because they usually dragged their dead and wounded away.

We moved no more than ten meters and a shout went out “we got one here.” An enemy soldier had died from wounds that close to us. Upon examination we found that he had a Chicom (Chinese Communist) anti-tank grenade on him. He had intended to sneak up and toss it among our vehicles.

Another time we set up a platoon sized mounted ambush near a stream bed. We spotted enemy movement on the other side of the stream and we spread the word that the ambush should not be popped until they crossed the stream to our side. Somebody got over-anxious and sent for the mortar illumination round too early. We opened up and the enemy ducked into the stream bed. We decided to call in Cobra Helicopter gunships, whose mini-guns fired five thousand rounds a minute to rake over the stream bed. The gunships got too far to the right and the rounds started coming down on us. We buttoned our vehicles up and nobody got hurt but this ambush was not successful. The sound of five thousand rounds of 7.62 mm rounds coming through the air down on you is a mighty scary sound.

During this time period we also were able to locate and confiscate enemy rice caches. By seizing these food supplies, we hindered the enemy's ability to pursue the war effort. The amount we found and confiscated over time must have numbered in the tons. Usually they would be found in what were called "spider holes" located on infiltration routes. I am sure the effectiveness of this activity was mitigated to a small degree by the fact that when we did not destroy the rice we gave it to local villagers. An educated guess is that, in our absence, the Vietcong would visit the village and violently repossess what we had given the villagers. It seemed we put in a lot of work and the rice moved around in a continuous circle but the destruction of food in a poor land would lead to moral questions just as well.

On a typical night in the field we would be on our ACAV laagered into some type of perimeter. Since we had 4 to a crew, night guard or watch would be divided into 2 hours apiece. The person pulling guard at the time would sit in the cupola behind the.50 caliber machine gun and watch for enemy movement. Every hour the command track would radio around to each vehicle for a sit rep (situation report) and usually the reply was "negative sit rep". If it was raining a poncho was placed over the top of the cupola and while pulling guard your head popped out of the hood of the poncho. When your 2 hours ended the next guy would be awakened and it would be your turn to sleep inside the ACAV on built up floor with pads over rows of.50 caliber ammunition cans.

Basically the maximum amount of sleep you would get would be 6 hours if nothing happened. Crashing jungle or being on the move for days on end getting at best the 6 hours of sleep I described every night became very exhausting.

Conditions during war can be very difficult. Much of the time we were hot, dirty, hungry, and tired. During monsoon season, the worst of which was August and September, we were wet all the time. Sometimes we were so desperate to be dry we would place our clothes over the diesel exhaust of the vehicle to dry them out. They smelled but we were dry.

To paraphrase Sherman though, war is not all hell. We had changes of clothes we took with us and sometimes local Vietnamese would wash our clothes for a charge. We carried water cans (about five, 5 gallon type) on our vehicles so we dumped Kool-Aid in the cans to kill the chlorine taste. We had mermite (insulated) cans that would hold ice that was brought out along with pop when we could get our hands on these items. We received hot meals shipped out to the field by helicopter and usually had to only eat C-rations (canned meals) twice at day at the most. Soldiers received "care packages" with goodies from home and we all shared them when we received them.

We also had reasonable chance to take showers every 3 or 4 days. We had water on the vehicle and we had a shower bag that we rigged with an engineer stake for a shower. You poured about 2 gallons of water in the bag, wet yourself lightly, soaped your self lightly, and rinsed off. It worked amazingly well.

A minority of our time was spent in actual combat and we did have stand down time that allowed us to recharge our batteries. In our home Blackhorse base camp we had wooden buildings to sleep in and a relatively comfortable government issued bed. There was a Post Exchange (PX) that reminded me of a country story and a snack bar. There were clubs (bars) where we could kick back and blow off steam at night. Bigger base camps we visited even had bigger PX's, clubs, and snack bars. Bien Hoa Airbase had a swimming pool and it was rumored that Long Binh Army base was to have a pool and running water soon. I never was able to use a pool.

While in base camp soldiers also had a chance to catch up on letter writing. Sometimes it was difficult to write letters while in the field. Everybody, however, loved receiving mail from home. Mail call was a highlight of the day and mail came regularly to the field. We referred to it as morale call. I had newspapers from home sent to me by my family. The news was about 5 days old but it kept me in touch.

Base camp had an almost normal mess hall where we ate our meals and we had showers that were enclosed and this allowed showering every day. The showers had barrels on top and a water truck would come by and fill them up every day. Being in the sun the water barrels warmed up and gave us lukewarm water for showers daily.

I helped build the wooden boardwalk to the shower. We took showers with flip flops on our feet but it had become very annoying to leave the shower and return back to your barracks having red soil all over you. The soil in much of Vietnam was red clay and we slugged through red mud in the wet season and were plagued with red dust constantly during the dry season.

In the field we made do however with bodily functions but in our base camp we had a latrine (what would be called an outhouse in the states) replete with the fifty gallon barrels cut in half serving as receptacles of waste. It might seems gross to many but it was a pretty efficient operation burning it because it limited the amount of flies that accumulated and also the water table was very high in Vietnam as I understand it. Eventually the government hired Vietnamese civilians to take care of this job. I never thought trained combat

soldiers should waste their time doing these things anyway.

In addition to our time in rear areas, every individual was entitled to an out of country Rest and Recuperation (R&R). I chose to go to Australia and spent 7 days there in Sydney. It was a great experience and to this day it amazes me that at twenty years of age I was on a continent where I didn't know anybody. I had a great time spending $500 in 7 days there. That was about two months' pay at the time.

The time finally came and my year's tour of duty was coming to an end. I checked all my gear in at supply in Blackhorse base camp and said all my goodbyes and made "keep in touch" promises with many people and headed back to Long Binh to process out of country.

I spent a night in the same replacement depot (in a different area) that I had processed in at. Next it was over to the airport to sit and wait for the plane to arrive that we would be traveling home in. Soon I saw some replacement guys walking up to the pavilion/airport where I had approached a year ago. We didn't cheer when the guys walked up but anxiously waited to be boarded on the plane. We finally boarded and as we sat on the runway there was a tension among us that was highly palpable. The plane finally taxied and lifted off. After lift off a stewardess came over the speaker and said "You're on your way home." At this point the whole plane exploded with thunderous cheering. It was a feeling I will never forget. We all settled down rapidly with many going to sleep on the plane.

I flew to Oakland, having stopped at Yokata Airbase in Japan, processed out and went to San Francisco airport. I made it there too late for a flight out that night but caught an early morning flight to O'Hare in Chicago. I had called my family and my brother and mother met me at O'Hare and drove me home. When we turned into the driveway at my home I saw in the window: Welcome HOME Jim, from Vietnam.

"Welcome Home"- these words have been experienced by many soldiers coming home from many wars and they are indeed music to the ears of the receiver.

It is my belief that the War in Vietnam was part of the overall Cold War and we won the Cold War. I also state emphatically that militarily we won our portion of the war even though our military success was undermined by later political events as South Vietnam fell to the communists invading from the North. This occurred 2 years after we had removed all of our combat troops.

Friendships and bonding occurred among our troops and I keep in contact with my comrades from Vietnam to the present. I am a member of the 11th Armored Cavalry's Veterans of Vietnam and Cambodia and we have annual reunions at various cities around the country. Over a thousand people usually attend these reunions and the bond remains strong with this "Band of Brothers" and will remain until the last of us old soldiers "fade away."

I hope this writing, while not a diary, will give readers in the future a sense of the Vietnam experience as experienced by a participant in that conflict that occurred in a past time and far away place, "Lest We Forget."

I am proud to have served my country in the Vietnam War!

They Called Me "Doc"
By Jim McCloughan

There are as many stories as there are veterans. A story begins at home and that is where mine takes root. I was raised in the rural area of Bangor, Michigan, the middle son of three boys (Mike, Tom, & me) born to blue collar workers. My parents, Oliver and Margarette infused us with family values, a strong work ethic. They worked just 7 miles west of our home, in South Haven, on the coast of Lake Michigan. We grew strong on home-cooked meals made from home-grown plants and animals. My parents modeled dedication and perseverance for us. At a young age, we started working and saving, and knew the importance of giving our best in everything.

My elementary education was at a one room country school. Next came Bangor Junior and Senior High school, and Olivet College for my undergraduate BA degree. Through each stage, I became progressively passionate about sports and vocal music. These have been my major inspiration and motivation. The mental and physical disciplines learned from athletics, especially football and wrestling, became a life saving force behind my survival in Vietnam.

My story could have been very different had I been able to pursue my first dream to be a Michigan State Policeman, but I was too short (5' 2") and did not fit the then-minimum 6' requirement. My second dream was to attend the Naval Academy at Annapolis, but being red-green color blind eliminated me from becoming

a cadet. My third dream was to be a teacher and coach and I was ready to start that career right after graduation from Olivet College in 1968. I believed I was on my way to fulfilling my dreams.

I found a summer job to pay the bills, and began working with the wrestling team at South Haven High School, where I signed a contract to teach and coach in the fall. But soon my dream would be detoured. I received a letter from my draft board and in July reported to Detroit to take a physical exam for the military. Even letters from the administration at South Haven Public Schools, expressing their need for me, did not prevent me from being drafted into the U.S. Army. I was inducted on August 29, 1968 for a two year hitch as a GI with my uncle—Uncle Sam!

After basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky and advanced medical training at Fort Sam Houston, in San Antonio Texas, I was off to Vietnam as a combat medic. I came in-country in Cam Ranh Bay, took a brief orientation course, then was sent to Landing Zone (LZ) Center where I would be assigned to company C, 3/21 battalion, of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade (LIB), attached to the 23rd Infantry—Americal Division. Our company was known as the Charlie Tigers.

I was responsible for all the 2nd platoon's medical needs. It was more than a full time job. The non-combat conditions became as important and as consuming as treating battle wounds. There was the administering of daily medications against malaria, sprains & strains, insect bites, leaches, impetigo, intestinal disorders, headaches, heat exhaustion or stroke, foot problems, etc. Every time the company stopped for a rest while marching to our next location, I was tending to medical needs—no rest for the medic. One of the most unusual cases was a soldier who was bit by a rat and required 14 daily shots for rabies, subcutaneously in his stomach. Syringes were flown in each day by helicopter and I administered the injections, moving in a clock-like pattern to maintain the count.

Being called "doc" gave me a sense of pride as I gained respect from my brothers in arms. After the first encounter with the enemy, I learned why my job was so important. When they screamed "doc" or "medic," it was my signal to come running no matter what the circumstances. It meant I would be needed for any plethora of wounds caused by shrapnel or bullets: traumatic head injuries; severe bleeding from extremities, body, or head; sucking chest wounds; damage to internal organs; broken bones; amputations; etc. It was also in this first firefight that I would experience what it was like to kill another human being, and the guilt that it carried.

There was no escaping the dangers of the kill zone for the combat medic. It was obvious that when I was called to a location there was already a wounded or dead comrade, so the medic could also be in the enemy's sights. I moved quickly, but without hurrying. Keeping my cool, I focused on the needs of my brother. Immediately assessing each situation, I acted accordingly; could I work on the wounded where he'd fallen or get him to a safer place for us both? I would do everything possible to keep him comfortable and alive. When battles resulted in numerous casualties, it was up to the medic to prioritize which wounded in action (WIA) would get attention first. Those who were killed in action (KIA) would be brought to a secure area if possible and bagged or covered later. Fire fights were quite chaotic and it was up to doc to stay calm and get to as many individuals as possible. A MedEvac helicopter would be called, the number of ambulatory and litter patients reported, and these men would be loaded on the chopper quickly, with the neediest going first.

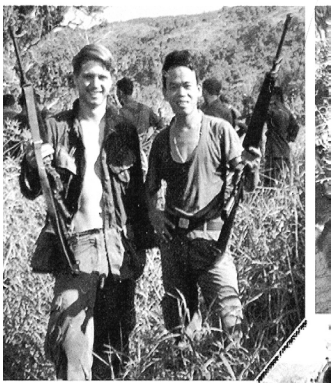
The battle may have been over, but the smell of death lingered. Now was the time to evaluate what had just happened and how I had handled the situation. It was difficult to go over everything in my mind again, but necessary for improvements, to prepare for the ensuing chaos of war. It was during these times, and many times since my return home, that the pleas and cries of the wounded and dying have rung in my ears. The fear and pain on their faces penetrated my psyche. I used confidence and compassion to ease the suffering, assuring them it would be okay. Even for the dying, the next world would be better than the one they were in. These emotional and psychological burdens, I could not delegate to another soldier. It was the combat medic's job.

The Charlie Tigers were often in contact with the Viet Cong (VC) and/or North Vietnamese Army (NVA). However, I was involved in two major combat experiences with my buddies that I have never forgotten. They are the source of repeated nightmares, plus post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Because of these horrendous conflicts life has, and never will be, the same again for me.

May 13, 1969 the "Charlie Tigers" began a combat assault (CA) into Tam Ky in Quang Tin near Don Qae. It was evident this was not one of those usual missions. A helicopter was shot down as the first waves of soldiers were dropped, and a squad was sent out to protect the pilots and gunners until another copter arrived to airlift them out. Then the downed vehicle was blown up so the enemy could not access anything on it. We had some contact with the enemy during that day. In the early evening, the company commander ordered my platoon to go on a search and clear mission. All we knew at this point was that the NVA had taken over the hill, visible to us in the distance. We made our way single file across an open rice paddy, into an area with some foliage. As I glanced in the direction of the hill, I saw some NVA carrying objects, and unwinding

a spool. By this time some of the platoon had made contact with the enemy and were exchanging gun fire. I attended to a soldier with minor wounds then saw a trench left over from the war with the French and quickly got into it. I handed my weapon to another soldier to free both my hands for attending the wounded. I looked up over the top of the trench and saw the NVA descending the slopes. It looked like ants swarming from their nest. Sgt. Hatton, a machine gunner, was in the trench with me and I felt a little better because he had covered me before, in many tough situations. I looked up and saw helicopter gunships firing overhead, so I knew the enemy was close. I also hoped the pilots knew our location, but I was almost certain that they had not a clue.

I heard the call, "Medic" from an opening, about 15 yards from us. Getting a bead on the fallen soldiers, I leaped out of the trench line, and low-crawled towards the men as Sgt. Hatton sprayed the tree line beyond with M60 machine gun missiles. I could hear and see enemy bullets and satchel charges hitting the ground around us. Suddenly I felt a sting in my leg. But my concern was getting these guys back to the trench. It appeared that they were frozen with fear, so I coaxed them and aided them back to the ditch. As we settled into what felt like a safe haven, I looked up and two NVA soldiers, within 5 yards, were coming toward us. I looked one straight in the eye as he wielded his AK47 toward me. Unarmed, I yelled, "Let's get out of here," and began running. I could hear them shooting at us and saw bullets hit the ground to my right. I would later discover the others were not as fortunate as me. One would be KIA and the other, Larry Aiken, an African-American would be missing in action (MIA). My athleticism had just saved my life. I gained enough time between the NVA and me to help a few more WIAs as I made my way back to the rest of the company. We were in a full blown, hand-to-hand combat, and considerably outnumbered. Suddenly there was an eerie silence. I could hear the soft rustle of the grass.



We were able to load the wounded on a chopper and set-up a makeshift perimeter. That night, I applied my training in the treatment of a sucking chest wound. I put plastic over the holes in his chest and covered it with pressure bandages to keep the lungs from collapsing, but was concerned about the lungs filling with blood. He could drown in his own blood. To make Francis Patton more comfortable, I sat him up so he could breathe better. Despite every effort, he could not hold on until the helicopter delivered him to a hospital where they could have administered suction. Wounded during one of my excursions into the kill zone, I now patched up myself. I told Captain Carrier that I was not leaving on the MedEvac because the company would need me. My earlier observation from the trench gave me the knowledge we were outnumbered at least 5 to 1.

The next day, May 14, we had heavy casualties as we were attacked by the overpowering NVA. I went out into the kill zone many times that afternoon and evening and was hit again with non-life-threatening shrapnel. It never slowed me down; by now the adrenaline was really flowing. One of our guys had a gunshot wound to the stomach which I bandaged and kept moist all night so his intestines would not dry out. Thankfully, he was alive and well when I put him on a chopper the next morning.

There were limited fighting men remaining when the sun went down, but we stood our ground like tigers backed into a corner. Red and yellow flashes streamed over our perimeter. I noticed it was coming from a nearby tree where a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launcher was firing at us. It was somewhat a blessing he was so close, because those weapons are made for longer distances. However, if he continued to zero in, one hit could blow many of us away. So I pulled a pin on a grenade and pitched it in his direction. I saw him step out as the grenade landed and exploded. The weapon's muzzle went skyward. The next morning we found him lying on his back - dead, with a finger on the trigger and RPG ready to fire. He had gone through some of the backpacks we left behind during our retreat to a safer area, so I checked to see if any of my personal belongings were gone.

We fought off and on all night long and the Charlie Tigers would have been wiped out had it not been for some very brave support units. As darkness fell we were running helplessly low on ammunition, so we called for more. But as the helicopter approached, he came under intense ground fire, pelted with bullets, putting at least 20 holes in his chopper. I placed a probe light in an open area identifying our position, and the ammo was thrown out from about 20-30 feet above. Our second savior was an AC-119 Shadow that dropped flares, lighting-up the enemy's position like a football stadium, leveling the playing field a little. Those gooks were an illuminated target, frozen in stride, and we opened fire. Also from above, a Spooky, capable of unleashing 6,000 rounds per minute, saved our butts.

That night I had a personal conversation with God. I offered a deal: if he would get me out of that hell-on-earth, I would be the best teacher and coach I was capable of being. I also remembered that as a boy, my dad and I did not say "I love you" to each other. We knew we loved each other, but males did not say those

words to one another. I just wanted to get home and tell my dad face to face, "I love you." Later, it became our greeting and parting words. I would teach my children to exchange those all important words too, and they have done the same with my grandchildren. Coming so close to death made me realize the most important thing in life is to say the three simple words.

On the morning of May 15, I was busy with the WIAs and KIAs, scurrying from one to another. By this time, I had been up two days and two nights, fighting for survival and dealing with mass casualties. Late in the morning, the last I remember was moving toward a down soldier. I collapsed and awoke in an aid station with IVs in both my arms. I had suffered heat exhaustion from the depletion of fluids. My pack had been sent from Tam Ky to our home base at LZ Center that morning. Dr. Foster, chief of the battalion medics, assumed I was dead when only my pack arrived. He was clearly relieved when I got off a chopper at LZ Center later that day.

Months later, I was told by my platoon leader, Lt. Randy Clark, that he had recommended me for the Distinguished Service Cross for my heroism during the battle in Tam Ky. He said he was informed that PFCs (my rank at that time) didn't get the DSC and the recommendation was thrown in a wastebasket. He resubmitted it as the Bronze Star, which I eventually received.

Miraculously, I again escaped death on June 11, 1969. LZ East had been probed by the enemy for some time, so companies from the 196th Battalion sent a few men periodically to help man the perimeter bunkers at night. The Charlie Tigers were asked to send a squad for that evening. I was the company's head medic, so I volunteered to be a part of the group. We humped with light gear to LZ East, I settled into a bunker with the medics, and spent the afternoon talking and sharing our hometown stories. But as darkness set in, all hell broke loose.

Clark stated, "McCloughan braved enemy fire and sustained several casualties. With complete disregard for personal safety.. his timely and courageous actions were instrumental in saving lives. McCloughan's personal heroism, professional competence and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service." I have always felt that I was discriminated against as a PFC. My actions as a combat medic warranted the DSC, but I was denied the recognition because of my rank. However, what cannot be taken from me is the peace of mind that I saved a lot of lives those two days.

The NVA began to shell the LZ with RPGs and mortars. Almost immediately the call came for a medic at the bottom of the hill. I took off rapidly in a low profile down the hill toward the bunker. The ground shook from the explosions and I was afraid I'd be a casualty. A bunker had taken a direct hit so there was no way to get to anyone inside. I could hear the whistle of the missiles traveling downward and now my fear accelerated as I headed back to the uncertain security of my bunker. We were saved by artillery and air support, which bombarded the enemy until they were driven away. As suddenly as it had begun, it ended. Again the ominous silence loomed.

When daylight came, it revealed the devastation and human loss. I patched up those who were more fortunate than the men I found blown to pieces. I was thankful for a couple of comrades who assisted me as I put the mangled bodies in bags. The horror on one of the faces has been etched in my memory. The fright on his face freeze-framed what we had all been through the night before. Another soldier appeared to have taken a direct hit from an RPG because his lower extremities were scattered. I collected the pieces to be put into his body bag and wept silently. I wished this did not have to be my responsibility. My only consolation was in knowing this would allow the patriot to be sent home to his family and friends.

In late July 1969, Larry Aiken, MIA since May in Tam Ky, would be found by another unit of the Americal Division. He was flown to the 91st Evacuation Hospital in Chu Lai, but was in a coma and had lost an extreme amount of weight during his captivity. Since he was in my platoon and I knew him personally. I, along with Cpt. Carrier and Lt. Gordon, was flown in to make a positive ID. My heart sunk when I first saw him. It was evident that he had endured inhuman pain and suffering at the hands of the enemy. I told the medical personnel it was Larry, but wished that it had not been true.

I was driven by Jeep to division headquarters to sign some papers at the casualty branch. CW3 J. P. Ramono commanded the office and informed me that a security check had been performed on me. He was impressed that I had a BA degree and offered me a job at the 91st Evacuation Hospital. I told him I would have to check with my commander at Charlie Company. He also discovered I was the recipient of two Purple Hearts and told me the unwritten policy was to take combat medics out of the field after receiving multiple wounds because of the danger in the nature of their job.

With permission from Cpt. Ernie "Outlaw" Carrier I was transferred to the 91st Evac and became the

liaison for the Americal division at that hospital. It was difficult to say goodbye to the men of Charlie Company. This would prove to be a good move for me.

I reported all incoming WIAs and KIAs from any unit in the division to the Casualty Branch and Red Cross. I developed a user-friendly system for those who visited the hospital, making it easy to find their wounded or sick soldier. It was a 24/7 job, but the safety of the rear area was worth it. I helped unload patients from incoming dust-offs, assisted in the emergency room, and recorded information. I created a bulletin board with patient's names, ward, and the bed number, as well as an alphabetized card catalog with information I obtained from talking with them. Teaming with the hospital administrators, doctors, nurses, and aids was gratifying. My prompt, accurate reporting to headquarters was essential, so the US Army could notify the soldiers' families back home.

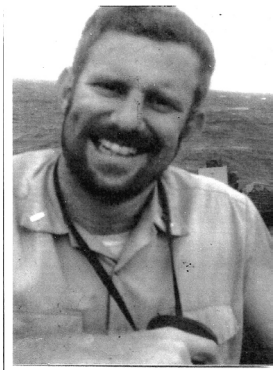
It was satisfying to view the whole picture of what happened to the wounded and deceased soldiers I had been treating in the field. To observe the excellent care these men were getting from the best professionals the Army could find, made me proud to be a part of the medical corp. I came in contact with some top brass as they visited these heroes, and found out the officers were very human, with burdensome responsibilities. My work was recognized by my superiors with a promotion to Sp. 5, and awarding of the Bronze Star for Meritorious Service. But most importantly, my liaison position provided me with the opportunity to meet and make friends with outstanding men and women who I will always hold dear to my heart.

I ended my tour of duty on March 7, 1970 and arrived in Seattle Washington to kiss the sweet ground of my homeland. I finished my service time at Fort Ord, California. June 4, 1970 marked my discharge and the end of 2 years that would shape my patriotic belief in America. Unlike 58,000 who never got the chance, I would finally complete my deal with the Lord and enjoy four decades as a teacher and coach at South Haven Public Schools. I was able to tell my dad, over and over, how much I loved him before his passing in 1991. I earned a MA in counseling and personnel from the Psychology Department at Western Michigan University, and have become a life-long learner. I am blessed with 2 sons, 1 daughter, and 1 stepdaughter (Jamie, Matt, Kami, Kara), plus 6 grandchildren. My wonderful wife and soul mate, Cheri, is my cherished companion, best friend, and is loved by all who know her.

"The world is made up of stories, not atoms." Thanks to my Band of Brothers who helped me survive my journey through the rice paddies, jungles, mountains, and valleys of Vietnam, I am still here to continue my story. I shall forever remember my brushes with death and give thanks for life's redemption.

Don Oderkirk
Commander USNR [RET]

Veterans Vietnam Restoration Project



Thirty four years later, in September 2002, I returned to Vietnam by flying into Hanoi for a three-week work project with five other Vietnam Veteran's and two spouses. We were part of a group called Veterans Vietnam Restoration Project (VVRP) who has sent I8 teams—one or two teams per year—to Vietnam to help build houses, clinics and schools for the Vietnamese people. Five days were spent sightseeing in beautiful Hanoi, undamaged in the war, including a day on beautiful Ha Long Bay. My first night in a hotel in Hanoi; I looked out the window and saw a new 20 story building that had a big sign on the roof, "PRUDENTAL." We then spent ten days in Dong Ha in Quang Tri Province an area where much of the heaviest fighting took place during which the Vietnamese refer to as "The American War!"

We spent a few hours working on each of the ten houses funded by VVRP for disabled NVA soldiers; then a few hours of a feast put on by the recipients of the new house, with rice wine toasts and games of arm wrestling with the men and jacks with the children. We also visited and donated money for a new kitchen and computer lab for a social care center, housing 20 orphans and 20 homeless elderly. Several interpreters were always with us and most of the recipient's children or grandchildren spoke some English.

The next few days were spent visiting the former combat sites of Khe Sanh, Rockpile, Dai Do, Quang Tri Citadel and the Imperial City of Hue, accompanied by one Marine and two Army veterans who had served in this area in 1968 This trip was therapeutic for several of our team members, since they had lost comrades in Vietnam. One, a former Army helicopter pilot had two of his friends shot down on a mission over the demilitarized zone (DMZ) that formerly divided North and South Vietnam. Their bodies were never recovered. One of the houses we helped build was for a grandmother who had been an anti-aircraft gunner in the same area at the same time. She had lost a husband and a young son in the "American War."

If you look on the website for “VVRP’ and click on “Journeying with the VVRP” you can read this emotional article by Charles Burton, Jr. upon coming home.

September 26 found me back in Da Nang, after eighteen days of work and travel down Highway 1 from Hanoi. As I walked upon the sandy spit of land where the Han River empties into the Bay of Da Nang, I recognize the muddy river water mixing with the clear water of the South China Sea, Monkey Mountain across the river and Marble Mountains upriver. I saw no hand powered sampans, but many larger sampans with noisy one cylinder engines plying the harbor.

On our trip back, at a banquet held at one of the houses we built, this guy (named Charlie Burton started talking to the woman who admitted she was an anti-aircraft gunner at the DMZ during the same period when Charlie’s co-pilot was shot. This was quite an emotional experience, not just for Charlie and the woman, but for all of us. To see Charlie crying and hugging this withered old lady who was an anti-aircraft gunner was quite an experience. It’s something to see a reunion of combatants, people who were once fighting each other nearly 40 years ago, embracing and sharing a meal together.

The city of Da Nang was undamaged during the war, the streets were clean and very busy, but I recognize only the large Catholic Church—about 10 percent of Vietnamese are Catholic due to the nearly 100 years France occupied Vietnam—along the main street. I encounter aggressive street vendors selling postcards, jewelry and cycle or pedicab rides.

Lots of cyber cafes where I caught up on my e-mail and news at a cost of $2 per hour. The majority of the tourists appear to be European with French being the most common language overheard. The Vietnamese refer to the French Indo China War of 1950-54 as the “French War.”

The Da Nang Airport Terminal did look familiar and this huge airport [once one of the world’s busiest] now has eight outbound flights per day. I caught the 9a.m. Vietnam Airlines flight to Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, then a noon flight to Hong Kong and I arrive in San Francisco 20 actual hours after leaving Da Nang. I spent two days at Travis Air Force Base north of San Francisco recovering from jet lag. The next day I drove out to Coloma, California; AKA Sutters Mill; where Gold was discovered in 1848. Coloma, Michigan is several times larger than Coloma, California!

In pondering what all this means; I feel I have satisfied my curiosity in seeing a controversial part of the world on two different occasions, and I do not need to rely on someone else’s views or opinions. The Vietnamese have largely put four wars behind them in the last 65 years; Japanese (1940-45), French (1950-54), American (1965-75) and Chinese 1979. The USA became involved in what I consider a civil war; and even in our country some hard feelings remain 140 years after our own civil war. Time does heal all wounds, and what scars may remain from Vietnam are largely of our own making. We must not forget the sacrifices made by our 58,000 servicemen listed on the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C. They did their duty and paid the ultimate price. Eight young men from Coloma, Michigan, out of forty seven for Berrien County died in Vietnam; indicating to me that small towns paid a heavy price during this war.

Senator John McCain, in his book, “Worth The Fighting For: A Memoir”, has a paragraph that summarizes my feelings:

“In America, our rights come before our duties. We are a free people, and among our freedoms is the liberty to not sacrifice for our birthright. Yet those who claim their liberty but not their duty to the civilization that ensures it lives a half-life, having indulged their self-interest at the cost of their self-respect. The richest man or woman, the most successful and celebrated Americans, possess nothing of importance if their lives have no greater object than themselves. They may be masters of their fate, but what a poor destiny it is that claims no higher cause than wealth and fame.”

I remain proud of my military service, and I remind the reader that service is the key word. I found it very rewarding to talk with and embrace former enemy soldiers with a mutual respect that only former combatants can understand. I must also point out that South Vietnam collapsed in April 1975 to a huge invasion from North Vietnam two years after our US military was withdrawn in accordance with the Paris Peace Accord signed in January 1973. While this was a clear violation of the Paris Peace Accord; the speed of the North Vietnamese invasion, our county not being too keen on getting re-involved and the Watergate Hearings holding sway in Washington, D.C.; we ignored the South Vietnamese request for military help.

I have great hope and enthusiasm for the Vietnamese people, who are very hard-working, have the start of a booming economy; and I can even envision our two countries becoming allies in the future. One of the internet cafes that I frequented was owned by a former South Vietnamese Marine who predicted the US and Vietnam will someday become allies against China, who is Vietnam’s long time enemy. He quoted, “Your enemies’ neighbor is your best friend.” There is some irony in that our mortal enemies of sixty plus years ago, Japan and Germany, with our help at the end of the Second World War; have economies that rival ours, and

perhaps that may someday happen with Vietnam.

Don Oderkirk is a Retired Navy Commander whose service included 5 years of active duty and 16 years in the US Naval Reserve.

Thank God for Dial-a-Bomb and other stories
By James C. Perso

Da Nang, RVN, 1968-69
Captain James C. Perso - Pilot
Captain Don E. Diederich – Bombardier/Navigator

Jim Perso was commissioned via NROTC in 1964; he attended the basic school and Flight Training. He flew with VMA (AW)-224, VMA (AW)-242 and as an Instructor in VMAT (AW)-202 and MAWTUant (Marine Air Weapons Training Unit– Atlantic). He left the Marine Corps in 1971.

Thank God for Dial-a-Bomb

The human engineering of the A6 was good. Items that were the pilot's concern were on the left side of the instrument panel or on the left console. Items that were the B/N's concern were on the right side of the instrument panel or on the right console. Those things that both the pilot and the B/N needed were in the center of the instrument panel or on the center console. Radios, for example, were on the center console. All of the armament panels were in the center of the instrument panel except for the Multiple Release Switch, which was located adjacent to the B/N's right knee. It allowed the B/N to select the number of bombs to release. It would select Off, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 18, 24, or 30 pulses to release the selected number of bombs. We called it the Dial-a-Bomb switch.

Don and I met in VMA (AW)-224, where we trained together. We went overseas about the same time and joined VMA (AW)-242. We teamed up, flew 116 missions together and were roommates—a good combination when you return from the same night mission, you do not stumble around in the dark and wake your roommate.

On several missions, both of us got scared; but on one mission, I scared Don. In the fall of 1968, we had a night mission in Route Package One (the southern 60 miles of North Vietnam). Our ordnance load was eighteen 500-pound bombs and ten 500-pound mines. We laid the mines, as planned, in a river and were about to start an armed reconnaissance to hunt trucks; when we were told to contact a high speed FAC, with a priority target.

We made radio contact and headed his way, as he briefed us on the target. He observed trucks parked in hooches with tire tracks leading into the huts, but not beyond. He said to expect ground fire; previous flights had taken a lot of fire attacking the trucks. Then he said, "I'll drop a parachute flare." I thought, "Oh boy, night dive-bombing, with the target illuminated by a flare," something I had not done since a weapons deployment to Yuma, Arizona , six months previously.

We got to the location of the truck park in the foothills of the Annamite Mountains. The FAC radioed that he wanted six of our 18 bombs on the first run and that he was dropping the flare. I pulled up, to establish a dive bomb run. We popped through a cloud layer, but it was thin enough that I could see the glow of the flare. I let the nose fall through to start the dive, when it seemed right. We punched through the cloud and found the flare way out in front of where I thought it would be located. I converted a planned 30º dive to a 15º dive. I also knew that my release height would be lower because of the shallow dive angle. I could not see the target yet, so I pointed the refueling probe at the flare, to guide me to the target. I closed one eye, so the brilliance of the flare would not night-blind both eyes.

Eventually I made out the ridgeline and the huts. I was so busy trying to line up that I never saw ground fire; but Don recalls that we took some fire. I got the pipper lined up on a hut and mashed the bomb pickle. I held the dive as the bombs came off, expecting six thumps; but there were a lot more. I pulled up and the FAC said "Great hits! On the next run get the hut to the south." I said to Don, "How many bombs did we drop?" Don replied, "All of them. Let's get the hell out of here!"

I radioed the FAC, "We experienced an intervelometer malfunction. We are ammo minus and headed to home plate." I knew that Don had revised the armament switches during the run. I knew how professional he is; I knew that I must have upset him. After we climbed to a safer altitude and got feet wet, Don explained that he kept watching that ridge coming up, simultaneously reaching down to the "Dial-a-Bomb" switch and increasing it to 9; watching longer, cranking to 12, then to15 and finally to 30. The lower we got, the more he

twisted the switch.

I did get a bit low.

EASTER EGGS

In the spring of 1969, Don and I were assigned a TPQ mission; but this hop was a rare event, a daylight mission. Furthermore, we had unusual ordnance, five 2,000-pound bombs of World War II manufacture, with a fat, blunt, high drag profile and box fins. Since Easter was approaching, our artistic squadron mates had repainted the bombs as psychedelic colored “Easter Eggs”.

We got airborne and checked in with the DASC who diverted us from the planned TPQ and told us to contact a FAC flying around the Ashau Valley. We checked in with the FAC, and a flight of A4’s checked in behind us.

The FAC briefed us on a target he wanted us to hit with our 2,000 pounders, a bunker in the middle of Ashau Valley. That presented a small problem. We were under direct orders from the Group Commanding Officer to not perform any single aircraft dive-bombing. I radioed the FAC with a terse version of the order. The trailing A4 leader radioed that he would be our wingman. That seemed to make it legal, neat, and tidy.

The next problem was that we did not have any ballistic information on the WWII vintage bombs. I looked up the data for a moderate drag bomb and rolled-on an additional 20 or 30 mils for the sight depression. Kentucky windage is OK for drift, but this was really pulling numbers out of the air.

The FAC described the target as a bunker. An earthen bunker, in the middle of a field not easy to see up close and from a slant range of 20,000 feet, it is impossible. I rolled out looking for the bunker; Don was calling the altitude, airspeed and dive angle. About half way down, I thought I saw something, corrected the run, and watched. I was lucky, as I approached the release altitude, I was sure that it was the target. The pipper moved through the bunker, at the release altitude, at the proper airspeed and at the correct dive angle. I pushed the pickle, releasing three of the bombs, got the aircraft nose coming up, and then radioed the FAC “Three Easter Eggs - on the way”. The FAC said, “What did you say? … Oh WOW, that’s neat.” The FAC followed shortly in an excited voice, “Bull’s eye! You demolished it. Great hit.” As we turned downwind I inquired, “Where do you want the last two?” He replied, “Hit your smoke.” The next run was easy to start, with the huge column of smoke and dust. I pickled the last two bombs with the pipper centered on the base of the dust cloud. I’m not sure what we hit, but the FAC was ecstatic. We checked out with the FAC and thanked our A4 wingmen. They replied with “Enjoyed your show!” We returned to Da Nang, Don and I commented that we had never heard a FAC get so excited.

We did not know then and to this day we have no idea what was in the bunker or why FAC was so excited. Maybe it was the bombs painted like Easter Eggs.

Star Light, Star Dim. It was Awful That Night

February 28, 1968

The Marine Corps used the KC-130 for aerial refueling. It employs the probe and drogue method. The C-130 became a KC-130, when two refueling pods were added to the wings, outboard of the engines. Each pod contains a hose, reel and a refueling drogue. The drogue stabilizes the hose and coupling; it is the target for the probe. The drogue collapses when stored and opens as it is reeled out. The receiver aircraft has a probe fixed to the aircraft, which the pilot flies into a drogue. The drogue has a coupling with spring-loaded latches to hang onto the probe, once the pilot has flown it into the drogue. The hose had to move into the pod six feet to start fuel flow. The C-130 has four turboprop engines, and is not fast. Jet aircraft must slow to fly formation and refuel from the tanker. The technique is to fly formation on the tanker and move forward flying the probe into the drogue. On the F4 Phantom and F8 Crusader, the refueling probe is behind the pilot’s head, making refueling a challenge, even for good pilots. The refueling probe is visible to the pilot on both the A4 Skyhawk and A6. Even so, in-flight refueling requires good airmanship. Refueling at night was, is and shall remain, more difficult. The drogue has three iso-lights that glow dimly at night. The three dots of light, in an equilateral triangle, form a visual target for the probe.

On a very dark and dreary night we went to practice night refueling from a VMGR 252, KC-130. It was a night section hop. I was flying wing on our operations officer, a major. The major had a lot of time in the F-8 Crusader, He was a skilled aviator and had done this before. Steve Paul was my bombardier/Navigator (B/N). Steve was new to the squadron; we had not flown together, until this night. After takeoff we joined up and proceeded to find the tanker. Once in formation, lead turned off his anti-collision light so it would not distract me; and I left mine on to identify the flight. The anti-collision light, or rotating beacon, or more colloquially the anti-smash light, is a red rotating light, used to alert other aircraft. Position lights (like a boat’s running lights, red on the left wingtip, green on the right and white on the tail) are normally set to bright, but may be set to

dim, or off. The Intruder also has formation lights, a yellow bar behind the wing and the red and green lights on the wing tips. The formation lights may be set to bright, dim or off. In combat, all lights are turned off.

Our squadron mate Igor was on the tanker. We came up on a perch and checked in with the tanker. They cleared one of us on to the other side of Igor, and the other was to stay on the perch. Hearing this, Igor transmitted, "That's OK, send them both, I am leaving." Then he changed his voice and said slowly, "IGOR - NOT - DO - TOO - GOOD!" His last transmission did not bode well. Igor and I were just out of flight school; if Igor found this difficult, I was in for a hard night. I was not worried about the major; he had refueled F-8s, a difficult task. I moved into position on the left side of the tanker and tried to see the drogue. The sky was moonless, with a high, thin overcast. The overcast partially obscured the stars; they appeared faint and blurred. On this night, the iso-lights were indistinguishable from the stars. I flailed around, trying to plug into several stars, only to find the drogue unexpectedly coming out of the dark.

My anti-smash light bothered the major; he asked me to turn it off. I did. However, in the process of trying to fly the bird, at slow speed, in formation with the tanker, while simultaneously feeling around the panel for the light switches, low on my left side; I mistakenly turned my position lights to off, rather than dim. I think the major, or the C-130 stated my lights were off (which I deemed confirmation of switching off the anti-smash). Steve recognized what had happened and tried to tell me. However, I was totally occupied. I did not listen; I misunderstood and misinterpreted his comment. Indeed, I did not know what he said, but I took it as a statement reflecting adversely on my ability as a pilot. We did not know each other and he was out of line to comment on my flying. True, I was not at my best; perhaps approaching the unskilled level denoted as a "plumber"—the ultimate insult to a pilot. I was not sure what Steve said, but I was offended and growled, fiercely, "Shut up." Steve didn't say anything more.

I persisted on the tanker, trying to plug. It was bad that night. It was impossible to see the drogue. It would appear from nowhere, always in the wrong place. Sometimes the probe would hit the rim of the drogue, causing the drogue to tip off and jump away. Or tip off and hit the aircraft. Once, it even went all the way around the radome, making an awful sound and causing minor compressor stalls as it blinded the inlet. It hit the windscreen. Once, it tapped the canopy over Steve's head. All this time Steve did not say anything.

The major left. I stayed. Finally I plugged. I moved forward, flying formation on the tanker and stabilized in the refueling position. I wondered to myself, "What would happen if I was "bingo - minus" (critical low fuel)?" I backed out; the drogue disengaged and disappeared into the night. Then, I tried again … and again … and again. I could not plug again. I was really depressed at my lack of skill. Eventually I gave up and headed back to MCAS Cherry Point. I called Approach Control for Radar Vectors to a GCA. With my skills as a pilot sorely challenged in refueling; I concentrated on the approach. That may have been the smoothest GCA I ever flew. I was right on the vectors and altitudes. The call to "Begin normal rate of descent" was followed only by "You are on glideslope, you are on centerline," until the final controller said, "The tower does not have you in sight." I landed and they still could not see me.

Having been quiet throughout this ordeal, Steve said, "I think the lights are off." I turned the lights on and taxied in. After post-flight, and signing the yellow sheets; we climbed the stairs to the ready room. I dreaded to admit my failings as a pilot. As I feared, the Major and Igor were waiting for me. They asked, "How many times did you plug?" I was embarrassed, ashamed and dejected. I responded, "God it was awful, I could only plug once." They said, "You did? Neither of us could plug!"

That experience was forty years ago. I remember it well.

THE THINGS WE CARRIED INTO BATTLE AND BEYOND
Robert Short

Note: Tim O'Brien wrote a book about theings (tangible and intangible) that the men in his platoon carried into battle during the Vietnam War. Bob Short wrote this story about things his platoon carried into battle.

Tim O'Brien, author of "The Things They Carried," served in Vietnam with the 5th Battalion, 46th Infantry. I served with a so-called sister battalion, the 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry at about the same time. Although not located far apart in what was then northern South Vietnam, the two battalions had very different missions.

The 5/46 was assigned, for the most part, the mission of controlling the heavily populated coastal area in northern Quang Ngai province. The 1/46, during the entire time I was there, was located in the next province to the north, Quang Tin Province, in the mountains and jungle several miles inland from the coast. There were no roads or villages in that area. Everything came in and went out by helicopter.

Our mission was primarily to disrupt the flow of enemy troops and supplies that came down from

North Vietnam on the Ho Chi Minh Trail into Laos and then moved east through the mountains toward the populated coastal areas. In this area, unlike the area that O'Brien's unit worked, there were very, very few civilians and those who were there stayed well concealed for the most part, although they were certainly active in monitoring our movements and setting booby traps throughout the area.

Our typical routine consisted of roughly three-week long patrols of company and platoon strength followed by about a week back on our fire support base resting and providing perimeter security for the base. The base was nothing more than a hilltop which served as the battalion headquarters and was the home of our artillery support. There were four rifle companies in the battalion, so three of the four were normally on patrol and the 4th would be on the fire base.

My reason for sharing that background is to highlight the fact that Americans who went to Vietnam had a wide variety of experiences. We served in a lot of different capacities in different settings, so I certainly don't profess to speak for all Vietnam veterans. What I can tell you a little about is one rifle company in one remote part of Vietnam.

I'd like to talk a little about some of the tangible things we carried and then move on to some of the intangibles carried while in Vietnam and after coming home.

THINGS CARRIED IN VIETNAM

In terms of tangibles, we mostly carried only the absolute necessities since every ounce counted because it was all carried on our backs.

- A pair of jungle fatigues (a clean set was issued about once a month whether we needed them or not)
- Boots
- Socks
- Steel helmet
- Rifle
- Lots of ammunition
- Grenades
- Map & compass
- Luminescent watch
- At full resupply I carried five quarts of water
- A rucksuck stuffed with a poncho
- Poncho liner
- Claymore mine to place out in front of our position at night
- A trip flare taped to a tent stake to put out in front of the Claymore
- A rifle cleaning kit
- A block of C-4 explosive
- Insect repellant
- Paper and pen for writing letters
- A small cylindrical corrugated container (actually the packing container for a hand grenade) that contained a bar of soap, a razor, shaving cream, toothbrush and toothpaste, comb and a small polished metal mirror
- Three to five days worth of C-rations

There were a dozen or so delectable C-ration entrees to choose from like chopped ham and eggs, spaghetti, beef with potatoes and gravy or beans and frankfurter chunks. There were also much prized cans of fruit cocktail, peaches or pears plus an assortment of canned cakes, cookies, crackers, peanut butter, cheese spreads, or jelly. C-rations also came with accessory packets, which contained a plastic spoon, salt, pepper, instant coffee, sugar, toilet paper and a small pack of four cigarettes.

Those of us who did not smoke didn't give away or throw away those cigarettes as they were bargaining chips. There is nothing like a smoker, especially a stressed smoker, who runs out of cigarettes! For a few cigarettes, you could get those guys to give up all sorts of things that they otherwise cherished. You could get them to part with a can of fruit cocktail or maybe that can of hot beer they had been saving for just the right occasion. You could just about name your price if they were desperate enough.

There were also the personal items that various people carried. They were usually small items that had some connection to home and were often a gift from a loved one -maybe a religious symbol worn around

the neck or some type of good luck charm.

Those of you who have read the book know that Lt. Cross carried a pebble that Martha had sent him. Henry Dobbins carried his girlfriend's pantyhose wrapped around his neck. Dave Jensen carried a rabbit's foot. Kiowa carried moccasins and a hatchet. Norman Bowker, an otherwise gentle person, carried a young man's thumb.

Sometimes these things definitely worked. One of my friends, Baby-san Peterson, for example, carried a special silver dollar in his wallet in one of his back pockets. In one particular battle, Peterson's squad was passing through a small clearing when the battalion commander's helicopter flew over the area. A nervous door gunner mistook the group for enemy soldiers and opened up on them with his machine gun. Roy Cordingley was shot in the stomach and permanently disabled. Don Montgomery and Real Paradise received minor wounds and Peterson, while trying to roll out of the line of fire, took a round in his backside. And, yes, it struck the silver dollar. He was bruised, but otherwise uninjured. I didn't see that event firsthand, but I know it happened because I joined that very same squad a couple of weeks later as one of the replacements for the casualties suffered during that battle. There was still a lot of chatter about Peterson's good luck. I did see, firsthand, the wallet with a bullet hole in it and the deformed silver dollar. Peterson came to be viewed by many as a sort of good luck charm himself.

The word was: "Stay close to Baby-san, you'll be okay".

There were the coveted care packages from home. These were priceless, especially the cookies and other treats that reminded us of home. It was customary to share treats like that with your fellow squad members. We didn't just devour those treats; we ate them slowly, savoring every bite. My Aunt Peg lived in Germany at the time and at one point sent me a tube of spicy German mustard. I am not sure I shared much of that with the others. By mixing that mustard with certain C-ration meals, I could take C-ration cuisine to a whole new level.

Lee Kaywork was a college graduate who was a little more sophisticated than most of us. He was an old guy—at least twenty-two or twenty-three! Lee had somebody sending him small bottles of gin so that he could kick back and have a martini every night with his C-rations.

Letters from home were always welcome. You could NEVER receive too much mail. It was our lifeline to the world - as we referred to home. Most of my mail was from family members, but one letter I received was from a girl I had gone to school with from the seventh grade through high school. She was in nursing school at that time. We had been good friends and had even gone on a date once, so I wrote her back but I never received a second letter from her. I didn't learn until years later that she didn't write back because for some reason she never received my letter so she assumed that I had no interest in corresponding. I guess I have to trust her on that one. It all worked out in the long run though. Almost twelve years ago, twenty-five years after she wrote me that letter, I finally got around to marrying her.

A lot of guys carried photos. Mostly photos of their families, their girlfriends, someone else's girlfriend, or in some cases of their wives and children. We would take them out frequently and look at them and show them off to others. Mario Gonzales was a proud father. He was so proud of his infant son that he must have shown me his picture at least a hundred times before he, Bruce Klingaman and Miguel Garcia were killed one night by one of our own artillery rounds. Bruce had shown me a new picture of his fiancée as we sat on the trail taking a break just a couple of hours before he died. He was scheduled to go home in just a few short weeks.

OTHER THINGS CARRIED DURING THE WAR

FEAR— of being killed or maybe even worse. From the perspective of a twenty-year old, the fear of being maimed or horribly disfigured for life. Remember the pact made between Dave Jensen and Lee Strunk in the book? As a squad leader, there was the fear of making a decision that would end up costing someone else their life. There was the fear of doing something or not doing something that would cause you to be viewed as a coward by your fellow soldiers.

For those who were married or had left girlfriends at home there was the fear of the dreaded Dear John letter like the one received by Henry Dobbins. Unfortunately, those letters were received all too frequently. There was also fear of the jungle itself at times, especially at night. The jungle seemed to come alive at night. It was like all of the creatures that simply watched you pass by during the day were on the move and communicating loudly at night. It could be a little unnerving. You simply hoped that the sounds you heard weren't caused by other armed men and that whatever else was moving around out there left you alone. For the most part, we kept all of our fears well concealed. As O'Brien wrote about the men of Alpha Company: "They were afraid of dying, but were even more afraid to show it." So we became emotionally numb and simply humped up and down the mountains one day at a time, hoping that each day would be a quiet one, but

knowing full well that the jungle could erupt with gunfire at any moment.

ANGER, FRUSTRATION & SADNESS—especially when someone would get hurt or killed or when we were ordered to do something that didn't make sense from our perspective and seemed to put us at risk unnecessarily. A lot of our casualties were from explosives triggered by trip wires stretched across trails. Having people get hurt in that manner was especially difficult and frustrating to deal with.

A SENSE OF COMFORT—in knowing that there were people who would do everything humanly possible to help us if we were hurt or in trouble. There were the doctors and nurses in the hospitals. Our medics who would be up and running toward the injured whenever called. Helicopter crews who would fly through hostile fire and any kind of weather conditions, day or night, to retrieve the wounded or deliver more ammunition if needed. There were the artillery crews, gunship pilots, Marine and Air Force fighter-bomber pilots, and a lot of others who supported us in one way or another. Infantry soldiers held and still hold all of those people in high regard. Without them we couldn't have survived. To those of you who provided that support - Thank you!

THINGS CARRIED SINCE THE WAR

SADNESS—I carry a profound sense of sadness when I think of all of the death and destruction and suffering that took place, and still takes place, as a result of our involvement in Vietnam. There is a copy of the registry of names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Seven hundred and sixty-three pages, over fifty-eight thousand names. Every one of these individuals had a family and friends and a life ahead of them. And this just represents the American dead. If we could publish a list of Vietnamese dead it would be, by various estimates, something like thirty-five to fifty volumes. War is a brutal and horrific endeavor and we need to make certain that we only send young men and women off to war as a VERY last resort.

SURVIVOR GUILT—I know this is common from talking to a lot of other veterans. Anyone who has ever been in combat knows how chaotic it is and how random the chances of death and injury. When it is over and you are still alive and well when others are dead or wounded, you are left feeling very, very humble. I cannot help but think almost daily about all the things in life that I have been able to experience and enjoy that those lost never got the chance too. Some non-veterans also carry survivor guilt. I have had several tell me that they feel some degree of guilt at receiving college deferments, or medical deferments, or even for joining the National Guard or Reserves to avoid Vietnam, knowing that some other person was then drafted instead.

RESENTMENT—Even though I have let most of it go, I would be less than honest if I did not admit to still carrying a little lingering resentment toward the portion of our population who took out their frustration with the war in Vietnam on those who were sent to fight it. The negative stereotypes that somehow developed never did describe most of us and may have been as damaging to some as the war experience itself. The vast majority of us came home and tried to move on with our lives. We went to school or found jobs. Most of us got married, raised families and have simply tried to be good solid citizens. Things have changed over the years though. For example, you are now much more likely to see Vietnam Veterans in positive roles in television shows and in movies. Now, even have some non-veterans impersonating Vietnam Veterans. None of us who lived through the sixties and seventies ever thought that we would see that happen. My sincere hope is that one of the enduring lessons learned from the war in Vietnam is that we must never again turn our backs on the people we send off to war even if we do not agree with the war in the first place or it does not turn out as intended. Men and women in the military don't decide when and where they will be sent to fight. Elected officials make those decisions. Regardless of how you feel about current events, I would encourage you to reach out to the young men and women in uniform today. When you see them on the street or in an airport, approach them, shake their hand and simply thank them for serving. I guarantee it will mean a great deal to them. They need to have their service and sacrifice validated.

MEMORIES—I mostly just carry memories now of that period in my life. I have probably filtered them somewhat, but many of those memories are of the men I lived in the jungle with for a year. I remember a group of very young men who, all in all, performed well in what was certainly a challenging environment. Some made better soldiers than others but I am proud of how every single member of my squad and platoon conducted themselves.

Things didn't always go as planned. They never do in war. We had our disagreements and tensions ran high at times, but we recognized that we needed one another in order to survive. We put aside our differences, at least temporarily, and pulled together, watched one another's backs, kept one another in check in stressful situations and sometimes risked our lives for one another. Blacks, whites and Hispanics alike became brothers as we struggled to simply survive. I will always remember the acts of compassion and kindness toward each other, toward the few civilians encountered (especially the children) and even toward wounded and captured North Vietnamese soldiers.

In the last few years, I have had the privilege of reconnecting with quite a few of those men (much older men now). It turns out that several of us were starting to search for one another at about the same time. As a result of our shared experiences, we have a bond of friendship that would be very difficult to match and renewing those friendships has been a truly remarkable experience in itself. Just one week from today many of us will gather at Fort Knox, Kentucky, the current home of the 1/46 Infantry. Today we are a cross section of society. From my platoon alone there are at least two attorneys. Now, I am not saying that's necessarily a good thing, but as O'Brien wrote, "we had a saying in Vietnam: 'There it is. There it is'." In other words, it is the way it is - you can't do anything about it, so just accept it and move on.

We are also engineers, teachers, factory workers, construction workers, small business owners, and farmers. A few have been disabled since the war and some are now retired. Some have died and some we haven't been able to locate. Those are the ones I worry about the most. At any rate, we are really all around you in all walks of life even though many of you aren't aware of it because we are not likely to call attention to our Vietnam experience. I have worked with other Vietnam veterans for years in some cases before knowing that they too had served.

While at Fort Knox, we held two separate memorial services. We remembered all 46th Infantry soldiers who lost their lives, both in Europe during World War II and in Vietnam. We also held a separate memorial service in honor of the thirty men from Charley Company and supporting units who died the night of 28 March, 1971 when their base, LZ Mary Ann, was infiltrated and overrun by a North Vietnamese unit. It is important to those of us who attend this annual event to never forget those we lost and their families and to continue to honor their sacrifices.

I recently ran across a short essay written by Tim O'Brien in 1985, titled "We've Adjusted Too Well.". I would like to quote a few passages from that essay because I think it is as applicable today as when it was written.

"Contrary to popular stereotypes, most Vietnam veterans have made the adjustment to peace. Granted, many of us continue to struggle, but the vast majority are not hooked on drugs, not unemployed, are not suicidal, are not beating up wives and children, are not robbing banks, and are not knee-deep in grief or self-pity or despair."

"Like our fathers, we came home from war to pursue careers and loves, and cars and houses and dollars and vacations and all the pleasures of peace. By and large, we've succeeded. And that's the problem. We've adjusted too well."

In our pursuit of peaceful, ordinary lives, too many of us have lost touch with the horror of war. Too many have forgotten, misplaced, repressed or chosen to ignore the anguish that once dominated our lives."

That's sad. We should remember. Not in a crippling, debilitating way, but rather as a form of affirmation. Yes, war is hell. The cliché is true. Oh, we all know it's true, but we know it in an abstract way, the way we know that the moon is a lonely place. But soldiers, having been there, have witnessed the particulars which give validity and meaning to the abstract. That's an important kind of knowledge, for it reminds us of the stakes: human lives, human limbs. Real lives, real limbs. Nothing abstract.

The same principle, I think, applies for the populations as a whole, veterans and non veterans. We have forgotten, or lost the energy to recall, the terrible, complex and ambiguous issues of the Vietnam War. What to fight for? When, if ever, to use armed force as an instrument of foreign policy? Which regimes to support, and how, and under what conditions? To what extent and by what means do we, as a nation, try to make good on our beliefs and principles-opposing tyranny, preserving freedoms, resisting aggression?

The national memory, like the memory of soldiers, is fickle and too short. Look around. Too many of us call for blood in every foreign crisis, but without any systematic examination of the implications of such action, without much inquiry into the history of American involvement in that part of the world, dumbly, blindly, impatiently.

We've all adjusted. The whole country. And I fear that we are back where we started. I wish we were more troubled.

A Redleg in Vietnam–Juliet Tango
Jim Taylor

Dedicated: To my daughter Sarah, who like many who served in Vietnam–fights with uncommon determination and valor against cancer.

Although I volunteered to go to Vietnam and volunteered to stay when it was time for me to return to the world— I was not a hero - far from it. I served in Vietnam from 26 July 1971 to 10 April 1972. The term Redleg dates back to Civil War terminology to identify someone in the artillery.

The draft lottery—an attempt by the federal government to make the draft more equitable was my entry point. Each lottery number was based on your birthday; so 366 numbers were placed in a spinning cage the night of December 1, 1969. The theory was if your number was 1 through 120 you could expect to be drafted. Numbers 121 to 240 would be a possibility and beyond 240 would not happen. I cannot remember the first number selected but I can sure remember my birth date August 5 was 54. Number 54 also happened to be the first number of those eligible to be drafted in attendance at the local bar in Angola, Indiana, that fateful night. I got free drinks for the remainder of the night.

I went for my pre-induction physical to Indianapolis on 10 April 1970. Something happened which stunned me. Most of us were college students but some were locals, including one fellow dressed quite differently with a shawl type of outer garment of burlap. Unusual even for those days. We got in line to start the physical and an assortment of tests, questions and this guy pulls out a lighter fluid, sprays the outer garment, and lights himself on fire. The outer garment did start to burn; but the medical personnel reacted quickly before he was severely injured. I stood there in amazement. He was hauled away and did not make the return trip. I have no idea what happened to him. I wondered if it was a protest or something else. That should have been a clue of what was ahead for me.

I was married as a fifth year senior in September 1969. I graduated from college in June 1970 with a mechanical engineering degree. Certain companies who recruited engineering graduates were able to offer occupational deferments—quite an incentive. For some unexplained reason, I chose to ignore those offers. I went to work for Clark Equipment Company shortly after graduation. As I look back I just did not thoroughly think about any career planning nor think of what might happen if I did not join a company that offered deferments.

So after a couple of weeks of work I came home on a Saturday afternoon and my wife Sue was crying and she showed me the letter that began “Greetings you have been selected.” I had been drafted. In August, I was inducted in Detroit. Next came eight weeks of basic training at Fort Knox. I was a platoon leader in basic so I had to look after myself and the others. During basic training you take a variety of written tests and theoretically match your skill set with the military needs. Most of our basic training companies were selected for Advanced Individual Training (AIT) in combat Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). I was selected for artillery AIT so we flew to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Artillery was a combination of being outside and technical training and my specialty was fire direction, coordinating the firing of artillery at the targets requested by the infantry through information provided by either a Forward Observer (FO) or Recon Sergeant (Recon). I also was required to train as a gun crew member and recon since each was an integral part of artillery. There was discussion of a Vietnam War truce but still the war continued and our MOS was for the most part only needed in Vietnam, so we wondered where our next assignment would take us.

I spotted an announcement about Artillery Combat Leadership (ACL). In another not so brilliant move of mine I signed up to attend the ACL meeting to avoid KP. That move was taken as requesting ACL training and I still had to do KP for that day and I never did attend the meeting. That is how I volunteered to go to Vietnam.

ACL was designed fill a need to create Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) to replace those rotating back from Vietnam, Upon entering ACL you were promoted to E-4 and, after graduation, to E-5 Platoon Sergeant/Fire Direction Specialist. The incentive for thoroughly learning Artillery ACL as one of the training instructors told us during the first couple of days –

When you get to Vietnam, you may be the only one in your unit actually trained in directing artillery fire, so if you are going to live through your tour you may want to learn all you can while you are here. After that, I paid attention.

I left for Vietnam in July after a 30 day leave but Sue was pregnant. So my situation was - I was leaving for a combat zone, not making much money compared to what I could have earned as a civilian and leaving behind a pregnant wife not knowing if we would see each other again. At age

24 I had done a pretty good job of making a mess of my life.

From Chicago I flew to Fort Lewis and within a day or two flew to Vietnam – in a round-about fashion – Alaska, Okinawa, Japan. Flying in to Cam Ranh Bay and I will always remember how beautiful Vietnam appeared upon first sight.

As for Vietnam rather than describe one situation in detail here are random selections some serious and some not:

I was initially assigned to the American Division with the battalion fire direction center (FDC) located near LZ Hurricane next to a swamp. Compared to later while I was with the 196th LIB there was not a whole lot of activity around Chu Lai. It was a good place for a newbie to break in. Once I became acclimated to artillery firing it was time to move on. So I stayed there until October of 1971 when the division stood down and I was transferred to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade (LIB) located in the foothills around Da Nang. To get to Da Nang was an unbelievable adventure. We left the port of Chu Lai shortly after a typhoon had devastated the coast. Probably Army command knew a typhoon was coming but at my level we sure didn't. All we knew was the FDC bunker was taking more and more water and we had to get out of there. We loaded onto a Korean LST probably the only thing that could reach us. For the next 12 hours we were in the South China Sea traveling 50 miles to Da Nang. For a while the waves were similar to a roller coaster ride. I was as sick as I had ever been in my life.

The mission of the 196th LIB was to provide perimeter defense to the port City of Da Nang. It was the only US artillery battalion left in Corps I, so we had howitzers – 105 mm, 155 mm & 8 inch plus a battery of 175 guns. In artillery, the difference between a gun and howitzer is the length of the artillery tube. I do remember the fire missions which depending on the ability of the artillery meant someone was going to die that day – I was trying to make sure it was the NVA/VC. I can not describe to you the adrenaline rush of a fire mission. Whether it was the initial breaking squelch of the radio which might include the first sound you hear is that of AK47 fire (the most commonly used weapon of the VC/NVA), or my voice trying to hide my panic or the voice of FO trying to remain calm. The FDC was responsible for using the information provided by the FO to determine the information to supply to the howitzers/guns in terms of gun angle, direction, type of shell and powder charge plus firing the artillery rounds. The FDC meanwhile must maintain contact with the FO and provide communication with your superiors at battalion. Someone is quite possibly going to die at this point and I was trying to make sure it was NOT a GI.

A majority of fire missions are fairly routine which include firing marking rounds at a grid intersection to determine location, illumination (using flares to illuminate an area of operation, defensive targets) or harassment & interdiction– which means a target is selected in the general direction of the enemy.

The most important is a contact fire mission, meaning you are engaged with the enemy. These can vary in length, from very short to several hours. It is as intense a period in your life as you will ever experience. Some of these fire missions stay with me to this day. When you had established the information to deliver to the guns you authorized the guns to fire by giving your initials. Mine are JT, so in the phonetic alphabet of the Army, my authorization is Juliet Tango. In seconds, you hear the artillery rounds.

At this point you communicate via radio, "shot over" to the FO.

He echoes back, "shot out."

While the shots are fired there is a lull of less than a minute. All sorts of things that go through your mind but you still have to be prepared to fire after this for another adjustment or if the rounds are on target you Fire for Effect (FFE) meaning you bring more howitzers in position to fire typically six total. So there are extreme highs when the rounds hit the target or the utter sickness when rounds inadvertently hit friendly targets which are called friendly fire incidents (FFI) While these are very minimal FFIs do happen – I was associated with 4 - but if you are firing constantly there are human factors that cause these such as wrong angle or orientation, wrong powder charge or shell, wrong location plotted or stated – many factors cause an FFI. I always remember the radio communications during these especially if more rounds were on the way.

The most challenging contact fire mission is the one where rounds are being fired within 600 meters of friendly positions-–called danger close. Does not sound quite right but will use that terminology to illustrate the point – friendly troops are in position either attacking or being attacked and you are directing artillery fire by 'walking' the rounds in so the enemy is caught between the troops and the impacting artillery rounds. You need authorization to fire within close proximity and there are many variables— location of enemy and our troops, the temperature of the artillery tubes and whether they are firing correctly, (there is quite a variation if a artillery tube is cold versus one that is hot or has been firing), the correct number of gun powder bags, the correct angle and deflection.

Since we were the last artillery unit in the north, we would rotate a new Fire Direction Officer (FDO) every month; so there was a learning curve. Even though the FDO is the commanding officer, the Fire Detec-

tion Specialist has more experience. I had a few major arguments with FDOs.

Our oldest son Jeff was expected around December 7. While I had other things to worry about, I was really wondering from the due date until December 15-16—when the Red Cross tracked me down by radio and later by telegram. Remember, communications were not as timely as now. I distinctly remember the Red Cross worker calling me by radio and telling me I had a son born December 14th 1971. After she finished I asked if it was a boy or girl and those in the background who heard the radio broadcast all echoing it is a boy you **** ***. That was one of those humorous moments that you remember forever.

I went home in February 1971 to meet him and see Sue. Had I known how hard it would be to go back to Vietnam I would have never gone home. After Sue dropped me at O'Hare to return to Vietnam I was depressed—torn about going back because I knew it would be tough but then on the other hand if I did not go back and something happened to me I wanted to see my son and I wanted him to see me.

Bob Hope had a show at the Freedom Hill PX around Christmas if I recall correctly – we could see the general outline of the show from our hill that day although it was several miles away. The only problem was we were taking rockets at the time so we were otherwise occupied.

The Tet Offensive in 1968 is the one everyone remembers but Tet (the Lunar New Year) is every year and the NVA/VC activity picked up quite dramatically during Tet in 1972. But no matter if your firefight was Tet 1968 or whatever if you were in one of those it was major to you since you were in it.

One of things I will always remember was during a Christmas cease fire a military Piper Cub flying over us playing Christmas carols – to this day I like Christmas carols and I always think back to that Piper Cub.

After one night-time fire mission I stayed awake and decided to fix some C-rations and I am thinking to myself this is great I have my favorites - beans & franks and pound cake - and I was heating it up with a sterno heater – heaven at the time. Then it dawned up me I am 10,000 miles from home, in a bunker at night away from my wife and newborn son and I am ecstatic because I have beans and franks and a pound cake. I lost my appetite and threw it away.

In 1972 there was an official phase-out of combat troops and I was given a 100 day drop so I went home in April at the start of the Easter offensive. While I had orders to go home, I never wanted to leave and volunteered officially to stay. Those who have been in the military will understand that thinking even though 30 plus years later it sounds incredibly stupid. So that is how I volunteered to stay in Vietnam but I was turned down by the FDO and S-3. I have always felt guilty about leaving since within a couple of weeks after getting back, I saw on the evening news that an artillery unit had mistakenly shot down a US helicopter killing a number of GIs during a combat assault. I will always feel had I stayed I could have avoided that. I never learned the details but I always felt had I been there it would not have happened.

In closing I have always felt guilty about coming home from Vietnam in one piece without a scratch. I never kept a running total of the number killed or wounded in action. The sheer tension of fire missions have always stayed with me. While Vietnam is a beautiful country and I have always wanted to go back. When I first got in country I saw a vendor selling plaques that said: When I die I know I will go to heaven because I spent my time in hell.

I am not sure if it was hell for those who served in Vietnam but you could see hell from there.

MILITARY POLICE
Terry R. Wainright

For what seemed like most of my life, I had heard about the Vietnam War. Through high school and college, I watched the War on TV, with my family, from the comfort of our living room couch. The War was brought to us every day in living color, on The Evening News with Walter Cronkite. Vietnam was a strange place, somewhere on the other side of the world, where our soldiers were fighting people with strange names and strange clothes, who spoke in a strange language.

Nobody really seemed to know why we were fighting. The politicians talked about fighting Communism. We would either have to fight the Communists there, in Vietnam, or end up fighting them in our backyards. But on TV, it seemed like we were fighting one group of Vietnamese, in order to protect another group of Vietnamese, with both groups fighting each other. On TV, both groups looked, dressed, and spoke the same. Vietnam was all jungle and rice paddies. Every night on TV, I saw our soldiers shooting machine guns, jumping from helicopters, and dropping bombs and napalm on men, women and children. I saw our soldiers being maimed and killed by bombs, mines and booby traps. Every day on TV, I saw flag-draped coffins returning to the United States.

Every young male from that generation grew up with the Vietnam War. It hung over our heads. We all

knew that some day we would be fighting there–possibly dying there. Every year, as we grew older, the War got closer and closer. Then, friends got drafted. Other friends moved to Canada. The soldiers on TV, coming home in boxes, were my age and just like me–and the war still made no sense.

In 1971, fresh out of Michigan State University, with no more student deferment, a low draft lottery number, and not being a senator's son, I decided to enlist. By September, I found myself in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, standing on the tarmac, wondering what was going to happen next. Going to war was not what I expected. Unlike the movies, I boarded a commercial flight in Seattle and many hours later landed in Vietnam. One minute, I was on a modern Boeing 747 jet airliner, the next minute I was in Vietnam.

In the movies, you are part of a company of men, storming some beach together. They are all buddies since you have been living and training with them for months, if not years. You are there on a mission. You are there to fight and win a war. You will all be together until your part of the war is over. Then you went home, together.

In Nam, you were a replacement part. You went to Nam alone. You were assigned to a unit that has been through Hell together. You were the FNG (the f—-ing new guy). If you survived in-country long enough, you will be accepted in the unit and it would become your turn to harass the FNG. Eventually, you became a "short-timer" – your remaining time in Nam was so short that you didn't have to open a door to enter a room; you could walk right under it. All you thought of was going home.

Everyone knew their DEROS date (the Date Eligible for Return from Overseas). After 12 months your tour was over and you rotated back home. The war continued. Winning the war was no closer than it was the day you arrived in-country. Your friends stayed in Nam and continued to fight. Every person's 12 month tour ended on a different date. Because of this, everyone arrived back in the States alone. One minute you are in Nam with brothers, the next minute you're alone on a commercial jet, riding that Freedom Bird back to the world.

This led to many problems for returning Vets. In Nam, you could march through Hell, overcome any obstacle, as long as you did it with your buddies. But when you were sent home to fight new battles, you had to face them alone.

So here I was, a brand new mlitary policeman from Fort Gordon, fresh out of training. At Cam Ranh, all "cherry" soldiers were sent to the Repple Depple (the Replacement Depot, also referred to as Repo Depo). You waited at the Repple Depple until the military found a unit that needed replacement. You were given a place to sleep; a bunk, a mattress and basic bedding. Cam Ranh was unbelievably hot, with sand everywhere. You were basically living on a beach covered with tents, with not a bikini in sight and no access to the water. Lizards and 3 inch long cockroaches were everywhere; crawling all over the inside of your tent and on your bed.

Then you went to supply for clothing and gear. After supply, you will at least look like a Vietnam soldier. Supply gives you head to toe olive drab (OD), and bright green OD it was. Everything was OD, from T-shirts, to fatigue shirts and pants, down to your OD socks and jungle boots. Even the boxer underwear was OD.

You could always tell a soldier new to Vietnam from an old timer. The hot sun and monsoon rains quickly faded the bright OD, to a soft, light, dusty green. The old timer wore his ragged and faded uniform with pride, refusing new clothes, which would make him look like an FNG.

After a few days, the Repple Depple learned that the MP Company in Quang Tri needed a new MP. So they loaded me into the next transport plane to Quang Tri, along with all the other replacement equipment and supplies. The transport plane was not quite up to TWA standards. There were no seats, so I had to sit on the metal skin of the plane. The crew threw me a few flack jackets to sit on and told me to get comfortable. The thought of flying several hundred miles over Vietnam with only a thin layer of metal between me and the jungle below, was somewhat disconcerting. So being a typical male soldier, I made sure that there were always several layers of flack jacket between the jungle below and any crucial parts.

An MP Jeep was sent out to pick me up at the airport in Quang Tri. As we drove through the city, an open, flat-bed troop truck came barreling up from the rear to pass us. It was loaded with ARVN (South Vietnamese) troops. As it passed us on the right, I heard a shot. At the same time, I saw a bullet strike the pavement about a foot away from my right arm, sending up sparks as it ricocheted off the concrete. Only an hour in Quang Tri, and I had already been shot at – by soldiers who were supposed to be our allies. Welcome to Quang Tri!

Finally, I reached Company C of the 504th Military Police Battalion in Quang Tri. Quang Tri was just below the DMZ. Company C was proud to call themselves the Northernmost MPs since our company's area of responsibility ran right up to the DMZ. Our company compound was just a cluster of ramshackle shacks and buildings, made of scrap lumber, plywood, sheets of corrugated metal, and sandbags. The compound

sat out in the middle of nowhere surrounded by sandbag walls and string after string of concertina wire. Bare ground, with no grass, bushes or trees for as far as the eye could see–totally desolate (turning during the monsoon season into a sea of mud). Our main gate faced Highway One, about 10 clicks south of Quang Tri City.

After a few days of settling in, I was finally scheduled for my first Jeep patrol. We always went on patrol two to a Jeep. The driver was an old timer on his second Nam tour. Him in his faded green and me in bright OD. We were both wearing flack jackets–each of us carrying an M-16 with plenty of ammo and a.45 on our hip.

We drove around for several hours. He explained our job and gave me a tour of the area. Finally, about noon, he drove into Quang Tri City. Quang Tri was a fairly large city, the capital of Quang Tri Province. Nothing could have prepared me for this. Everything was so alien, so strange–the crowds, the noise, the smells, nearly overwhelming my senses. Leaving the crowds behind, we entered a quiet part of the city. My partner drove us into a narrow alley, which ended in a small courtyard, surrounded by broken-down, unpainted, buildings. Homes were jammed together, stacked 3 and 4 stories high. No one was in sight, and it was so quiet.

My partner (holding a package) turned to me and said "I have to take this to my girlfriend's family. I'll only be a few minutes." With no further explanation, he started up a ramshackle stairway and disappeared into the maze of buildings. And I was alone!

Every story I had ever heard about Nam flashed through my mind. I had never felt so alone. Then I heard a faint rustling noise. Then more noise, all around me. Then, creeping out from everywhere, young boys - dirty, ragged, half naked, skinny, street kids. There had to be 15 or 20 of them, ranging in age from probably 3 to 10 years old. They quickly surrounded the Jeep. They were all talking and yelling at once. However, I knew no Vietnamese, and the only phrases they seemed to know were "Hey GI! You got cigarettes?" and "Gimmee money!"

My first thought was astonishment that any children that young would be asking for cigarettes. Then my mind remembered the TV news stories, where Vietnamese kids would get close to a GI and then pull the pin on a grenade. All the while, my mind was repeating, "What the heck should I do?"

Then they closed in. There were hands everywhere–plucking at my pockets, grabbing at my M-16 and.45. I'd yell and push them off. They would retreat, regroup and counter-attack. Wave after wave, I'd repel them, but they kept coming back. My mind was now shouting "What do I do?" I thought, "Nothing in all of my training prepared me for this." My weapons were useless–I couldn't shoot them. My hand-to-hand combat training – useless. I could call dispatch on the radio, but what would I tell them: "I don't know where my partner is. I don't know when, or if, he will ever come back. Honestly, I don't even know where I am. I'm completely surrounded by 5 year olds and I'm in danger of being overrun. Send reinforcements."

The whole incident probably lasted for less than a half hour, but it seemed to last forever. Out of nowhere, my partner was back. He yelled a few Vietnamese words and the boys disappeared like magic. The Battle of the Jeep was over! My partner calmly got into the Jeep, as if nothing had happened. He took one look around and quietly said "Where's the mirror?"

During the battle (not two feet from a fully armed MP, with his American technology and training), a handful of street urchins had stolen the driver's side, exterior mirror – the entire assembly, including all the necessary hardware. It would have taken a heavy-duty wrench and a lot of muscle to detach the mirror, but these kids had it stripped off the vehicle in minutes. Personally, I felt lucky that we still had four wheels and the spare.

I never did find out why my partner left me there that long - maybe a black market transaction, or drugs, or maybe a little afternoon delight with his girlfriend, or possibly all three. I spent the rest of the day at the motor pool getting a new mirror installed. Fortunately, no one asked or even wondered how I could lose a Jeep mirror.

Later on, I realized the military had given me training that covered this situation. During my MP training, a great amount of time had been spent on the Voice of Command, commands, given with confidence and authority. But like many trainees, I thought it was silly and had not taken it seriously. They had told us, "One of the most effective weapons an MP owns is the Voice of Command. With it one person can easily control a large group." It took my first patrol in Vietnam and a Jeep mirror to realize they were right.

Company C of the 504th was not your stereotypical MP unit. It was certainly not spit and polish. We were combat MPs. In fact, many of the guys, along with the company's contingent of V-100 Commando armored cars (sometimes called a "coffin on wheels"), had only recently returned from Operation Lam Son 719 (Nixon's invasion of Laos). Many of the MPs (long overdue for a shave and a haircut) looked more like infantry grunts just coming in from a mission than MPs. Many of these old timers were on their second or third

tour of Nam. Dress code was informal (even while on duty) and was hardly uniform. Military discipline seemed to be all but missing.

Off duty time was mostly spent playing cards, drinking, and flirting with the house maids. The house maids were local Vietnamese women who entered the company compound every day to do all the cleaning and laundry. Every house maid was responsible for a specific "hooch" and specific MPs. If you wanted to ensure good service and keep them happy, it was customary to give your house maid frequent gifts. The gifts were usually liquor or money (in the form of Military Payment Certificates or MPC–which was illegal for Vietnamese to own).

At the end of each work day, all the civilian employees left the compound through a checkpoint. At the checkpoint, each employee was searched for any illegal contraband (such as liquor or MPC). Interestingly, just past the checkpoint a large group of MPs always gathered, apparently just to say goodbye to their house maid. No one ever seemed to notice the brown paper bags and packages that changed possession.

Liquor was cheap, but rationed. Every MP was given a ration card for use at the PX down the road. The card was good for such things as liquor, beer, cigarettes, fans and electronics. You could also get unlimited alcohol by the glass at the EM club, but only during the hours it was open. The club was also closed during times of high security alert or when supplies of alcohol were short (which were frequent). At the EM club you could get a bottle of beer for 20 cents or a mixed drink for 25 cents (50 cents for a double). Of course during Happy Hours prices were 10 cents for a beer and 15 cents for a single mixed drink. People would drink steadily during Happy Hours. Then just before it ended, you would order 4 or 5 doubles at once. With 5 doubles costing all of $1.50 (and little else on which to spend your combat pay), it was easy to become an alcoholic.

Other Vietnamese employees worked in the company compound in the mess hall, doing all the KP duties and all the other hot, dirty work that no one else wanted to do. Then there was old "Papa-san" who had the worse job of all – "sh*t burner". The company latrines consisted of crude wooden structures with holes for 4 or 5. Under the holes were 50 gallon oil drums that had been cut in half. Every day, as the half drums were filled, "Papa-san" would remove the drums (replacing them with empty drums). "Papa-san" would dump oil into the full drums and stir, using a thick stick, until it was all thoroughly blended. He would then light a match. That is how he would spend his day, out in the hot Vietnamese sun, watching the mixture burn, stirring constantly to ensure that it burned completely, while trying to stay upwind from the thick black smoke. Funny though he seemed happy to have a job. And you never saw him without a big smile on his wrinkled face.

In theory, all Vietnamese civilians left the compound at the end of the day. In reality, many of the MPs had live-in girlfriends. This, of course, was illegal, but overlooked by the officers and higher NCOs (who probably had their own companions). The general feeling was "whatever happens in your own private hooch, stays in your hooch". During security alerts, no Vietnamese civilians were allowed in the compound. During high alert, word was passed (informally) that even girlfriends had to leave - temporarily.

Life in the Company C compound was laid-back. My first night on perimeter guard duty was a good example. One of the old timers and I were assigned perimeter guard duty in a bunker made of wood and sandbags. Surrounding the compound, in front of the bunker, were bare, open fields, with line after line of concertina wire. Our job was to watch and listen all night for sappers (trained commandos, generally with high explosives) or any other enemy activities. After about a half hour, my partner went around to the front of the bunker. A minute later, he returns, with company. My partner had arranged entertainment to help while away the long lonely night – a young (much closer to age 15 than age 18), semi-nude, Vietnamese woman. He was willing to share (as was she). He even tried to persuade me, by showing me all of her excellent features. But, I told him I would pass. So, I took care of the guard duty, while he took care of his young lady.

Once a month, Company C had a Barbeque – a show of appreciation from the company officers (the CO, a captain, and the XO, a lieutenant) and the First Sergeant. The mess hall would make a tub of potato salad. The Captain, "LT" and Top would do the barbequing. They had a grill that was easily 8 by 5 feet. They had hot dogs and brats. They had barbeque chicken, dripping in sauce. They had fantastic T-bone steaks, cooked to order, that could be cut with a fork. I don't know where they got the chicken and steak, but rumor was that the CO had connections with the Navy. We had "all you could eat" of the best barbeque, ever! Then there was the Jeep trailer filled to overflowing, with beer, soft drinks and ice.

Quang Tri had only two seasons–hot and dry and hot and rainy. During monsoon season, there were torrential rainstorms for several hours, every day. Then the sun would come out. It was like living in a sauna. In monsoon season, everyone had to cross a large pool of water, just to get to the mess hall.

Near the end of October 1971 came Typhoon Hester, the worst typhoon to hit Vietnam in 27 years. The wind and rain from Hester was incredible. In a country known for heavy rain, news reports at the time stated that it was the highest rainfall in over 100 years. News reports indicated that Hester had killed over 100

people (mostly Vietnamese, some GIs), leaving over 200,000 people homeless. The wind howled continuously for several days. It was so loud that everyone had to yell just to be heard.

During Hester, unless you were on guard duty, everyone stayed in their hootch. The hootches were made of lumber covered with plywood (no other siding), with large screen windows on every side. The roofs were corrugated metal sheets, dotted with sandbags to hold down the sheets during a wind. During Hester, the rain came through the building from everywhere. The wind blew the rain through the screen windows, between the cracks in the plywood, and under the flapping metal sheets of the roof—the rain coming in sheets sideways through the building. Even during the day, the rain was so heavy inside the building, that it was difficult to see across the hootch. We tried to block the rain, but with no luck. We just sat, hoping and praying that the building didn't get blown away. I think the only reason it didn't get blown away was that there was so little resistance to the wind and rain – it just blew through the building.

At the peak of the storm (in the middle of the night), when it was difficult just to stand outside without being picked up by the storm, C Company was called into action. Quang Tri City was in danger from flooding. The MPs of Company C spent the rest of the night fighting the typhoon, while saving Vietnamese civilians from the flood waters.

We were just recovering from the impact of Hester, when another trial hit the company. Highway One was cut by Charlie south of us and sappers had cut the water line and electricity to the area. All U.S. bases in the Quang Tri area were placed under alert. Even worse was no more house maids! Who would clean our hootches, do our laundry, pick up after us and keep us company? So being typical young men, we did without cleaning and laundry. We left things on the floor. And we greatly missed the company.

Water was strictly rationed. What little water we had left was allocated to the mess hall for the cooks to use in cooking meals. There was no water for washing or even drinking. We continued to do our normal MP duties. But, in the extreme heat of Vietnam, we had to be on guard to avoid heat stroke and dehydration from the total absence of drinking water. There wasn't even any beer or soft drinks. A few of us had some hard liquor, but that was it.

The mess hall had some cases of grape drink (in 4 ounce cartons). At each meal, each MP was given two cartons of warm grape drink. If you made all 3 meals, you would have six cartons of grape drink (and this was all you had to drink each day). At every meal, an officer guarded the cartons of grape drink. Directives were posted throughout the mess hall, telling us that anyone trying to take more than two cartons would be severely punished. Some of us took a carton or two back to our hootches to use as mixers for drinks. Daily temperatures were somewhere between 90 and 100 degrees. There were no fans, no air conditioning, no refrigeration, and no ice. So, we would mix together room temperature bourbon, with warm grape drink. It's not a drink I would recommend.

Finally, after a week with no water, supplies started coming up Highway One. Our compound got a much welcomed tank of water. That water tasted good! A few days later electricity and water service were restored.

Quang Tri, with its rustic living and occasional minor hardships was good duty. For MPs, it was much more relaxed than other duty stations–no ties, no white gloves, and no spit and polish. We did our job. We handled our mission. Military BS was kept to a minimum. Being in an active war zone, there was also no room for chicken sh*t or horse sh*t.

Then came Vietnamization - turning over the war to the South Vietnamese military. All the U.S. military in the Quang Tri region was to be withdrawn south to the Da Nang area and replaced by ARVN Company C, the Northernmost MPs, were to be split up.

The first stage was to move the entire company down to Phu Bai, to join with Company B, the Roadrunners (who were convoy escorts). When we left Quang Tri in the morning, a squad was left behind. It was their job to guard the company area until the ARVN officially took over the compound.

Evening came and night fell and the ARVN started replacing the U.S. troops. All U.S. troops were leaving the region, at once. There were no problems during the withdrawal. The NVA didn't want to hamper the U.S. withdrawal in any way. However, the ARVN were fair game. The continuous sound of mortars and rockets could be heard like distant thunder as far south as Phu Bai. On the horizon, the northern sky glowed like the lightning from an immense electrical storm. The Battle for Quang Tri, between the NVA and ARVN, had begun. After midnight, our squad of MPs made it to Phu Bai. It was an experience they would remember their entire lives. They told us of the massive mortar and rocket attack that had chased them all night as they raced down Highway One. It was an awful feeling to realize that the U.S. had run away with our tails between our legs.

For the next month, while the military decided what to do with us, Company C helped Company B patrol the Phu Bai and Hue area. On one patrol, my partner and I explored the Citadel in Hue. The Imperial

Palace was beautiful, in spite of all the scars still visible from the 1968 Tet offensive. The Citadel walls were still pockmarked from the fighting. Chunks of the wall were still missing from the battle. The entire length of the outer wall of the Citadel was also covered with American GI graffiti. My partner told me I should carve my name in the wall along with the rest. He said, "some day you will see a picture of this wall and you can tell everyone that your name is on that wall." I told him, I would rather see a picture years from now and be able to say "I was there and my name is not on that wall, even though I had the chance."

Most of Company C merged with Company B and stayed in the Phu Bai area. The rest of us moved to Da Nang to join Company A. All of the old timers stayed in Phu Bai. I'm sure the Army felt that the old Company C MPs and Da Nang were not going to be compatible.

The Da Nang MPs were stationed in the XXIV Corps headquarters compound at Camp Horn. Coming from "the World" to Quang Tri was a significant culture shock, but nowhere near the shock as going from Quang Tri to Camp Horn. In Quang Tri, I was a combat MP. At Camp Horn, MPs were in many ways, more spit and polish than MPs back in the World. At Camp Horn, we were what the infantry grunts would call REMFs (Rear Echelon Mother F-ers). I felt sorry for the grunts who were temporarily sent to Camp Horn to take a break from the field.

In a nutshell, our job was to baby sit a bunch of generals. The old Company A MPs informed us that we were now "palace guards". From this point on, we had to start looking and acting like palace guards. One of our jobs was to stand guard (24 hours a day) in front of the Corps Commander's home (a 3 star general). Standing at parade rest for 4 hour shifts on the sidewalk outside the general's front door, was a huge change from sitting in a bunker in Quang Tri. At any given time, there were 4-5 generals in residence at Camp Horn (not counting the visiting generals, both U.S. and Vietnamese). Who knows how many full-bird colonels lived there? Several flocks, at least. Lt. Colonels and Majors - more than you would even try to count. Captains and Lieutenants – a dime a dozen, they were just gophers for the higher officers. This was a walled compound that you could walk from one end to the other in less than 5 minutes. At Camp Horn, you did more saluting than anything else.

The XXIV Corps headquarters was located just across the river from the large Da Nang airport. The most dangerous part of living in the headquarters compound was due to this location. The airport was a frequent target of Charlie's, and our compound was close enough to be hit by errant rockets. We were often blasted out of our night's sleep by the sound of rockets hitting near our compound, immediately followed by air raid sirens. With the first sound, we hit the ground running–racing to the safety of the many concrete foxholes and shelters outside our barracks. This happened so often that sometimes we literally did this in our sleep, from instinct – waking up in a foxhole, not remembering how or why we were there. Some GIs slept with their clothes on. Some slept with boots on. Most GIs just kept their boots unlaced on the floor by their bunk, where they could be slipped on in an instant. Frequently a GI would end up in a foxhole wearing nothing but boxer shorts and boots. One FNG ended up in a foxhole with only the boots–it took him only once to learn from this lesson.

I still remember my first night at Fort Benning, Georgia (after returning home from Nam). The temporary quarters given to me that first night was right next to the main post flagpole. Of course, no one bothered to tell me this. So at dawn, when the ceremony to raise the flag started with its usual firing of a cannon, I found myself grabbing clothes and slipping on boots, frantically looking for a foxhole.

One of our more interesting (albeit exhausting) jobs was guarding the main gate. During the day, two of us MPs spent the day checking papers and saluting. After a while, you learned to ignore any lieutenants and most captains, saluting only majors and above. If the lieutenant or captain lived and worked in the compound, they weren't expecting a salute. They spent most of their time keeping an eye out for superiors, not wishing to miss a salute. If the lieutenant or captain were coming in from the field, they could care less whether they got a salute, they had more important concerns.

Standing at the main gate in the hot Vietnamese sun for eight hours took a lot out of a person. It was a hot sweaty job. You seldom had any relief or even liquids. One afternoon after being out in the sun for over six hours, an MP lieutenant unexpectedly came to take us to the Camp infirmary. That day and time had been chosen for all EMs in the compound to take a surprise drug test. That test should have been easy to pass, except for one thing. There was not a drop of extra water left, anywhere in my body. I was totally dehydrated. So when they gave me the sample bottle to fill, not a drop was to be found. The friendly looks of the medics and officers in charge suddenly turned cold and business-like. I was taken under guard immediately to a holding room. The room was nearly filled with what appeared to be a bunch of "druggies" – unkempt; longish hair; red, vacant eyes; haunted looks. They were sitting there, with their legs tightly held together, trying to hold off the inevitable. Here I was, an MP, in full gear sitting next to them. Finally an MP Sergeant came to my aid. He handed me an ice cold Coke; then a second, followed by two more Cokes. He told me to chug them down.

Finally, a half hour later, I was able to fill half the bottle and I could go back to work.

The main gate was a totally different experience at night. The gate was closed. No one came in or out of the gate at night. No traffic was ever on the road at night. The gate area was lighted, as was the road in front of the gate. But 25 feet from the wall of the compound, it was pitch black. It made you and your partner feel like you were in a goldfish bowl. Everyone outside could see you, but you could see nothing, except for frequent tracer rounds from gunfire. On duty, we always wore a.45 on our hip. In addition, at night we wore full combat gear – flack jacket, steel pot, M-16. The darkness in front of us was dead quiet - quiet, except for sporadic gunfire (single shots, bursts of automatic fire) and the occasional pop of a flare going up. The gunfire and flares went on all night, our constant reminder that "someone" was always out there.

Several of our MPs had been in Nam during the '68 Tet Offensive. They talked about the need for constant vigilance, especially at the main gate. They told about VC, dressed like civilians setting off bombs at main gates. They would tell stories of bases being overrun, with Charlie entering compounds over the bodies of MPs, who had been guarding main gates.

One night, our thoughts returned to those stories. About 2:00 in the morning, when no one is ever on the road, an older Vietnamese man came walking rapidly down the road, carrying a long, large package. He walked up to the main gate, spoke a few words of Vietnamese, calmly setting the package down in the center of the road in front of the gate; and then quickly returned back up the road from the direction he came. Well, we decided that standing closely behind the gate was probably not the thing to be doing. We backed off a few steps and called the MP station on our radio, to report this strange incident. Within seconds, an MP Major from the Provost office, in full combat gear, was rushing to the gate. He looked much like John Wayne. With visions of medals and military honors in his eyes, he sprinted through the gate, quickly covering the package in flack jackets. About 10 minutes later, while the Major was trying to decide what to do, down the road came our Vietnamese man, carrying another identical, large package. With the Major's M-16 pointed at him, he placed his package next to the first, and approached the gate. The Major placed the man under arrest and sent word for an interpreter.

We eventually discovered that the man worked for a bakery down the road. The packages were filled with day-old French bread that his employer had given him. He had got off work at 2:00. He had no transportation except for his feet. He could not carry both of the heavy packages at the same time, so he was carrying them home in shifts – leaving them in the care of MP guards, in the only lit portion of road for a couple of miles. Such was the enigma of Vietnam. What was the truth? What was reality? How could you tell friend from enemy?

Drugs were everywhere at Camp Horn. While there was some grass, the drug of choice was heroin. It was sold in plastic vials or "caps". Each cap was about the size of the top segment of your index finger. Heroin was amazingly cheap (about 2-3 dollars a cap), easy to get, and potent. It was normally pure, uncut, heroin (sometimes laced with a little meth) – heroin 100 times stronger than what you could get back in the States. This led to powerful addictions. Being so strong, needles were not needed. The heroin was usually smoked in small pipes or larger bongs. The empty vials were scattered on the ground, everywhere you looked (including under the open windows outside of MP barracks).

MPs in Nam had two sets of enemies, Charlie and your fellow soldiers. In XXIV Corps headquarters, the main enemy was your fellow soldiers. It was even worse when it was a fellow MP. One time, while I was on duty, I had to subdue one of my good friends. He had taken too many or the wrong combination of drugs. He was totally out of his head, violent and uncontrollable. I had to wrestle him to the ground, handcuff him, arrest him and battle him all the way to the Evac Hospital down the road. The drugs seemed to give him superhuman strength and little pain sensation. Arm locks and holds didn't work. I thought his arms would break, yet he didn't seem to feel anything. Even with handcuffs, it took all of my strength to get him to the hospital. And this was a friend! Imagine, dealing all the time with long time druggies who hated police and would do anything to get that next fix.

One of our least favorite MP duties was being a guard at the drug Detox Center. Druggies were sent to Detox to dry out (most of the time, cold turkey) from the drugs they were addicted to. After a few weeks of going through the intense and painful withdrawal process, these druggies would be sent south to the Saigon area for further treatment and/or punishment at LBJ (Long Binh Jail –officially, Long Binh Stockade). Detox didn't need us during the day, when there were plenty of doctors and staff on duty. But at night, it was only you and a single orderly and about 75 to 100 patients. The Detox center was creepy and down-right spooky. There were only a few dim lights on in the ward. It was mostly quiet, except for occasional screams and the cries from the patients who were trying to kick the heroin habit. Even in the late hours of the night, it always seemed like no one was sleeping. You sat there, with no weapons, as their eyes stared and confused minds thought strange thoughts.

At least MP duty at XXIV Corps had variety. The level of excitement ranged from checking IDs at the intelligence center and the situation room to guarding donut dollies (Red Cross girls). Yes, where else would donut dollies live, but in officer heaven at Camp Horn. The dollies lived in a cluster of trailers. The MP job was to guard the trailers all night, to ensure that no unauthorized people tried to have any unauthorized contact with the dollies (or, heaven forbid, take an unauthorized peek at one). Donut dollies were especially adored because they were Americans. They spoke fluent English, had round eyes and had a semblance of a figure. Of course, the only people who were authorized to contact them at their trailers were officers, the higher ranked the better; and the MP guard. Of course, MPs were limited to short conversations, as we escorted them to their trailer, but it was better than nothing.

In Quang Tri, we shared everything, good times and bad. Your personal belongings were safe. At XXIV Corps, nothing was safe, and investigating theft was a daily occurrence. I even had my own belongings stolen from my own hootch in an MP barracks.

At Quang Tri, with our unmilitary appearance, we were free spirits, but we did our job and we were always ready and fit for action and duty, no matter what. At XXIV Corps headquarters, people looked and acted more military. But in a combat situation, I would have traded one squad of Company C MPs for the entire contingent of soldiers at XXIV Corps.

Eventually, I was a short timer–I was so short, I could walk under a snake's belly without even having to take off my hat. By that time in 1972, the military had learned a lesson. Because of the limited 12 month tours, a soldier was most vulnerable in the first month and the last month in Country. In the first month, he was a FNG, with no friends, no experience and no one to watch his back. In the last month, his only goal was to make it home. That was all you thought about. Your biggest fear was to almost make it. You didn't want to survive for 364 days, only to be killed on the 365th. In fact, you almost expected something to happen. Of course, this single-minded thinking also made you vulnerable.

So by 1972, whenever possible, a GI was given a safer, easier job. I was fortunate (for my last month in country) to be assigned guard duty at the China Beach, in-country R&R (Rest and Recreation) Center. This is where soldiers were sent for rest and relaxation. This was wonderful duty. I reported each night to the guard's barracks. We picked a bunk and went to sleep. The officer on duty would awaken each shift of guards in turn and we were driven to the guard towers to replace the existing guard.

Normally, I sat in a tower for about 3-4 hours every night. China Beach was in a well-defended, secure area, so guard duty was easy, with little stress. After a night's guard duty, I would go back to my hootch, take a long shower, and sleep until it got too hot. Then I would put on my swimming trunks and walk down to the beach. The beach at China Beach had to be one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. Deep blue sky, blue water with gentle waves, white sand and palm trees as far as you could see–and you were the only one on the beach. The only thing missing were young ladies in bikinis. When the beach got too hot, it was time to go to the EM club for a cold drink and air conditioning–talk about almost Heaven. I figured that the military must have been trying to get me to re-up (re-enlist)? They almost had me, except they had forgotten the bikini-clad ladies at the beach.

After a month of virtual R&R, they put me on a military plane to Tan Son Nhut Airfield near Saigon. Back at XXIV Corps, just across the river from the Da Nang Air Base, you could sit by the river and watch the big, white birds taking off. For months, I had been dreaming about getting on one of those great, white, Freedom Birds going Home. I dreamt about leaving this country where everything was OD, returning to the Land of the Big PX.

A couple of hundred of us sat in the terminal, waiting. They finally called our flight. Our dream was about to come true. Back then, Braniff Airlines was one of the commercial lines flying in and out of Nam. At the time, Braniff (for promotional purposes) painted their jets different colors. So, much to our displeasure, we walked out on the tarmac to fly home in our big, green, Freedom Bird.

My tour in Nam was over. We disembarked from the commercial jet in San Francisco. We had no further instructions. We could go anywhere in the world from there. We were on our own. Freedom was a good feeling. But you also felt alone, abandoned, and discarded.

After taking a taxi to Oakland, I took a flight to Detroit. I was in uniform, carrying a large, heavy duffel bag. I stuck out my thumb, to hitchhike to East Lansing. Many drivers picked me up, people of all ages, some with young families. Every single one expressed their thanks and gratitude. Some wanted to buy me meals or drinks. Every one apologized for not being able to take me further. Several of them asked me if I had any problems with protesters and were surprised when I told them "no, they have all been as friendly as you." Several told me that they did not usually pick up hitchhikers, but they wanted to show me that not all people were like the protesters. In fact, during the entire trip from San Francisco to East Lansing, I had received nothing but respect and heartfelt thanks. Basically, there are great people in this country.

When I got about a mile from home, I found a pay phone and called. Only my brother and his girlfriend were there. They picked me up and drove me home. I dumped my duffel bag in the center of the living room. I put on (a non-OD) T-shirt and blue jeans.

My brother asked, “What do you want to do now?”

My answer, “I want to go to Burger King and have a Whopper!”

Back in the world (the good old USA), people don’t understand what it’s like to have the freedom to jump in a car and go anywhere you want to go, and do anything you want to do, without having to get permission or authorization from anybody. Living in a country where food is plentiful and there is no war. Living in a country where you can speak your mind. Where you can dress how you want to dress and have your hair as long or as short as you wish. The ability to go, whenever you wish, to an American fast food place for a Whopper and fries symbolizes to me a collection of freedoms that most Americans take for granted and few other people in the world own. And they were given to us by the sacrifices of millions of Americans, who fought for those freedoms.

Albert Walker

I was born February 24, 1945 in Memphis, Tennessee and entered the military at age 18. I volunteered. My family tradition has always been military and that’s why I joined. I love my country and whatever my President assigned me to do, it was my job to do to serve my country. I grew up in Chicago, raised by my mother. She was a firm lady, short in stature and size; but like nitroglycerine—small with a powerful explosion.

When I decided I wanted to join the military, I was 17. I called her and said, “Mom. I want you to sign some papers for me.”

She said, “Not under my roof. When you turn eighteen, which is going to be in February, (this was November of 1962).” In February of 1963 I turned eighteen years of age, but I realized that education is something that’s important. I was already in school, and success there should be my first step in accomplishing something – not being a quitter. Just prior to graduation I’d gone to the recruiters and told the Army recruiter I couldn’t go and then I went down to the Marine Corps recruiter and had a long conversation. I forgot about it. Graduation came. After graduation, I called my relatives in Gary, Indiana and made plans to go off and have fun, take a vacation starting Saturday. I’d called on Tuesday.

Well, Wednesday I got a call from the recruiter and he says, “Come on down.” So I did. In coming on down, I went down to the armed forces examination center which is downtown Chicago and then from there it was the physical and the examination and everything and then the swearing in and when I took an oath to serve and protect my country. It meant something to me then as it does today. I am old; but I still believe in serving my country.

At that time, war was not a big issue. When I joined, Vietnam was still on the back burner and still brewing. While I was in, then the pot started getting hot. So then, it was like I was already in and see President Kennedy was assassinated while I was still in training and that was in November of 1963 when he was assassinated, and, as it ended up, it was a hard time but the moments in history that stick with you—look upon my birth as when the Marines landed on Iwo Jima in February 19, 1945. That was the bloodiest battle in Marine Corps history. And it was my destiny to become a Marine. My mother raised me and then I went into the service. I served and it made a better man of me. The Corps values I still value today. I mean they were really firm and everything but it’s the core values that I adhere to and live by. In fact, when I joined, I joined because I wanted to join the military. My family was very supportive of me and what I did.

In other words, when I turned seventeen, I was legal, I was to do as a man what I wanted to do. So when I turned eighteen, I said, “Hmm, I’ve finished high school. I got a diploma.” So I went on to school and made the honor roll and after graduating I felt even better because there was like, you have to accomplish something and you have to take steps in life. And as you take steps in life you feel that you can sit down and you can say, “Ahh, I made it this far.” It’s just like a good meal. After you sit down and you have a good meal and then you say, “Ahh, now its time for desert.” So that’s the way your life has been.

I am a Hollywood Marine since I went to basic training in San Diego, California. It was the beginning of a lot of things for me. In boot camp I was burdened with little or no sleep. At that time, we were living in Quonset huts (which were prefab structures made of galvanized iron). You were in one Quonset huts for a while and then you nap, then you got to move to another one and finally when you go in and then you realize, it was a shock in finding it was a difference. And what they did was they stripped me down from being a civilian and reshaped me into being a better man.

I made rank and I lost rank. My highest rank I made to lance corporal when I got out.

After boot camp I went to Advanced Infantry Training. Then, I ended up going to a state battalion and

then was shipped over to Okinawa. I was on a back line in Okinawa and they had a lot of different equipment and it looked like giant erector toy sets. But this was all real. Cranes, forklifts, bulldozers…

While in Okinawa, I was asked if I wanted to be a mechanic or an operator and I said I wanted to operate. So, they trained me to operate their equipment. It was just a matter of following instructions and doing what they said to do.

From there I ended up going over to Vietnam. In Vietnam I was attached to Alpha Company Seventh Engineers. And later on I was with Charlie Company.

A typical day in Nam was:

You wake up, make up your bed, and then you wash up.

Take your rifle with you wherever you go.

Go down to the water buffalo and you get you some water and you freshen yourself.

Then you go off on your job assignment depending on what it was. I remember one time I was breaking ground for General English who was the Commanding General of the Marine Corps forces over there at the time. We were breaking ground for his headquarters. I'm down in the hole just breaking ground so I look up while this man walks by and he is asking questions and he says, "How's it going Marine. Cleaning it up." And I says, "Oh, fine." Cleaning it up. "Pretty fine." And he says, "What are you doing?" And I said, "Oh, I'm just down here" This guy is talking to you. Who are you talking to? So then I stood the jackhammer and then I look up and then I see clean boots. Then I'm looking up a little bit higher and then I see Pressed Utilities. "Uh 0h!" then I look up. And then I see this man looking down at me and he's got some black stars on his shirt. And I say, "Sir!" And it was General English talking to me at that time.

That was one of the hilarious times and then there were times that I remember and kind of put on the back burner and there were times when you have two jobs in the Marine Corps. You got your MOS, which is your military occupational specialty, which is heavy equipment operator, but every Marine is a rifleman. Because no matter what else your job is, every Marine is a rifleman. He is taught whether he pushes a pencil or whether he is stirring a pot, every Marine is a rifleman. Every Marine knows how to fight and to defend himself so it doesn't make any difference. That's why you don't see any branch or any unit's insignia because everyone is the same in the corps. That's what I like about it – the brotherhood and the camaraderie.

At the same time, when there is a landing, there are riflemen that are in support so that it clears away so that the troops can land. They take land and they advance. When they advance, then you have your other support troops that come in. It's a constant barrage of first you have your recon forces that hit the beach. After recon comes in, they know where and what's clear. Once an area is clear, then they have the Navy come in so that they can direct the unloading of the troops. So that everything is all laid out and everything is all coordinated and once you give directions you go ahead on. Once I landed then it was up to me to go off, get with my unit, which was Bravo Battery, whatever the unit was at that time, and if they needed a tree pushed out of the way, cleared out, that's what I did. If they needed a gun pit made, then I made the gun pit. Later on, if they need bunkers dug, you know, for sleeping or for even medical bunkers, for sleeping and keeping medical supplies, you'd dig the hole. Then they'd lay the different stuff over it and sandbags and stuff so that you're well covered and everything, but, you know, anyway…

Well, Okinawa, more or less, was good times…peaceful times and everybody was…it was no war or anything…it was liberty and gay times. Vietnam—that's a different story within itself. The difference is you don't see your uniform. You're always in your utilities unless you're getting ready to leave the combat zone and you're going on R and R. And then you've got your civilian clothes all in your duffel bag so that you take all your clothes with you, going and coming. This way you've got your gear with you wherever you go.

I saw some drug use in Vietnam. A couple of guys were smoking weed. That's all that I saw. With the Corps being in a combat zone, being a young man at the time, you know, I wanted to be able to see clear and focus because I have one life to live and I want to live it fully and I saw a lot of guys that were making mistakes, drugs and non-drugs. As they say, the good die young and there were a lot of young men that died. Unnecessarily so. Even in the clean up action you end up having casualties. I left Vietnam in June of '66 and that's when I turned stateside and then in November of '66, I was on a Caribbean cruise so that the thing about it is that you have to be combat ready in order to be going on cruises and into combat zone. So, to go to Vietnam, come back, and then to go on a cruise, you know, they always keep you combat ready so that you're able to move and do and think at a moment's notice. It's the things after that ended up hurting a lot of guys. You know, it's after you do things, you act first and you think later. And it's more or less the adrenaline kicking in that it saves you when you're stressed out.

Well, I had R and R and went to Okinawa and I enjoyed that. And I went to Bangkok. You get time out at different times. You would get leave after about six months or so and then you had a week somewhere and you could fly wherever you wanted to go and they'd fly you right back. It was exciting. I ended up going to a

bar. I worked at a bar. I'm on R and R and I'm at a bar working and what the guy would do was we could drink all we wanted and he paid us at the end of the day, too.

So, what I'd do is, I'd end up just before going on stage to sing, me and another guy – his name was Savage – I'd go down to the steam bath and get a steam bath and that would just refresh me. It's just like you walk in and then when you wake up and you are so refreshed when you go out and I'd go sing and had a good time.

We would sing some old time, like Motown songs. We were singing "My Girl" and "The Girl's All Right with Me" and different things like that and so it was a fun time.

We ate pretty well because the battalion fed us well. But then when you had R and R you could go into the village and the potatoes that we'd throw away the Vietnamese would come in and pick them up. After they picked them up, they would clean them up, fry them, and sell them back to us as French fries. And some of the stuff we threw away…I went to Pop's Barbeque in Da Nang. Never forget that. I asked for fried chicken. I had fried duck. Fried duck is almost like eating rubber. You know, it just doesn't work. That was a funny experience.

One of the worst experiences that I had was a friend and I went to one of the villages and the bars. We went in and we were drinking some of the Tiger beer that they had there and a friend of ours went in the back with one of the ladies and he ended up hurting himself very seriously and one side went north and the other side went south and they ended up flying him back to the states. They had a battalion meeting and they said that "we can protect you on a lot of things, but there are some things we can't protect you from, so you gentlemen have to be careful in what you do."

We were paid about $100 every two weeks plus combat pay that kind of boosted it up so it was like double. It didn't quite double, but it was a little extra. Most of it went home.

We had Vietnamese working with us and when you go in a country you work with the people. You just don't come in and walk over the people. You work with them so that they understand what you're there for. A lot of time, when I would go places I had no problem getting along with people. I treat people the way that I want to be treated by people. If I treat you right, then you will treat me right. If I treat you wrong, then you'll treat me wrong. At the same time, I would still carry myself in a military way. But even in carrying myself in a military way; I was not dogmatic. I'm letting you know that we are friendly forces but at the same time, don't take my kindness as a weakness.

I probably did, but I put it this way. "God had me doing something and God protected me in what I did." And every man has to be held accountable for his own actions. And, good or bad, when judgment day comes, he who runs will not run."

Well, I remember General English. That's the main commander I served with. I had an officer who was Hiram Walker IV. You've heard of Hiram Walker liquors? He was a first lieutenant at my Marine Corps school. You meet a lot of fascinating people and you can learn from a lot of people. So there was a guy. His name was Charlie Samsung. He was a young man at the time. I took him under my wing when I was with Bravo Battery First Battalion 10th Marines. We were on a Caribbean cruise and on the cruise we were aboard the LPT 1 Raleigh which was a landing ship dock which the battalion would load up on and you haul stuff, such as artillery, heavy equipment and what you'd get; landing craft, they would just flood the back. Load the landing craft and then we hit the beach.

That was really exciting for me because it opened up doors. It made me friendly with people. You go places and you see things. I enjoyed having an open mind. You learn the language, including some Okinawan. And there's Vietnamese. You learned a lot so that you can get by and learn things. I enjoy meeting people and everybody has a right to feel that because we all see things differently. If we all saw things the same way, this would be one mixed up world. I'm glad to be an American and I'm proud to say that this is a country where every man has a right to disagree and you don't have to worry about him hanging from a tree.

Asked if he witnessed any acts of heroism in Vietnam, Walker responded, "I probably did but its been so long ago that, some things I maintain and focus on and then there are things that I put on the back burner and, as I say, it takes so long to put the fire out and it smoldered for so long and finally the smoldering went down so some things I remember and some things I don't."

I had a lot of letters and in 1986, my girlfriend's mother had a stroke and we had to go down to Georgia. While gone, my letters that I had were in the basement and we had a Michigan basement and it flooded. And I had about four or five shoe boxes of letters that I had written to my mother. My mother and I had written, and I kept the letters and she kept the letters. So I had them and I'd look at them. And I'd read them and I'd say, "Boy, I said a dumb thing like that." Or, "Boy, I was really mushy that day." But something I always did, regardless of where I was, I would always give my mother a $2 bill. And when I was in Vietnam the last time I only had one American dollar so I sent that to her. American money is no good in foreign countries so you

have to be out of the country in order to be able to use it and then when you get ready to leave, you got military payment currency and you exchange that for your regular money.

Anyway, when I sent that to my mother, I said, “Mom, this is my last dollar.”

She kept it and she cherished that more than anything that I had sent her. There’s more to correspondence than just letters. Sometimes there are keepsakes like that that mean a lot.

My last days in Vietnam: When you get to be a short timer, they take you off of your field assignments and then they, more or less, have you in the battalion area so that you don’t … they want to make sure that you go home. I was working at the officers’ club. It was nice because, see, the officers had ice. Enlisted men didn’t have ice. It was good to be able to put a can of pop on ice and then be able to drink it. I am in there, working in the officers’ club and then I had my pop on ice. Then at the same time I’d have a beer on ice, too. Everything was held accountable for, I mean, it was just exciting to do little things like that and to say, “They can’t shoot me here.”

When I came home, I couldn’t wear my uniform. My family knew, but others could not know because, in coming home, well after landing in California, coming back from Vietnam, I had a girlfriend out there and we were walking down the street and some kids were playing with firecrackers. The firecrackers went off and I’m rolling and I’m reaching. Then I realized, “you’re home now.”

So then I explained to the girl, “I’m sorry.”

This is what happened and it takes me awhile and in the meantime people laugh at you and you…you just take it in. And you know what your problem is and it’s a fact just because someone else doesn’t know what your problem is, if you know what it is, then the rules of engagement that you live by and just because someone doesn’t know doesn’t mean that you have to harm them. You have to give them a chance to evaluate what they say and then you evaluate what they say and what did they mean with what they say.

When I first came back, I was in California because of the staging that you have to go through. Debriefing. Once you come out of combat. They just don’t let you go home. They hold you and debrief you and then talk to you about a few things.

The firecracker incident was after debriefing—just a few hours before I had to get on the bus to get home. Cause I was leaving base, saying goodbye to her and then I was catching the bus in order to go home. I didn’t wear my uniform from then on when traveling.

I left active duty in August ‘67 and inactive duty in August ’69. See with the Marines you do six years. That was then. And now it’s a little bit longer. Back when I went in there was a selective service and I wish to God today that they had that because the young men that we have today have no direction. They feel that when a man talks to them that their manhood is being threatened and it’s not. All we do is try to explain to them what life’s about and not to make the mistakes that we’ve made.

I belong to several veterans’ groups and they all are important. The guys in the pool and in the locker room. We talk about things and we do things, you know, and I more or less end up being the light for the party in the locker room. Me and my big mouth, when I come in, I might be singing and they say, “Oh, here comes Al.” And then everything livens up. And they help my mental psyche in areas. Then I have the veterans here at the resource center that I work with and there are those that have problems and need help in being placed in the right direction.

I’ll help them go and get in the right direction. We have a couple of veterans that needed to apply for health benefits, so we helped them get their health benefits. We’re not an agency of any sort but we try to be helping each other. On Veterans’ Day, we go down and we meet and then we have some shut-in veterans that are missing that camaraderie. We also have Mr. Freeman who lives just a few blocks down the way. We meet at the center here on the second and fourth Monday of each month. And the second Monday is more or less our business meeting. The fourth Monday is our eating meeting. At one point, they used to bicker and I said, “Hey, we got to put a halt to that. When we sit to eat, we sit to eat, not to fight. Sometimes you can argue and you can hurt a man’s appetite and kill by doing certain things. And Mr. Freeman, who’s shut-in, he looks forward to us doing stuff because I’ve made it a point to go down and if we have dinner here, send him a plate. When, for Veterans Day, after leaving the Veterans’ Flag down there, I’ll come back and what I do is I’ll have beans and corn bread here to feed the veterans that can’t get over to the American Legion. Because we have veterans here that have no transportation and they need help, too and they have their different problems. But when we meet here, there is no membership fee here. We come, we meet and we talk.

I belong to the Marine Corps League and there’s a membership in that. I’ve got a lifetime membership with them. I meet with them and we do things. I enjoy working with and helping veterans. I can go to Chicago and I can go to McDonalds and a guy will have USMC tattoo on his arm and say, “Hey, man, can I get a quarter, can I get a quarter, please.” I’ll give him a dollar. What he does with it, I have no concern. It is out of the goodness of my heart and my volition that I help my fellow veteran. If he is going to contribute to his downfall,

that's his problem. I am going to try to contribute to his strength, to help him stand and to support him so that he can get to where he needs to get to. In the business world, one of us is going to be first and the other is going to be second. With me, teamwork is we both manage together. There is no first. There is no second. We finish this together.

This interview has brought up things and ideas and thoughts that, let's say, had a little dust on them. And sometimes when you wipe that dust off that section, you see things a little clearer. When you see things cleared it's taken off your shoulders and that's the way I look at it. By taking a burden off my shoulders and making life as easy as it is for me. By making life easy for me, it can be easy for you, too. If I make it easy for you, it's an easy step, as we both go along. And if we do things together, you know, you have to walk a mile in a man's shoes before you know how tight they are. And then if you know where I am coming from, then if I tell you where I am going, then we can go together.

MIDDLE EAST

DESERT STORM
Captain Steven Alsbro

Commander of the 542nd Transportation Company, USAR, Kingsbury, IN.

I dedicate these memories to Kelly, my beautiful, loving and supportive wife who helped make this experience tolerable given all of the stress we both endured.

Alsbro's Homecoming

July 1990: In a brief ceremony, I took over as Commander of the 542nd Transportation Company, taking command from Captain Anderson who led the company the three previous years. Although it was a bit odd for a 1st Lieutenant to take command of a company, my experience and performance as platoon leader and XO for the company must have been sufficient to give the chain of command confidence in my ability to lead the company. Plus at the time, I was the only officer in the company so I guess I was the best, the worst, the only choice. Little did we know at that time what was about to happen.

August 1990; Saddam Hussein (or as we liked to refer to him as; Sodam Insane) invades the little country of Kuwait, clearly to seize a port for his economic ambitions and ability to sell more oil. Frankly I think I was quite naive at the time because I barely took notice of this major event. I saw it on the news, and heard about the potential for troops to be deployed, but that's those active duty guys, not us reserves. I was still under the misconception that reserves would only go for the big one—the WWIII. There were enough active duty members to take care of these regional things, like Grenada and other conflicts that had come up and we were in and out fairly quickly. I had not taken notice of the fact that during the recent downsizing of the military, the Pentagon had restructured the majority of active duty to the Combat Arms and Combat Service Support Units like Transportation were now in fact 70% housed in the reserves. The concept certainly makes sense, if you are limited to how many active duty you can have, get rid of all the noncombat roles and move them to civilian jobs and keep your full timers on potential combat missions and the support guys can come in to support. So in August, I didn't think there was a chance this would impact us.

As time went on, September, then October, more and more reserve units started getting called up. Although we were on the potential list, it didn't seem likely still that we were to be affected. At the time I was working for Zenith Data Systems and things there were getting fairly bleak given some major government contracts we did not win. So in November I decided to resign and take an offer to work for Mazda Motor Manufacturing in Flat Rock, Michigan. It seemed like a good career move, and timely. What I really hadn't thought through was how timely it was given what had now been dubbed Desert Shield. Sodam Insane had continued to swing his saber and refused to vacate Kuwait, so the build-up to force him out had begun. What few people realize was that at this point, if Saddam had decided to really cement his position, he could have moved right down from Kuwait and into Saudi Arabia, and taken over several hundred miles of coastal and port areas, and there was no one there to stop him. The few US troops that were there would have put up a good fight, but they probably would have been outmanned 10-1, and their equipment was still en route so the fight would have been limited for sure. Had Saddam done this, Desert Shield and ultimately Desert Storm would not have turned out like it did. I suspect Saddam later wished that he had done this, but politically he did not think the US would ever gain enough force and support to push him out of Kuwait so he was content to stay there. Idiot!

Anyway, after I resigned from Zenith, and before I started my new job, my group commander called me, “Steve, your unit is on the list.”

I said, “Yeah. I know that, it’s been on the list.”

He said; “No, it’s on ‘the list.’ You need to start preparations.”

I hung up and started thinking, ok I understand employers have an obligation to hold an equivalent spot while you’re activated, but I don’t suspect that holds true if you’ve already resigned. And my new company, if I haven’t actually started, is there any obligation for them to hold a spot? Quite the quandary, as Kelly, my beautiful wife was pregnant with our second child, our house was just going on the market and I needed to start a new job before the call to activation. Yikes!

So I called up Mazda and said to my Human Resource contact,” Hey, you said I could start anytime, can I start this week?”

“Sure,” she said (and yes, they did know I was in the reserves and that there was a potential to get called up).

So that was a Monday, on Wednesday I started working for Mazda and on Wednesday night I got the activation call starting Thursday—the next day. I called my new boss, Takao-San and said, “I am really sorry but my reserve unit just got activated. I don’t know for how long.”

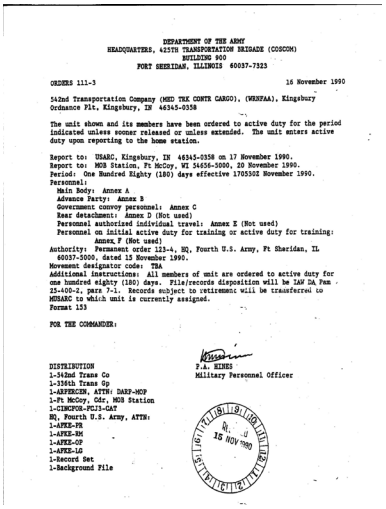
I was hoping for a quick resolution to the conflict in weeks, but knowing years wasn’t out of the question. He was good about it and just asked to be kept informed. From this point on, I have to say Mazda and the people of Mazda Motor were absolutely the best. They supported me for entire time I was gone with letters, boxes of treats and snacks and most importantly constantly reminding me that my job was waiting for me when I returned. This peace of mind was priceless to allow me to focus on the task at hand and of course my family back home.

Our house sold in one week. Amazing. Rather than buying a new house while I was gone, Kelly thought it would be best to move in with her mother so that she would have some help with Bridget, our oldest, now all of 18 months old and with baby #2 on the way. With family and house issues settled, we started our mobilization efforts with a trip to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

Fort McCoy was a typical mobilization post, everyone getting 15-20 new immunization shots, PT and rifle range training but most of the training efforts focused on two things; security and Nuclear-Biological-Chemical (NBC) training. I had an awesome NCO staff, from my Administrative leader Sgt Lucas, to my Platoon Sgt Cook. This great NCO staff made my job easy as I told them one time what needed to be done and didn’t have to worry about it, it got done. At age 25 I affectionately became known as ‘old man’ among the troops. Anyway, back to training at Fort McCoy. Security and security procedures such as how to protect yourself and your unit from likely terrorist threats that will exist within the confines of the operation became a key training element. Secondly the focus was on NBC training; which stood for Nuclear, Biological and Chemical training. This, as it should, scared the hell out of us all.

The US had good reason to believe that Saddam had authorized his field commanders to use chemical weapons as needed, which is one reason that in the early stages of the ground war, speed was such a critical factor. If we moved on them so fast they wouldn’t be able to use these weapons because they would frankly then be using them on themselves in terms of close proximity. I never heard any confirmation for sure about this, but I personally think these weapons were used in limited applications, as I recall several times where NBC equipment was reported to be going off (sounding alarm) and it was blown off as malfunctioning. No evidence to this comment, but maybe this is where some of the Gulf War Syndrome was created? Anyway, not looking to stir up any controversy, it’s just an observation and my opinion.

The other thing of interest I recall from Fort McCoy was looking at the map of Saudi Arabia one day and being told, this is the area that you guys will be operating in. I was shocked because the area—about 400 miles long—was supported by one two-lane road called (Main Supply Route) MSR Dodge. Even more shocking, this MSR ran along the Iraq and Saudi border



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 425TH TRANSPORTATION BRIGADE (COSCOM)
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ORDERS 111-3 16 November 1990

542nd Transportation Company (MED TRK CONTR CARGO), (WENFAA), Kingsbury Ordnance Plt, Kingsbury, IN 46345-0358

The unit shown and its members have been ordered to active duty for the period indicated unless sooner released or unless extended. The unit enters active duty upon reporting to the home station.

Report to: USARC, Kingsbury, IN 46345-0358 on 17 November 1990.
Report to: MOB Station, Ft McCoy, WI 54656-5000, 20 November 1990.
Period: One Hundred Eighty (180) days effective 1705302 November 1990.
Personnel:
Main Body: Annex A
Advance Party: Annex B
Government convoy personnel: Annex C
Rear detachment: Annex D (Not used)
Personnel authorized individual travel: Annex E (Not used)
Personnel on initial active duty for training or active duty for training: Annex F (Not used)
Authority: Permanent order 123-4, HQ, Fourth U.S. Army, Ft Sheridan, IL 60037-5000, dated 15 November 1990.
Movement designator code: TBA
Additional instructions: All members of unit are ordered to active duty for one hundred eighty (180) days. File/records disposition will be IAW DA Pam 25-400-2, para 7-1. Records subject to retirement will be transferred to MDSARC to which unit is currently assigned.
Format 123

FOR THE COMMANDER:

P.A. HINES
Military Personnel Officer

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15 NOV 1990

The order mobilizing the unit.

Kingsbury unit takes 1st step to Saudi Arabia

By Rosemary Shaw-Powell
News-Dispatch staff writer

KINGSBURY — Despite a full parking lot, there was no activity outside the thickly wooded Kingsbury reserve center yesterday morning.

But inside the World War II vintage building, solemn-faced soldiers passed each other in the narrow halls, or battled the confines of nearly bursting duffel bags, as they struggled to stuff in one more item before attempting to latch them closed. The bags lay in sporadic lumps along the paths of red-and-white linoleum flooring.

Pages A6, 7: More on Guard unit and the Gulf.

Two National Guard units train at the facility, and as of 1 a.m. yesterday, the 542nd Transportation Company was activated and was preparing for duty in Saudi Arabia.

"We're pretty much on a roll," said company Commander Lt. Steve Alsbro. "We know now that the president is ordering the 542nd activated for 180 days and we're to arrive at Fort McCoy, Wis., on Nov. 20."

Alsbro said the unit has been told it will be deployed to Saudi Arabia, but the soldiers don't know when, where or what their mission will be. [illegible] Fort McCoy will be for personnel training and could last up to six weeks, Alsbro said.

"Ours is a medium-to-heavy truck company," Alsbro said. "We haul anything within our weight and height restrictions. We haul long and short, down the street or for several days. We don't know what we'll move in the Middle East, but it could be anything from beans to bullets to blankets."

In October, the unit, 175 strong, was divided into three groups and sent to Germany as support personnel for other transportation companies stationed there.

"While we received and performed some much-needed training," Alsbro said, "that operation

•See GUARD, Page A6

Sgt. Kenneth Mortell puts on his gas mask. Photo/Jennifer Flowers

Newspaper article on mobilization

all the way to Jordan. I said, no, there must be a mistake. We're an OTR (over the road) line haul unit. We're supposed to be in the rear (sometimes referred to as REMF) working the port, bringing supplies to a safe point where the tactical transport guys take it to the front lines. We're not supposed to operate on the front lines. There must be some mistake with this map.

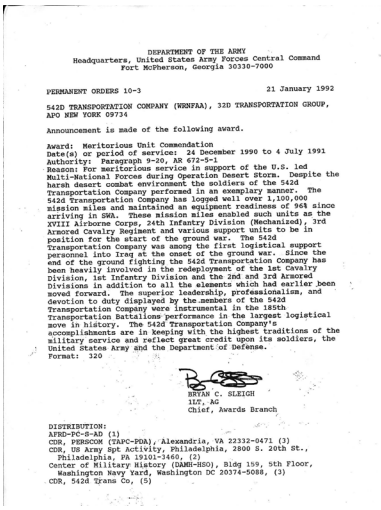
Well …. There was no mistake; we spent the majority of our time, in fact, on the border. Actually no one actually knew exactly where the 'line' was. There was no road, and there was no welcome to Iraq signs posted, so we guessed we were on the border.

I showed up at Fort McCoy with no platoon leaders and no Warrant Officer (WO) to run my maintenance platoon. Sure enough, here they come. We were assigned two second lieutenants and one first lieutenant as my executive officer (XO), as well as a CWO for maintenance. Its tough coming into a new unit, especially one that has mostly been the same and together for many years, but all the guys did a good job of assuming their new roles. Lt. Scott Pollard, my XO really turned out to be a godsend. Throughout the entire deployment he continued to keep me informed on what was going on in the troops' morale and performance as well as being my sounding board for important decisions needing to be made. Thanks again Scott!

I recall the worst part about Fort McCoy was worrying about the unknown. How will this unfold? Will they use NBC weapons? How many months or years will we be in the fight? It had been made clear from the start that the Pentagon's approach to this conflict was not going to be like Vietnam from a unit integrity standpoint. Units would deploy together and return together, even if that was years and not months. Thinking about this certainly can be quite stressful.

My final memory of Fort McCoy is ironically the fact that we allowed (and even I went) skiing on Ft McCoy's little ski hill. In retrospect the opportunity to have broken a leg or get hurt and become non-deployable was quite high. I'm surprised that the superiors didn't shut this down actually.

So our equipment hit the rails, and we wait for the word to fly out. It took about 5 weeks from our activation date of 11-17-90 for that word to come. We tried to keep the troops focused, but considering Thanksgiving and the Holiday Season was upon us, it was tough for everyone. Our call came, and on Christmas Eve we leave the US bound for Saudi Arabia.



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, United States Army Forces Central Command
Fort McPherson, Georgia 30330-7000

PERMANENT ORDERS 10-3 21 January 1992

542D TRANSPORTATION COMPANY (WEMFAA), 32D TRANSPORTATION GROUP, APO NEW YORK 09734

Announcement is made of the following award.

Award: Meritorious Unit Commendation
Date(s) or period of service: 24 December 1990 to 4 July 1991
Authority: Paragraph 9-20, AR 672-5-1
Reason: For meritorious service in support of the U.S. led Multi-National Forces during Operation Desert Storm. Despite the harsh desert combat environment the soldiers of the 542d Transportation Company performed in an exemplary manner. The 542d Transportation Company has logged well over 1,100,000 mission miles and maintained an equipment readiness of 96% since arriving in SWA. These mission miles enabled such units as the XVIII Airborne Corps, 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and various support units to be in position for the start of the ground war. The 542d Transportation Company was among the first logistical support personnel into Iraq at the onset of the ground war. Since the end of the ground fighting the 542d Transportation Company has been heavily involved in the redeployment of the 1st Cavalry Division, 1st Infantry Division and the 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions in addition to all the elements which had earlier been moved forward. The superior leadership, professionalism, and devotion to duty displayed by the members of the 542d Transportation Company were instrumental in the 185th Transportation Battalions performance in the largest logistical move in history. The 542d Transportation Company's accomplishments are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon its soldiers, the United States Army and the Department of Defense.
Format: 320

BRIAN C. SLEIGH
1LT, AG
Chief, Awards Branch

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AFRD-PT-S-AD (1)
CDR, PERSCOM (TAPC-PDA), Alexandria, VA 22332-0471 (3)
CDR, US Army Sys Activity, Philadelphia, 2800 S. 20th St., Philadelphia, PA 19101-3460, (2)
Center of Military History (DAMH-HSO), Bldg 159, 5th Floor, Washington Navy Yard, Washington DC 20374-5088, (3)
CDR, 542d Trans Co, (5)

The trucks of the 542nd Transportation Company drove over 1.4 million miles with no serious accidents or injuries.

Still not knowing what Saddam had for an Air Force or Air Defense Artillery (ADA) when flying into or near enemy territory, you have to sit there and wonder if we are being targeted. As it turns out Saddam's little Air Force turned out to be grounded quickly by our Air Superiority which we established very quickly and ultimately would be the key to winning this conflict quickly and with limited casualties. We land and are moved to the mass storage hangar at the Dammam port.

Up to this point, most military exercises I have been involved in were staged and set up as training exercises, so there was always a challenge but it was structured. I remember thinking, you've gotta be kidding me, no one knows where our equipment is, or if it's here, or when we can get our hands on it. There were thousands of containers showing up and it seems to be a free for all, first come first serve. Eventually we found our equipment, most of it anyway and moved on to a famous housing area called Khobar Towers. We stayed in Khobar Towers and operated out of the location starting to move equipment up and into the front lines in support of the troops who had already been there for several weeks and when the air war started on January 15th or there about, we found ourselves in MOPP 4 (Protective equipment for NBC attacks) as every couple of hours as Saddam tried to launch Skud missiles at us. It didn't take a genius to figure out, we were in a complex of 18 high rise apartments full of US troops, and you think he's shooting them at us? We were never so happy to move from a place with warm running water and AC to a place commonly known as somewhere in the Desert. We moved to Log base Bravo, about 20 miles south of the Kuwait border and in direct support now of the 18th Airborne Corps.

COMBAT OPERATIONS COMMENCE

We were supporting the 18th Airborne, and the 6th French Foreign Legion on the now famous end around maneuver that moved over 200,000 troops over 300 miles in less than 3 weeks without being detected by Iraq. We operated out of Log Base Bravo for about three weeks, running operations 24/7 in what seemed like an endless set of missions to move equipment, water, rations and ammunition northwest. Our troops followed very rough sketches of maps, routes and destination points, as there was no GPS for them to use.

Directions like, drive MSR Dodge (it was known as Dodge before the war, but became famous as the MSR where you needed to dodge the oncoming tankers, trucks and land cruisers and the stretch of road that killed more people in the war effort than did Saddam's elite Republican Guard) for about 100 miles, when you come over a hill and see a tree on the right, go about 3 miles past and turn right at the sign saying xx (usually a small board with painted symbol, so quite easy to miss after driving a truck on a dangerous 2 lane road for 8 hours). Go north for 15 minutes until you see the MPs, follow their instructions from there. This was a typical direction for one of our convoys, how more troops didn't get lost I have no idea! There was one famous incident where in fact a convoy of two vehicles got disoriented and turned the wrong way, and quickly found themselves driving north directly into Iraq. They were subsequently taken as POWs. Again, I emphasize our trucks drove over 1.4 million miles with no severe injuries or accidents.

As we moved the troops and equipment, we were able to listen to the radio on occasion, but really had no access to TV or CNN. We could see the sorties flying over us every night, the bombing missions being a very successful campaign for the allies. It was truly amazing, sitting out on our homemade bench, watching a line of planes in the sky going over us north to Iraq and then a line of planes returning. As my XO Scott and I would say over and over, man it was good to own the skies! As we would sit there we would also contemplate the war, its consequences and how long we might be in action. It was still hard to tell, the ground war hadn't started yet and we were still under the belief that the Republican Guard was an elite fighting force. We both had families back home and understood how hard it was for them, not knowing day by day where we were or what we were doing. On the other hand, Scott used to joke around, it's the biggest game in town, the world is watching and if we were not here we would wish we were. As with most major events in one's life you are able to look back and think about what an incredible experience it was and forget about the harsh realities of war and that the reason you're carrying a weapon, gas mask, flack vest is because someone out there is trying to kill you. It's funny the things you remember, but I do remember M&Ms. As transporters, things sometimes showed up that we didn't question, and one I remember is bags and bags of M&Ms available to us. I think I ate so many that to this day I do not crave them.

As the air war and Desert Shield turned into a ground war Desert Storm, our support moved up to Log Base Charlie. Log Base C was our own little oasis in the desert, we think in Saudi Arabia, but it was actually so close to the border it could have very well been in Iraq. As the ground war started, we were following the 101st Air Assault division right up into Iraq.

There are certain things you remember as a Commander, as you have others' lives under your control and direction. Having good NCOs is key. I'll never forget the talk about who should be in the first convoy, the one most likely to take on resistance and fire from the Iraqi forces. My XO, Lt Pollard stepped up and said I want to lead the first convoy. As I said, good NCOs and good officers make a commander's job the easy one. The progress we made in the first few hours and first day was incredible. It was one of those too good to be true scenarios where you really needed to keep from getting elated and then let your guard down. Our troops never did, they were taking POWs so fast that they couldn't be processed in time, so our troops had them drop weapons, searched for explosives and then sent walking south to camps where they would be fed and kept. Many in this region were starving at this point. They had no will to fight and when their tank encountered our much superior air and tank equipment, they understood quickly to resist was signing their own death warrant. It became for many of the Iraqi troops a balance between when they could surrender, because they had to wait until the Iraqi Regular Army officers fled or risk being shot as traitors. Once we stormed in, it became clear most didn't want to be there and were improperly trained and equipped let alone starved. We operated out of this site until ground war was done, which thank God was only a few days. We continued to operate from this location for another 4 weeks starting the clean up and recovery process.

When the ground war was called off, we quickly moved into Kuwait, and were in Kuwait City the day after the ground war was called off. Our reception was incredible, after driving through and around the smoke filled city we found ourselves in the heart of the city and feeling what must have been similar for those troops on VE day must have felt with people dancing in the streets, cheering for Allied and US troops. You could feel the excitement in the air knowing what we had done so quickly to Saddam, and much of the world had insisted couldn't be done or that it would take months/years to accomplish. As we took up our positions in Kuwait City, we found ourselves operating out at the airport, and moving mostly munitions out of the city and back into Saudi for the demolition experts to detonate. Handling the munitions was risky business for my troops because many of them were very old and in deteriorated condition. I was also concerned that we would find and handle chemical weapons, which we were not really equipped or trained to do. We didn't find any, at least any that were marked accordingly, so all the movements went well and the detachment that we had brought forward for the operation stayed in this location for about 2 weeks. I recall several things of interest while in Kuwait City, which included our ability to get into the royal palace and see much of the destruction caused by

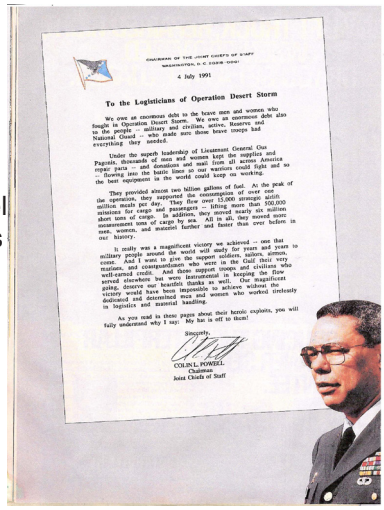
Saddam's troops. Several of us one day went up into the landmark restaurant that was reminiscent of a ball in the sky, and this place was about 40 stories in the air and was totally destroyed. The windows were all broken out of the place and it was extremely dangerous to be walking around this building, especially since it probably had never been cleared properly and could have contained booby traps all around the building.

Other things in Kuwait City included talking with the locals, where we heard many stories of torture and rape from the locals during the occupation by Iraqi troops. Hearing these stories made you feel as though we really were right for our mission to kick out the Iraqi troops. When the ground war ended, and we moved into Kuwait, we entered via the main route between Bagdad and Kuwait, which was also known as Highway of Hell. There was a stretch of this road that was littered with vehicles and tanks which you could tell were all looking to escape. Stories went that as the ground war quickly turned against Iraqi forces, and the Republican Guard ran from Kuwait City north, that any remaining officers started grabbing stolen cars and tried to get back to Baghdad. Unfortunately for them, we had our attack helicopters just waiting over the ridge for these guys, and that's why as I said before, it's good to own the sky. As we spent time in Kuwait City we could see the fortified entrenchments that the Iraqi troops had build expecting that any Allied invasion would definitely come from the sea. The troops that sat out there posed to come ashore were a perfect decoy for the end around I talked about, as we know now the Iraqi commanders felt it was a decoy and never saw the full force of the attack until it was too late.

After our time in Kuwait City was complete, we moved back to KKMC (King Khalid Military City) and operated out of there for several months moving equipment around to storage areas and port areas. Really nothing special about operating out of this location, we lived in our tents on a secured base in the middle of the desert. Working with 24/7 operations, you find yourself needing a break from the monotony of dispatching missions, maintenance of the trucks and of course endless reporting of any military operation. My outlet became the gym at KKMC, which was this incredible facility including an Olympic swimming pool. Being 110-120 degrees every day, this daily ritual became my relief valve, my time to exercise and meditate thinking of my family, what I would do when we were finally able to return home.

As we awaited our orders to return home, it was clear that we were clearly doing something very important and generally speaking all of my troops were engaged. We could see when we moved other troops that they had been disengaged from the action since the ground war was over. I knew from this, that we would be one of the last ones out and our redeployment date kept getting pushed and pushed back. Things within the ranks started getting very tense, and every time we had to report a delayed date, keeping positive attitudes became more and more challenging for my NCOs. To make matters worse, there were several of our troops who had family emergencies and had to go home for these, but because the ground war was over, the Army decided that any troops who returned home early would stay redeployed (not return), so you can imagine the number of family emergencies that came up including ones such as bereavement requests of non related parties, or my favorite one as I recall was a family farm emergency where someone needed to get back to the farm to help plant or the crops would not get done in time to harvest.

It was during this time that I knew I needed to lead by example and not try to get home, but I actually had a good reason to get home as Kelly was pregnant with our second child. On April 15th, 1991, I called the hospital just moments after she gave birth to Kevin our son. Thank God, everything went well and her family and mine were able to be there for her and support her during the birth. I wish I could have been there, but I knew I couldn't and thank Kelly again for her strength as a mother and wife to never make me feel bad about missing such a blessed and significant event. It was several weeks later, I think the first week of June where Kelly's nerves and strength was tested again. Kevin developed a fever and went into the hospital at 6 weeks, and in such a situation you never know how quickly things can go bad. Kelly didn't have patience this time, as she needed me there. She went to the Red Cross and insisted they find my troop location immediately and get me the message that our son was in the hospital. It unfortunately took 3 days for me to get the message, and when I made that call home I knew it was too late, that either Kevin was ok or not. The walk to the phones I remember distinctively as a long walk, full of concern and anticipation. Again, thank God Kevin was fine and was already home. Kelly wasn't impressed with the Army or Red Cross's ability to contact me to say the least.



4 July 1991

To the Logisticians of Operation Desert Storm

We owe an enormous debt to the brave men and women who fought in Operation Desert Storm. We owe an enormous debt also to the people — active and civilian, active, Reserve and National Guard — who made sure those brave troops had everything they needed.

Under the superb leadership of Lieutenant General Cisa Pagnoli, thousands of men and women kept the supplies and repair parts — and donations and mail from all across America — flowing into the battle lines so our warriors could fight and so the best equipment in the world could keep on working.

They provided almost two billion gallons of fuel. At the peak of the operation, they supported the consumption of over one million meals per day. They flew over 15,000 strategic airlift missions for cargo and passengers — lifting more than 500,000 short tons of cargo. In addition, they moved nearly six million measurement tons of cargo by sea. All in all, they moved more men, women, and materiel further and faster than ever before in our history.

It really was a magnificent victory we achieved — one that military people around the world will study for years and years to come. And I want to give the support soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen who were in the Gulf their very well-earned credit. And those support troops and civilians who served elsewhere but were instrumental in keeping the flow going, deserve our heartfelt thanks as well. Our magnificent victory would have been impossible to achieve without the dedicated and determined men and women who worked tirelessly in logistics and materiel handling.

As you read in these pages about their heroic exploits, you will fully understand why I say: My hat is off to them!

Sincerely,

COLIN L. POWELL
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Letter from Colin Powell

We de-mobilized and returned home without a single member missing or KIA, and only several casualties mostly due to driving accidents. As we returned on July 2nd, to Fort McCoy the reception was incred-

ible. Our families joined us in force to welcome the plane at the hangar. On July 4th, we were just in time to represent the 542nd in local parades and celebrations. The guys and gals of the 542nd initially really didn't want to participate in the parade. They just wanted to go home and be with their families, but we insisted they come (easy to do in the military, call a mandatory formation). In the end, I think it was a wonderful and fitting conclusion for each and every one of us, really bringing home how important and how successful the 542nd was in helping the cause.

The Sage Brothers: Redmond, William, John, and James
Essays on Military Service—Korea to Vietnam
One Family's Experience
BY Redmond Sage, Army; 1st Lieutenant, Artillery
William Sage, Army; Corporal, Transportation Corps
John Sage, Air Force; Airman 2C, Fire Control Systems
James Sage, Navy/Marines; Petty Officer 3, Medics

INTRODUCTION

While I was writing some notes for my children and grandchildren about my life it occurred to me that in my family there are four boys, all of whom served in the United States military services. Four brothers with the same family genes but with different personalities who served in different branches of the service and whose lives span two thirds of the twentieth century, perhaps the most war ridden century in history. Their stories cover the period from World War II through Korea, the Cold War, Cuban Missile Crisis and into the Vietnam war. Wouldn't it be interesting to tell the stories of these four men side by side and be able to contrast and observe the differences and similarities reflected by their memories, not only of the times but of the men as well.

Included here are excerpts from the stories of Redmond (Red), the oldest, was born at the start of the Great Depression, November 6, 1929 and James (Jim) was born May 17, 1945.

WORLD WAR II and Korea
By Redmond Sage

On my twelfth birthday, no one suspected how our lives would change in just one month; December Seventh, Nineteen Forty One, the "date which will live in infamy." From that December day everything our elders did seemed aimed at the war.

We had scrap drives to collect scrap metal and paper, bond drives to sell war bonds. As kids, we did not have enough to buy a bond but we bought savings stamps and pasted them into a booklet. When we had eighteen dollars and fifty cents worth of war savings stamps we traded the booklet in on a twenty five dollar war bond. We had civil defense. My mother was an Air Raid Warden and I was a Messenger. During Air Raid Drills we would go around the neighborhood checking to see that all the houses were blacked out. I don't know how they expected enemy airplanes to get all the way to Dayton, Ohio. I still have my handbook. All the comic book heroes became military people or were helping out the military with their special powers.

The Japanese and Germans were portrayed as monsters with big ugly toothy grins and mean faces. Before this, of course, the war had been going on in Europe and the Far East. We had some knowledge of it through the newspapers and school. So, we were playing at war before Pearl Harbor. One of our toys was lead soldiers. These were similar to the plastic ones of today. They were about three inches tall, hollow, made by casting lead in molds and then painted with uniforms and camouflage. Most of them were in the style of the soldiers of the first world war. There were riflemen, mortar men, horse soldiers, officers, cannons, tanks and all the other pieces of war. We had a big area at the back yard, about ten foot by ten foot, which was all dug up and made a great battlefield.

We dug miniature trenches, dugouts and built roads and headquarters. I wonder if there are still some of those lead soldiers buried out there. Later we cast our own soldiers. They were about half the size of the store bought ones and were solid not hollow. No paint on them either. I don't know if you can even get lead today to make your own toys. I suppose so since you can get it to make bullets.

Redmond's Essay

Of course, we played Cowboys and Indians with cap guns and home-made rifles made from broom-

sticks. I remember three of the guns which I particularly liked. One was a western model with a white plastic handle that had a long-horn cow head cast into the grip. It was just like the ones you saw in the movies of the time. The second was a double barrel pirate gun. It fired two caps one on each barrel. You had to cock it by pulling back each hammer separately, and then put a cap into each slot and it was ready to fire. It was very elaborate with fake engraving and a nicely curved handle, again, just like you see in the pirate movies of the time. The third gun was unique and I have never seen anything like it. It was sort of a futuristic gun. Its trigger was large—a part of the handle—and you squeezed it with your whole hand. When you did, the front part of the barrel moved backward pinching a paper tape between it and a rubber grommet attached to the rear part of the barrel. While this was going on air was being compressed in the rear part of the barrel. As the trigger approached its limit the air was released which popped a hole in the paper tape making a loud bang. Releasing the trigger fed a new part of the tape into the barrel gap and you were ready to fire again. Now, how's that for unique and futuristic in the 1930's?

Playing cowboys and Indians migrated to playing soldiers. We had helmet liners that were rejects from the manufacture of the real ones in the World War II style. I don't think we had camouflage shirts and pants like you do today. This was the same year I joined the Boy Scouts. I wasn't a Cub Scout; we did not have a pack at our school or church at that time. I moved right up through the ranks and enjoyed scouting very much. One of my school buddies and I had a friendly competition about getting merit badges and therefore about moving through the ranks. We both won a trip to see a Cincinnati Reds game as a reward for our progress.

I eventually became Junior Assistant Scoutmaster.

Perhaps Scouting helped stimulate my interest in things military. In our house while I was growing up there were bookcases on both sides of our fireplace. In one of those was an R.O.T.C. manual from sometime after World War I. I never asked him about it but it must have been my Dad's, probably from St. Mary's College which was the predecessor of the University of Dayton. He went there briefly and the book must have been from that time. I was fascinated by it. There were chapters on marching (close order drill), Manual of arms (how to do all those fancy drill maneuvers with a rifle), First Aid (I think that is where I first found out about stuff like Paris Green Larvacide). We were only allowed to have toy guns although dad had a bee-bee gun which we could never use. So all this stuff about guns, shooting and what was going on with the war was very romantic and sounded like something neat.

ROTC

At the University of Dayton, ROTC was a required course for two years. I became a member of the Pershing Rifles which was an honorary military society. Through it I was involved in special drill meets with similar groups from other universities. I was on the rifle team and earned a letter.

When I became a junior I was going to continue with R.O.T.C. but the classes conflicted with those I had to take for my math major. So I had to drop out. I did get a certificate that I had completed the two year basic ROTC course and would be eligible to enter an officer training course if I were ever to go on active duty.

I found out that I could use it to take a correspondence course to become an officer in the National Guard. So I joined the Guard and signed up for the course. It took me two years of study to complete and I passed the exam and the officer board and became a second lieutenant in the Ohio National Guard. Sunday morning, June 25, 1950 the Korean War started.

NATIONAL GUARD

I enlisted in the National Guard and went in as a recruit which was the lowest rank the Army ever had. It was so low that they did away with it because it was considered demeaning. So that's how I got to be a private. I was in the Field Artillery, Headquarters Battery, 136th Field Artillery Battalion, 37th Infantry Division. Our symbol, the patch you wear on your shoulder was supposed to represent a buckeye and is part of the flag of the State of Ohio Because of my education and the fact I was taking the officers course they wanted me in the S-3 or operations section of the battalion. I was in the fire direction center which was the group of people who figured out the proper settings for the guns and ammunition based on the target type and location that was reported to us by the forward observer. During this time I went from private to corporal to sergeant to sergeant first class.

We went to two weeks of summer camp each summer and got to fire the guns. Of course we had to do all the other stuff associated with the military like KP, inspections, marksmanship, etc. We went to places like Camp Atterbury, Indiana, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, and Camp Perry, Ohio. One event with marksmanship was interesting. We were at Camp Perry, Ohio which is right on Lake Erie west of Cleveland. It was and is a post for national shooting championships in addition to a National Guard training center. Of course I was

on the University of Dayton Rifle Team and had a lot of shooting experience. We were shooting the M1 rifle on a firing line that must have been thirty or more targets long. After we has shot however many rounds they wanted us to shoot they would lower the targets so you could no longer see them. Then they would mark your best shot, send up the target and show where the shot had hit with a round marker on the end of a stick. My first shot was a Bulls-Eye and so were those of many of the others. They kept doing this for each round fired and gradually the shots moved to lower and lower rings of the target and eventually got down to complete misses at which time they waved a red flag on the end of the stick. This was called Maggie's drawers and indicated a complete miss. I kept getting bulls-eyes, the target kept going up and coming down and eventually there was just me and one other guy down the line whose target was still being raised and who was still getting bulls-eyes. The excitement on the line was palpable. Even the officers were cheering. Then, the last shot. my shot was a nine. The other guy still had a bull. I didn't win for the fire direction center but everybody was happy though and congratulated me.

In 1951 the Ohio National Guard was activated to go to Korea as replacements for the people who were already there. It was the end of a semester and I had one more semester to go before I was to graduate. The National Guard would not let me delay going onto active duty so I looked for other alternatives. Luckily I had taken some art classes at the Dayton Art Institute which was affiliated with the University. The University let me use the credits for those classes as electives and that gave me exactly the right number of credits to graduate. So, I went off to active duty and was graduated in absentia the following June.

FORT SILL

I was assigned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma to attend the Basic Battery Officers course which was about three months long. I had a 1941 Plymouth sedan, well worn. I drove it all the way from Dayton to Fort Sill, Oklahoma without any major problems except a flat tire and lots of oil usage. The Plymouth was pretty beat when I got there but I still drove it for a while. Then the car bug got me. After all I was headed for Korea. "Might as well live it up while I can", I thought. "After all, I'm an old man, 23 years old, right"? So, I shopped around Oklahoma City and found this beautiful 1950 yellow Studebaker convertible. It had tan leather seats, overdrive transmission and a racy look. Just the thing for a young Second Lieutenant. I sold the Plymouth for the amount I paid for it. The guys I sold it to (Mid-Easterners I think) didn't like it but they needed a car and it was the only one available. That's car dealing! This was my first experience with getting a car loan and it went very well.

We went to class everyday except Saturday and Sunday. Every morning, noon and evening we would march to and from classes while they played the Colonel Bogey March on the public address system. That is why, to this day, I whistle it. It is built into my head. On weekends we went to Oklahoma City. That is where I had my first Filet Mignon steak. And that was just in a little diner that we liked. The diner also was the first place I ran into Lawry's Seasoned Salt. There was an Indian Reservation near the post and we visited it to see Indian Ceremonies and the Buffalo. (Did you know when the chips are down, the buffalo is empty)?

There was also a big artillery museum on the post. I believe it is the place where Geronimo was imprisoned. Sometime I would like to go back and see that. I met a young officer my age from Puerto Rico, E. Seda Morales, and we did a lot of these things together. He taught me two Spanish songs, "Adios Muchachos" which had an English version, "I Get Ideas", and the other "Solamente una vez" which also had an English version, "You Belong To My Heart". There were two other Puerto Rican officers in our class but they were older. They got special coffee beans shipped from their home. To make their coffee they boiled these until it became thick syrup. Then for a cup of coffee they poured hot coffee cream into a cup and then put in a big spoonful of the syrup and stirred it up. Too strong for me!

As for the military educational aspects, this was where they tried to teach me how to observe artillery from an airplane. I have no sense of direction and when the pilot turned the aircraft after we had fired a shot I had completely lost it and he would have to point it out to me, the observer! Even though I had always wanted to fly airplanes I would have been no good at it. I graduated 48th in the class of 117 and was assigned back to the 37th division at Camp Polk, Louisiana.

I only had about five days for the trip and decided to visit Dayton on the way. Of course, that was out of the way and added many miles to the trip. That was the first time I drove straight through, one thousand miles, twenty four hours. I took No-Doze to stay awake and it sped up my heart so much I thought I would have a heart attack. That's when I decided that drugs definitely were not for me. Because of the delay in route to visit home I got to Camp Polk late and was chewed out for it. So, in a sense, I was AWOL from the National Guard just like President Bush. Big Deal!

CAMP POLK

Life at Camp Polk was the same, day after day, Basic Training. Men who had returned from Korea were assigned as training cadre to teach us from the experience they had gained from actually being there. I was sent to another school, CBR, which stands for Chemical, Biological and Radiological Warfare, at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

This was near San Antonio. I think it was only two or three weeks long. Most of what we learned was how to protect ourselves from these types of weapons. The most dramatic class was the one in which we had to go into a tear gas filled building, without a gas mask, tell someone our name and serial number, then put on the mask, clear it and exit at the other end. Sort of a teary experience. I did get to visit the Alamo and San Antonio was a nice town. I don't remember it having the nicely landscaped river at that time but I think it did. We just didn't have enough time to see it all.

When we returned to our units we were supposed to be the teachers and resource people for training them. I set up a demonstration of a tear gas attack using tear gas grenades. They burn to set off the gas. One of them rolled under a Jeep and started a grass fire right under it. I ran to it, started it, and was lucky to move it out of the way while the fire was extinguished. I could have had to pay for a Jeep if it had burned up. This was my first experience with losing or almost losing a Jeep. More about that later! Other than that most of life at Camp Polk was boring. It is now called Fort Polk.

POW INTERROGATOR SCHOOL

Back at Camp Polk, one day during lunch, someone delivered the mail at the mess hall and there was the letter that ordered me to Korea. I knew what it was right away and my hands were shaking while I opened it. In fact one of the guys at the table made fun of me for that. It ordered me to Korea with a delay in route to attend the Prisoner of War Interrogator School at Fort Riley, Kansas. This was a two month school. I considered this a real break. Maybe I wouldn't have to go to Korea as a Forward Observer. Their life expectancy was about one patrol.

Fort Riley was the Intelligence School for the military. It is located near Manhattan, Kansas and not too far from Kansas City, Missouri which is a very cosmopolitan city for being "out west". My experience at Fort Riley was similar to my experience at Fort Sill, classes and study all week then off to Kansas City on the weekend. I had a couple of friends that I would go with. One of them, Owen Thurnow, was from Independence which is very close to Kansas City. He knew where to go and also knew some nice girls. He introduced me to my first romance, not girl friend, romance. She was a photographer at a big department store, Pecks of Kansas City. Her name was Lee (Dorthaleen) French. She was a hillbilly from Arkansas.

Lee and I corresponded during the war. She was not Catholic and both she and I thought that would not be good. So before the war was over I stopped writing to her. That was not a very nice way to do it, for her maybe even worse than receiving a "Dear John" letter.

It is one of the things I did that I regret. After the war, while I was at Purdue, I tried to contact her but was not successful.

2 Jun 1952
Today I had to teach a fire direction class It lasted 4 hours. I think I got along pretty good. Sometime next week I'm going to have to give a class to the whole battalion on safeguarding military information. That will probably be a rough one.

After the school was over I had two weeks leave and went home to Dayton. I did all the preparation for going to war. I sold my car, made a will, gave power of attorney to my father, visited my old math professor Doc Schraut (he gave me a soldiers prayer book to take with me), and visited all my friends. It was almost Christmas and everyone was busy. It was cold weather and I caught a bad cold running around. I had to report to Fort Lewis, Washington, near Seattle, for shipment overseas.

I left a few days early and went back to Kansas City to visit Lee on the way. Kansas City was beautiful at Christmas time. There is a section of the city that they decorate with lights that are strung along all the edges of the buildings so that each building looks like it is drawn in lights and the effect is to make it look like Bethlehem. I think they still do that today.

19 Jun 52
Last night I slept in a fox hole on the O.P. We were shooting at night and I was one of the observers.

When I got to Fort Lewis near Seattle it was cold and damp and I still had my cold. I was there for a few days (hurry up and wait) so I went to the medics. They gave me some APCs (the Army's all purpose capsule) and sent me on my way. The time came to leave and they put me on a commercial airliner (I guess they were anxious to get me) and sent me off to Anchorage, Alaska. This was a civilian flight and we landed at the city airport. The thing that fascinated me was that there were machine gun emplacements around the airport and even on top of the terminal. It was my first trip out of the country and this sight impressed me as to how it must be to live under the gun.

We stayed there only briefly and then re-boarded for the next leg of the journey, from Anchorage to Attu. Attu is the last little island in the Aleutian chain and is only about big enough for a landing strip. We had been flying all day and it was about midnight when we landed on this little airstrip. It was in the middle of a blizzard, snow, wind, cold, bad conditions. Since we had not eaten they took us into a Quonset hut for dinner. The food was frozen swordfish steak, I mean till frozen not just previously frozen. That is why, to this day, I do not eat swordfish steak even in a gourmet restaurant. When we left Attu we flew to Tokyo.

In Tokyo we were stationed at Camp Drake and went through all the processing for Korean service. Still, there was no treatment for my cold except for APCs. It took about a week for the processing and assignments so we got to see the sights of Japan, at least of Tokyo. We shopped at the Ginza market which is a large open air market, one of the most famous in the world. They have raw fish hanging on hooks, vegetables everywhere and any kind if trinket you might want. I had not brought a camera with me and so I bought one in the PX. Prices on everything in the Ginza are negotiable. The merchants will follow you along trying to get you to buy something. I wonder if it is still like that. We saw an Officers Club burn down. Scary when you are an officer. In Japan it is said, they take the brakes out of the taxis and install a big horn instead. Then they drive as fast as they can. Also scary! We spent Christmas in Tokyo with the usual Turkey dinner.

KOREA

When they had finished the processing we were put on a boat (the Marine Lynx) for the trip to Pusan. It only took a couple of days as I recall. We arrived on New Years Eve. We went directly from the boat to a train. It was colder than h.l with snow and ice. The train they put us on was an old one with cars that had no glass in the windows. The seats were made of wooden slats like those that used to be in the old street cars when I was a kid. There was a GI can at each end of each car with an oil fired immersion heater. (A GI can is just a big galvanized garbage can). The cans were filled with C-Rations being heated for our food. This was also the total heat for the car. We were on our way to Seoul. At least we didn't have to walk. Seoul was about a hundred miles and it took us twenty four hours to make the trip. We stopped at every little burg along the way. I don't know why because it was a military train. Maybe we were taking on other military personnel. There were Korean people milling around the train at every stop. Even kids were running around with the skimpiest amount of clothes on that you can imagine. Some of the people were even without shoes. I don't know how they could stand the cold.

When we arrived at Seoul it was another week of processing and being assigned to a unit. We had to turn in all our money and we were issued military money. This was supposedly to prevent Black Market transactions. I still had my bad cold as you can imagine from my description of the trip so far. And still there was just the standard ordinary Army treatment, APCs. I was assigned to the 505 Military Intelligence Service Platoon which was attached to the Seventh Infantry Division. The division was on the front line and I was sent to their replacement depot. On the way we crossed the thirty eighth parallel, the border between North and South Korea.

At the replacement depot I was assigned to the Platoon Headquarters at the Division. I was still getting only APC's as treatment for my cold. Here I was issued my carbine, ammunition, combat gear etc. and sent off to regimental headquarters. There I was assigned a bunk with the MPs (Military Police) because that was the location of the prisoner compound and the MPs were responsible for prisoners, bad guys and enemies.

The first night I was there they had an officer's party. Only the officers could have booze. The enlisted men could get beer at the PX. I had never been a drinker. Even in college I did not go to the beer parties. Beer tasted terrible to me so I didn't drink. At the party in question they were drinking Boiler Makers. That is a drink where you drink down a shot of whiskey and then wash it down with beer. Another way is to drop a shot glass full of whiskey into a glass of beer and then drink it down. Since I was the junior officer I was pretty much forced to drink some of these. Of course I got stinking drunk and sick on top of that. The latrines were made out of the shipping cases for 155 mm cannons shells. They were sunk into the ground and you peed down into them. I hugged one of those things all night throwing up into it. They were outside and I already told you how cold it was.

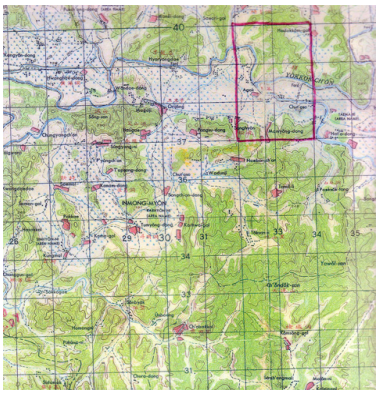
I don't remember how many days it was but one day I

7 Jan 1953

Well I've been in the Army just one year today. Doesn't seem that long though. They've got me in the hospital right now for my cold. It was really pretty bad. Near pneumonia I guess but I'm feeling pretty good now. I guess they'll keep me here for a couple of days yet.

This is really a funny war over here. Nobody seems to care at all what goes on, from the generals all the way down to the privates. Just like a bunch of little tin soldiers playing a game and some guys getting killed over it. I can't figure it out.

passed out and was taken to the medics. It was determined that I had pneumonia. And I still hadn't interrogated a prisoner. Hurry up and wait the Army philosophy. When I was improving I was talking to one of the medics and he told me he never saw anyone loaded down with the amount of ammunition that I had on me. I had stuffed every pocket and place I could find with ammo. By golly I was going to go down fighting! I don't know how long I was in the hospital; it was a field hospital similar to the ones you may have seen in the TV show MASH. When I got out I was sent to the Thirty Second Infantry Regiment, the Buccaneers, still in the Seventh Division. Here I got my own small detachment, office and living quarters.



Except for five days R&R (Rest and Recuperation) in Tokyo and my time in the hospital my whole time in Korea was spent on the line. During that time we were not fighting the North Koreans but the Chinese Communists. I was, at different times n the 32nd Infantry Regiment and the 17th Infantry Regiment. The Division was on the Main Line of Resistance (MLR) just west of the town of Ch'orwon facing the Yokkok Chon River valley. It was the scene of some of the intense battles near the end of the war when both sides were jockeying for political advantage. The map shows the area. Some of the features that are pretty obvious are T-Bone Hill, the Alligator Jaws, and Pork Chop Hill. In the block whose lower left corner is coordinates 29-35 at the tail end of T-Bone are the hills Erie, Arsenal and Hill 200 which are shown from a bunker in a picture later on. The bunker was on the hill with the number 418 just below and to the right. Pork Chop is in the lower left hand corner of the map in the block 33-26. The area in the red rectangle is the area covered by my three dimensional map. The Alligator Jaw is at the lower left corner of the red rectangle. There were big battles at Pork Chop, Erie/Arsenal and the tip of the lower Alligator Jaw.

INTERROGATIONS

My headquarters was in the general vicinity of the regimental headquarters. Whenever a prisoner was caught he was brought to us and we had twenty four hours, most times less, to get whatever tactical information we could from him. Then they were sent up to higher headquarters for more thorough interrogation. The Chinese were uneducated peasants. Their education level was about the third grade. They could not read a map. They loved basketball. This I found most fascinating. Many of them had a picture of their local basketball team which they enjoyed showing. They were most eager to point themselves out as members of the team.

25 Jan 1953
There is a big attack going on up front now. Biggest in a long time I guess. Maybe we will get some prisoners out of it. I saw my first shot up dead "chink" today. I had to take a detail up to the Graves Registration office to search him for any documents or information that he might have on him. Didn't find a thing though.

Most of them were not legitimately captured prisoners but were deserters and would very readily talk to you. We had people who could speak Korean, Chinese and Japanese and one who could speak Russian so we had all the bases covered as far as translation was concerned. I mentioned that the prisoners could not read a map. In order to get reliable information from them it was necessary to somehow describe what was on a map or to help them communicate information about the enemy locations by words, a difficult problem. I remembered from one of our map reading classes at Fort Sill how a terrain map could be made from the contour maps we used. So we built one using file folders and Plaster of Paris from the medics. When it was painted it looked just like a miniature version of the real hills, valleys and streams the prisoners were familiar with. In fact, the Division Commander liked it so well I had to make one of the whole Division front so he could use it in his headquarters.

1 Feb 1953
Have you read in the paper about the "Spud Hill Raid". It took place here in our division last Sunday. There has really been quite a stink raised about it. They say it started out to be a show for some VIP's. Air show was all it was supposed to be, but they figured they shouldn't let all that air power go to waste I guess so they pulled a daylight raid. I guess somebody in Washington didn't like it.

The Chinese were dressed just as you see in those Korean War movies. Mustard tan colored quilted coats, pants and hats in winter and the same color lighter clothes in the summer. They always wore tennis shoes. It fell to us to search the dead bodies. It doesn't take long for the maggots to grow. Sometimes when you would open up the jacket of a particularly ripe body the maggots would actually jump about four inches into the air. They must have wanted fresh air as much as we did. In that job booby traps could be a problem. One time we were searching bodies and one of them looked like there was something tied to his hand. We rigged a string, got back behind cover and pulled. Nothing hap-

pened. It turned out he must have just thrown a grenade when he got hit and the ring with the string from their kind of grenade was still on his finger. Their grenades were of the potato masher type similar to the ones the Germans used in WWII. Some of the prisoners and dead bodies had a little stamp pad that I think was their signature. They were in a little plastic box about 2.0" X 0.5" X 0.5". Inside was a space with the stamp and a little reservoir of red ink.

Wounded, ours and even the enemy's, were evacuated by helicopter. I rode in one once when I had a wounded prisoner. I probably should have just let them take him because he was pretty badly wounded but prisoners were scarce and we had orders to stay with them if possible. It took me a long time to get back to my unit because I had to hitch hike back. The C.O. didn't like that very much.

12 Feb 1953
Just got up a couple of hours ago. I was in bed sleeping all day. I was up all last night interrogating. You know you really can't help feeling sorry for those poor guys. Even though they are Chinese enemies and deserters.

HYGIENE

We did get showers but not very often. Several weeks would go by. Then we could go to what they called a shower point which was a tent setup with shower heads. If you ever watched "MASH" you might have seen a representation of one. There were tank trucks with water (like the fire department uses) and trucks with heater units to heat it. So the shower was usually a nice hot one. You got clean clothes too. Do you know what dingle-berries are? They are the little pieces of s—t and toilet paper that cling to your butt hair when, for weeks at a time, you can't do a good job of cleaning yourself. One time I had dysentery. I had to take a road trip in a Jeep to another unit. It was winter; we were dressed in parkas, wool shirts, and long-johns. About half way to where we were going I pooped my pants. It was that slimy, stinky, gelatinous, yellow stuff. I had to do the rest of the trip and back to our unit sitting in that stuff. Then when I got back all I could do was scrape it off. No shower available.

15 Jan 53
I got my hair cut a couple of nights ago. first time since I was home and I was really beginning to need it. One of our Koreans did it in the orderly room. Did a pretty good job too. He used a double edged razor just held in his fingers to shave my neck. You should see the barber chair that we have here. It is made out of a 50 gallon oil drum which has been cut down and mounted on a hydraulic jack so that it can be raised and lowered just like a regular chair. Boy the things that people can think up to make things a little easier. I think I am going to get to go to the shower point tomorrow and take a shower. It will be my first one in about 2 weeks I've been taking my bath in my steel helmet. It is a job and cold too.

Trips along the front lines were interesting. The terrain was mountainous with flat valleys in between. Rice paddies were on the sides of the mountains and in the valleys. It seemed there was always a valley between our line and the enemy line. In some places the roads ran along the side a mountain, as in the picture, and it was exposed so the enemy could see it. There would be a sign that said something like "Next mile under enemy observation." Sometimes there would also be camouflage hanging on the enemy side (outside) of the road in an attempt to block the view. You would travel real fast over that section of road. Sometimes they would shoot at you but not too often.

Speaking of shooting, I have never discussed this with any one; it's sort of a scientific question. I wonder if anyone else has ever noticed it. When someone is shooting directly at you it sounds different than when the angle is off a little bit. The sound is much sharper. I wonder if it might be like a sonic boom that you hear because the bullet is coming very fast at a very close angle to you. I suppose that most of those who may have heard it never had a chance to reflect on it. Perhaps Winston Churchill did. He said "There is nothing quite so exhilarating as to be shot at and missed."

SEOUL

I made a couple of trips to Seoul to do some military business, I was the pay officer for our unit and had to take money down to Seoul to pay the members of our unit who were attached there. One trip was on Korean Independence Day. There was a big parade and I met the family of one of my Korean interpreters. We took a tour of the city which had twice been the victim of combat. Destroyed houses were being replaced with walls, roof etc. made out of beer nd pop cans. They took a can, cut off the top and bottom, sliced the side open, bent the edges so they would lock together then put them together to form a whole wall or roof segment. Ingenious!

Several times the officers of our regiment were invited to Sunday din-

ner at their Ethiopian Battalion headquarters. That is where I learned to dislike lamb or mutton which was one of there main foods. Because our outfit was attached to the regiment we were able to draw some rations on our own. We had no kitchen facilities because we lived with the MPs. The MPs had a kitchen for the prisoners and we were allowed to draw rations as an attached unit but we didn't need everything because the MPs had it. So, we were able to have some delicacies, like steak, more frequently than other units and shared it with the MPs. Also, our people were all Oriental and their families sent them many oriental delicacies. Even the Koreans among us got stuff from home or were able to get it from local sources. So, almost every evening they would cook up something on the oil burner pot belly stove that was in each tent. I was invited to many of these and learned to eat such stuff as seaweed and squid, but not Kimchee. Kimchee was a type of Chinese Cabbage that was highly spiced in a crockery container buried in the ground and left to rot. Then it was eaten with hot sauce. Ah, yes, Speaking of the pot belly stoves, one day we were working outside and I happened to notice that the stovepipe for the stove was red hot. I sent one of the Korean boys up to check on which number the carburetor was set. They ranged from 0 to 9. He came running back and said "number hava no, number hava no". What he meant was zero.

So it was set on the smallest amount and was still running on high. Obviously there was something wrong with the carburetor so I went up and turned it off before it burned up the tent. The peace negotiations were going on during the time I was there and each side was jockeying for a position which would be favorable to them. This meant continuing the hostilities and at times being fierce about it. There were air strikes, artillery barrages, patrols and raids from a bunker on the MLR, one is from inside the bunker and the other from outside.

Another note says it is T-Bone. Erie and Arsenal were outposts right at the end of the stem of the T-Bone so they both are correct. The smoke is from an air strike that had just taken place. The hill shown in the center of the outside shot is the hill that is on the very left edge of the inside shot. The black edge with light ground just bove it is the bunker opening and the ground right in front of it. The darker hill in the right hand corner with trenches across the top is the hill on the other side of the valley from the one shown in the outside picture, It is the Erie Arsenal complex.

5 May 1953
Went down to Seoul Sunday and really had a nice time. I went to Mass at the Seoul Cathedral and boy it is really a beautiful place. A great big church just like stateside and very nice even after the Chinese had been here.

In the evening or off time I learned to play a Japanese game called Hanna. I have a couple of decks of the Hanna cards in my bed headboard now as a souvenir. They are little cards about one inch by two inches and very thick. They are very hard to shuffle and it takes a while to learn the process. I'm sorry to say that I no longer remember how to play the game. It was fun!

The fighting was very much like the trench warfare of World War I. The ridges and hills were lined with trenches, outpost holes and bunkers. The Chinese and North Koreans were on the north side and the U.N. forces on the south side.

That's what the Burp Gun was for. You got an immediate R&R if you captured a prisoner. I was already on the plane waiting to take off for my regular R&R when one of my friends in the regiment came on board. He had captured a prisoner and got his immediate R&R. Perhaps the worst fight in my experience was the night patrol which ran into an ambush. One of my friends Hillary Allemeyer, from the University of Dayton was killed in that. He was the patrol leader. I was in the forward aid station with a prisoner that night and looked for him but couldn't find him. The place was named Allemeyer Alley in his memory.

It was always good to get packages and mail from home. My brothers and sisters wrote to me and sent me packages of goodies, things like Ritz Crackers, Cheeze Wiz, Nuts, Kleenex and the requisite books and papers. I was always asking my Mom to send me the crackers, Cheeze Wiz and olives. They are all still available today. We had a generator that supplied power a couple of hours a night or when it was necessary for after dark interrogation.

There was extensive patrolling in the valleys, almost always at night, and an occasional large attack against the outposts and trenches. Night fighting was done under flares and was really erie. There was a lot of shelling from artillery and mortars and much automatic fire. The Chinese believed in heavy fire from simple automatic weapons that an uneducated peasant soldier could easily handle.

CEASE FIRE

At 10 a.m. on Monday, July 27, William Harrison and Nam Il - without saying a word to each other - signed their names to a document that silenced the guns 12 hours later. The final hours were war by the clock, much the way it had been when armies in Europe awaited the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month for the 1918 armistice of World War I. The last bomb from

a B-26 fell 30 minutes before the cease-fire; during the war, the Air Force, Navy and Marines had dropped 588,000 tons of bombs and over 32,000 tons of napalm. Artillery thundered until 10 p.m. Arthur Trudeau, commanding general of U.S. 7th Division, pulled the lanyard on his batteries' last round of the war and kept the shell case as a memento.

The war was over. There was a system for rotation back to the States. Typically you would be over there for a year. They were trying to bring the men who had been prisoners of war back first. They must have needed officers with some kind of experience with prisoners even though these were our own people. I think that because I had been involved in the Prisoner of War situation I was chosen to be among the ones to go back with these guys. As you will see I didn't figure this out until later. I can't remember how I got from Seoul to Pusan. It could have been by that same train I told you about before or maybe by air. I suspect I flew as I do remember, vaguely, being at Kimpo Air Base. When I got there it was replacement depot all over again. I was assigned to a ship, the General W. F. Hase. There were all kinds of boats in the harbor including the hospital ship and many beggar boats as shown below.

COMPARTMENT COMMANDER

It turns out it was to be the first shipload of former prisoners of war that had been held by the Chinese and Koreans. I was assigned to be a "compartment commander" of one of the big compartments which was to be the home for these guys on the trip back to the States. I don't remember exactly how many, several hundred. Racks of bunks were set up just like you see in some of those old war movies.

There was some animosity among these guys because of the suspicion among them that some of them had been sharing and collaborating with the enemy. I heard rumors that we had lost some overboard, maybe accosted at night by a mob and just dropped overboard. I didn't live in the compartment but shared a cabin with another officer. One morning I went down to the compartment for an inspection and found a big pool of blood on the deck (it's not a floor on a ship). One of them was accosted and beat up on suspicion of collaborating. I say suspicion because there had been no trials but I suppose living under the conditions of an enemy prison camp they pretty well know who was involved

On the way back we crossed the International Date Line and I got a little card stating that I had done so. Then we ran into the tail end of a typhoon. Based on that experience I wouldn't want to be in the heart of a typhoon. Even the sailors were getting sick. It was all up and down and over and back with waves and spray coming completely over the ship. I was one of the lucky ones and didn't get sick. I got the extra work though. We sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge, past Alcatraz with the fire boats shooting off their water cannons, and landed in San Francisco. More processing and we got on a train headed for Chicago. The train went through the south west and then turned northwest toward the Windy City.

In Chicago I went to Fort Sheridan for more processing and separation. I was not discharged but sent back to the National Guard. From Chicago I flew back to Dayton. At the airport in Chicago I ran into Captain Bonner who was in my outfit when we were activated and went with us to Camp Polk. Because he was in WWII he did not have to go to Korea so he had served out his term and was back in civilian life. Small world!

21 Feb 1953
Received the first box today. The one with crackers, cocoa, marshmallows and fruit. Thanks loads..
Boy some of the artillery pieces are in the next valley behind us and they shoot all night. Every time one of them goes off it shakes the whole tent. Sometimes it almost blows the candle out.
26 Mar 1953
We have really been busy this week. All kinds of work. I guess by now you have heard about Old Baldy, Pork Chop and Arsenal hills. It was really something. We got 7 prisoners out of the deal and it really kept us busy. Didn't get any sleep for about 3 days in a row. I got to ride in a Helicopter too. Last night I came up here to the 17th Regt to take over the section here. I guess I will be here from now on. I have got a real nice little setup here I think it might even be better than the one back at division. Went to take a shower this afternoon. Boy, it really felt good. Nice hot water. Sure would like to have a good ol' bath though.

Back in Dayton, I had made up my mind to take some time off, maybe even a year, and just bum around. One of the first things I did was visit my old math professor at U.D., Doc Schraut. When I walked into his office he looked up at me and said "What are you doing here? Why aren't you in Grad School?" He picked up the phone, made a call and when he hung up he said, "Be at Purdue Monday morning. You are enrolled in the mathematics program and have an assistantship to teach algebra. Keep in touch and do a good job."

I consider that one of the biggest breaks of my life and Doc Schraut one of the most influential people in putting me on the right track in life. At Purdue on the North side of the campus there was some kind of ordinance test facility. I didn't know it was there. One day I was driving by, and just as I passed, they fired a burst from a 50 caliber machine gun. I almost wrecked my car trying to duck. Loud noises that I don't expect still make me jump and upset me. I stayed in the National Guard, and attended the weekly meetings and summer camps whenever I could. I am sure there are those who would put me into their hate category as they have G.W. Bush for missing some of these training sessions. That was MY experience with being AWOL. although it was all authorized.

Along the same line, after Paddi and I married, the Viet Nam War was heating up. Paddi found out I was still on the inactive list in the National Guard and wanted me to resign. In order to get out I had to resign my commission which I did. Was that any different than the activities of Bill Clinton or George Bush to allegedly keep out of Vietnam?

And that was the end of my military career except for a few Veterans Day parades and a Korean Veteran hat. One of the main things I learned was that people are people no matter where they are, what nationality or race, they all seek the same things as I do and respond to circumstances in the same ways that I do. The Korean people and even the Chinese enemies are people just like me. It is too bad that we all just cannot understand this and get along together without these wars.

In the fifty years that have passed what has happened? As you know Communism has not survived; it has collapsed around the world. In 2001 I made our Christmas card using a picture of the world at night from satellites.

South Korea has become a successful member of the world community. North Korea is a desolate, depressed and oppressed country unable even to feed its own people. But they still spend money on military might including the aggressive push for atomic weapons and intercontinental missiles. The country has been run by a dynasty of dictators, father and son, who act in a mode of oppression that has followed communism and terrorism, oppressing and terrorizing their own people and isolating themselves from the rest of the world. Even China is beginning to become frustrated with them. Let's hope recent developments will change this situation for the better. It is sad that it has taken so long.

25 Feb 1953
Hi Mom,
How's everything? Just put on some water so that I can make some of that cocoa you sent me. I wonder if you could buy one of those little 10 cent pencil sharpeners and send it to me. We don't have a pencil sharpener in the whole unit and no possibility of getting one either. Water's just about hot enough so I guess I'll put the cocoa in. The marshmallows were really good. - Not Bad. the cocoa that is.

I feel my military experience was a very positive influence on my life. It taught me a lot about human nature, responsibility and service to others. I firmly believe that all young people should spend a compulsory time in some kind of public service, not necessarily military but even something like the peace corps would do. Perhaps when everyone must work with and share with all kinds of people they will come to realize that, for all our differences, we are intrinsically all the same. Over time the bigotry persistent for generations may disappear.

Previous generations served to improve life for their future generations. To me there is some question as to the improvement we may be seeing. I think perhaps we tried too hard to give the kids everything we did not have. The current generation has not had to provide for themselves and learn the lessons of self sacrifice that I believe are necessary for the human race to truly prosper. In the play "The Fantastics", in the main song, "Try To Remember" there is this stanza; "without a hurt the heart is hollow". I believe we are seeing this in the current generation. Perhaps public service would help us fill this hollow.

William Sage, Army; Corporal, Transportation Corps 1953-1955

Shortly after graduating from high school, with no intention of going to college, and engaged to be married, I was facing the decision of what to do about the future. With the country in the midst of a Police Action in Korea, which most likely would result in my being drafted into the Army, Jane and I decided we would be better off in the Navy. Attempting to join the Navy I was informed the Navy was not accepting any more applicants. Apparently, others had the same idea as I did. The axe fell in early 1953 when I was drafted into the Army on March 19, 1953. 1 was inducted at Fort Meade, Maryland and sent to the transportation center at Fort Eustis, Virginia for Basic Training.

After Basic Training I was assigned a MOS (Military Occupational Specialty), to become a light vehicle driver. Having never driven before my first assignment in MOS was to drive a 2 1/2 ton truck through the Difficult Driving Course which required us to drive two miles through the woods where no roads existed. No problem!

At the end of MOS training we were placed on orders to go to Korea. The week we ended training the Cease Fire occurred in Korea and our orders were changed. This resulted in our being unassigned. This situation persisted for some time. During this period we were used for every mundane project the Army could dream up. We even learned how to move a hole in the ground from one location to another. Growing tired of having nothing to do I decided to try out for the Post baseball team. After practicing with the team it became apparent that the players I was competing against were much more talented than I, so I started looking for other pastimes. I later learned that the person I was competing against for the center field position was a young man from New York named Willie Mays.

Still looking for something to do I committed the cardinal military sin. During morning assembly, when asked if anyone knew how to type, I volunteered even though I had never typed a word in my life. The result was I was assigned as the Dispatcher & Records Control Clerk for the 110th Harbor Craft & Marine Maintenance Co. where I stayed for the remainder of my tour of duty. Our responsibility was to furnish transportation for a Harbor Craft outfit which operated all forms of landing craft, tug boats, and freighters. Fortunately Fort Eustis was located between Williamsburg and Newport News, Virginia, and twenty miles from Norfolk and Portsmouth. This location afforded us many things to do during off duty hours. During football season we attended several games at William and Mary College. In addition, swimming beaches, fishing, and visits to historical sites were abundant. One of the most interesting occasions was attending the launching of The USS Forrestal at Newport News.

During this time I had my first experience with racial bigotry. When sightseeing with a good friend who happened to be African American we stopped for lunch at a roadside cafe. I was afforded service but my friend was sent to the kitchen area to eat with the hired help.

During 1953 and early 1954 I returned home on weekends an average of once a month. During this time I took my first commercial plane flight. We flew a Piedmont Airlines DC 3 from Patrick Henry Airport to Washington D.C. and TWA from Washington to Dayton. Total trip cost $38.00. My main method of travel during this period was hitch hiking. If done today I would probably not be here to write about this. People in love do crazy things. All this came to an end in early 1954 when I joined the “Dear John Club. Enough said!

My Duties as Dispatcher afforded me weekends off, no KP or Guard Duty, a semiprivate room, and early mess privileges. On one occasion in 1954 while on a fishing trip on The James River I acquired a sunburn so severe I spent three days in the hospital under a gauze tent. For some reason the Army did not consider this grounds for a Purple Heart.

During the summer and fall seasons we experienced three hurricanes. Although our barracks were built to withstand the storms, we had to move the vehicles inland to safe haven. This amounted to several days of R&R since there was nothing to do but wait. I suppose to some people these two years seems like a vacation but believe me it was anything but. Now that it is history, I feel it was an experience that taught me a lot about life. Except for the aspect of war maybe everyone should have this experience.

JOHN SAGE
AIR FORCE AIRMAN 2C
FIRE CONTROL SYSTEMS

I guess that growing up in Dayton (the Birthplace of Aviation) during a very patriotic war (WWII), I had been interested in flying my whole life. I went to a lot of flying movies and flew many imaginary flights out of our back yard and up the alley. I should have found someone to talk to about joining OCS or ROTC as an entry to eventual flight school, but alas, as things go, it wasn’t to be, no guidance in high school nor from a father who didn’t care. I wasn’t driven enough to set flying as a goal, especially after reading about and seeing plane wrecks in our own area, Tuttle Ave, and Indian Ripple Rd., and the thought of a jet engine following you into the ground.

In high school George Zavakos often talked about the 162nd Tactical Fighter Squadron (Spec Del). The (Spec Del) designation means that the unit has the capability to deliver atomic weapons. The unit was part of the Air National Guard located at Springfield Municipal Airport. He had joined it, and enjoyed the experience. At this time the Air Guard was at Dayton Municipal Airport. They were still flying P-51’s and even though they were

just phasing out the P51's that really caught my ear. I loved the old propeller-driven planes and they might not be around for long because of the jets. But, alas, by the time I got in they were phased out and we had F-84-E's which looks like the old F-80 Shooting Star. Believe it or not, dad and I actually went to an air show at Dayton Municipal Airport. George Zavakos was a year or so older than us in class. I was really interested. Besides my interest with the aircraft, the girls liked the uniforms, especially since I was still in high school. Also it would keep away the draft. One big wall; I was under age and there was D A D. Mom said she would sign for me, but when dad heard of it he was furious which came as no big surprise. I don't remember how Mom and I got him to sign but he did, this was in February of 1957

The 162nd TAC Fighter Squadron (Sp Del) usually went to 2 weeks summer camp at Collins ANG Base in Alpena, Michigan flying sorties and bombing practice at the range at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. Meetings were 2 days a month usually one weekend and then the summer camp, mixed with as many TDYs (temporary duties) as you wanted to get. I started out in weapons but I had to get Basic Training first.

I had never been away from home for any extended amount of time. I graduated from high school June 7th. of 1957 and shipped out to Basic Training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. on the 9th of June for eleven weeks of training. Lackland; 93 to 114 degrees in the shade, hell hole #1, satin's hometown. Man; I had assholes yelling at me, nose to nose and at a distance, telling me to do things I had never heard of. I was in the habit of chewing gum, but here it was a no, no. First thing they caught me chewing my gum. I had to remove it from my mouth and place it on the tip of my nose for the rest of the day. Of course with a Staff Sgt. Drill Instructor (DI) from Texas who hated damn yankees and a junior DI who wasn't as old as some of us, and only outranked us by one stripe, things got a whole lot worse. Because the young DI couldn't buy alcohol he took it out on us the next day after we got liberty, what few times we did get it. I did get to see the Alamo and the little crook kids that would say "shine your shoes airman?", then, when they got one shoe done they said it would cost another $0.50 for the other one. Some had a "nice sister" they would offer to introduce you to. Not much other fun here, just hardwork. The food was "blah" to say the least, and the "c rats" (c rations) were from the early forties. There was a lot of marching! The DI would shout "Sage you look like a monkey f—-ing a football'; pull me out of rank and I would march perfectly; put me back in rank and I was back after the football. That little hop is a Sage family trait. When, I pulled KP I would usually ask for pots and pans - which no one else liked. It was hot but no one to bother you! And, yes, I peeled my share of potatoes, even with an electric potato peeler right beside me. I was sweeping the barracks floor one day when I came up to the barracks guard stand where a very large black guy was leaning against the podium. Well I asked him politely to move a couple of times but he ignored me, so being the even tempered kind of guy that I am, I swept the pile of dirt across his bare feet. Without a word he clipped me right below the eye with the ring he wore on his finger and bounced me off the wall. Well we were supposed to stand inspection the next morning.

When he saw my eye, he was really afraid I would tell our Dixie DI and it would be the stockade for him. I didn't let him know any different. Next morning at inspection the Dixie DI came up to me, saw my eye and asked what had happened, and I told him that I had run into a door (the old excuse). After two more times of asking me only a little closer to my nose with his, and with a smirk on his face when he said "a door huh?", I added "yes sir, a big black door", he just smiled, never looked at my foot locker and just walked away, he never gave me a bit of trouble the rest of basic training. I never did find out how he knew what had happened.

Texas is one place I do not ever want to return to; flat, 93 to 114 degrees in the shade, little bugs that can kill you, no thanks. It was so hot, we took salt tablets, and my fatigues would stand up by themselves when the sweat dried and left them stiff and white. We were given the job of unloading a truck of melons from Georgia, had to carry them into the Mess Hall. Well, good old John and Co. decided we would like some for the barracks. So, two of us turned off the path to hide a couple of melons in the bushes, but we were busted. Extra duty for two weeks; boy what grumps. After Basic I was glad to get on the old Gooney Bird to take me back to the 162nd TAC, but we had a strong headwind and I had been looking out the window watching the white hot glow of the engine exhaust when it went from white hot to red hot to nil, that bothered me. Because of the strong headwinds we had to set down before our normal gas stop.

Got back to Ohio from basic training to return to my old civilian job but they had not saved it for me, so they made a job up just to offer it to me to be legal. Being an impossible type of job I didn't stay that long. Meanwhile, in the Guard I waited for an opening in a Tech School but when months passed I enrolled at the U of Dayton in Business Administration.

Meanwhile, at the 162nd I had entered weapons training and went to school for an atomic bomb loading crew. That was scary, you learned that even though it it not allowed to be atomically armed in the continental United States, you cannot outrun the blast if something goes wrong. There are two systems present and you have 90 seconds to pop the nose cone and disconnect the systems, believe me, you do. You carry a

small screwdriver with you at all times with which you access the nose cone. Well after a while I decided I still wanted electronic training. I had just completed about three semesters at U of D when an opening came for Fire Control Systems school (Airborne Radar Systems) in beautiful Denver Colorado. So, I had to withdraw from college.

In April of 1958, I caught a old puffer-belly out of Dayton for Lowery Air Force Base near Denver Colorado and the Fire Control Systems school. The only train I ever rode before this was with uncle Carl a couple of times to the Reds games in Cincinnati. Everyone said the clickty-clack of the tracks made you sleep good, boy that's bull! I didn't know what first class was (a sleeping berth with meals "etc") so all the way to Colorado I sat in a seat trying to figure how to get something to eat, It wasn't until I got to Colorado that I was told what I had missed But boy, going home I sure took advantage of all of it. But the damn berths were so small that when the train stopped I hit my head, and when the train started up I slid till my feet hit the wall.I don't know how someone like my brother Red could even ride in them!

In the military there is a fixed date to change uniform types with the seasons and the date depends on where in the world you are located. April of 1958 we in Ohio were in Khaki uniforms, In Colorado they were still in Blues so that when I got there, the first thing I was caught and chewed out by a female officer for being out of uniform. I got some satisfaction back as the Air Force academy was just starting so they made all the cadets salute us even if we had only 1 stripe.

The barracks were 3 storied brick buildings unlike the old frame buildings we were used to. Found my barracks, found a free bunk, mine was on the third floor, went in, there was just one other guy in the barracks, the rest were in school. Putting my stuff on my bed, the doors burst open and this big guy flies through the door, grabs his shirt with both hands, rips it off his body while shouting "I'm going to lick everyone in here"; well I knew there was only me and the other guy in here, and this big dude wasn't talking about tongue licking, and he was heading for me! When he gets nose to nose he steps back, looks at me really close and says "you're the Sage kid arn't yuh?". Well after looking up and thanking the lord, we got to talking and he said that, back home he lived across the street on the corner of Hadley and Shafor Blvd. Still don't know who he was. Small world, huh?

Denver Colorado was the only other place I would care to live, simply beautiful. You could get sun burned in the morning and early afternoon but go up into the mountains and throw snowballs. I remember hitting the bars up in the mountains and then coming down looking at the speedometer from 40 - 65 miles per hour. In the mountains that's death. Don't know why I'm still here. No, I wasn't driving!

The type of school, the teacher, my hard headed questions, and not getting the answers and ideas through my head, we both decided this Radar School wasn't for me. Besides the teacher didn't like it that I could get peanuts out of the penny machine for nothing and he couldn't. They must not have taught that when he was in school! I came back to Ohio thinking I would surprise Mom; took a cab, didn't tell her I would be home; came walking down Hadley and they were, tearing down the historical Heightman home. I dropped my duffle bag, sat on it and cried, that was the only house I ever really wanted even to this day. I used to go up there, when I was small, and listen to Mrs Heightman tell stories about what she knew about the history of the house. She showed me the tunnels that were left from when it was part of the underground railroad, and the big fireplaces even as big as 8 ft. x 8 ft., the old guns, the Paul Revere type lanterns. She said that the house used to set a ways back and was turned sideways to what we knew it sitting there. What a waste, put up a four family apartment building instead of history. I can remember when I was real little standing in front of Reilings and Macklins, across the street from that house, singing "Bell Bottom Trousers coat of Navy blue...." to the girl who lived there and married a sailor, whose name I believe was sailor. I couldn't have been very old then.

Again I enrolled at U of D, this time in Electrical Tech, and went to night school at RETS (Radio, Electronics and Television School) in Radio and TV service from which I graduated in 1961. So settling back into life in Dayton, I was stationed back at Springfield with temporary assignments at Wright Patterson for sortie missions, from about January through March 1961. In 1961, with the problems between East and West Germany, Russia started to set up the Berlin wall and President Kennedy activated reserves and National Guard units as a precaution. Mine was one of them.

In April, 1961 we were shipped to what was an old B-17 base during the second world war in Gulfport, Mississippi. Not a bad place to be stationed, the town of Biloxi was very close and both towns lived off travelers and servicemen and New Orleans was less than an hours drive, so if you stayed, it was fun. We all wondered if we might be sent to Germany but another fear came that no one really knew much about, Vietnam. I ran the bore-sight range which was somewhat like a rifle shooting range only for airplanes with machine guns and aerial cannons. We adjusted the guns and sights in the airplanes (zero them in) so that the pilot would accurately hit what he aimed at. We had to redline (ground) our planes as they were taking parts off of them

and shipping the parts out to what we later found out was Vietnam. But we did not have a need to know so we didn't know for sure. It seems that the United States troops were supposed to be advisors in 1961, but with the planes of Guard vintage being used for close ground support early in the 'war' and with men being shipped out, adding two and two together it appeared to us that we were getting deeper and deeper into the 'war'. By God's blessing I didn't ship out. Maybe, if I had still been in a few years later, things would of been different.

We got a lot of gunnery and bomb practice, while down there. The United States Air Force (Air Guard) units at that time would very often outperform the regulars in the Air Force even with our older equipment. Unlike now, Guard units were not thought capable of doing that by the regulars. We were of course on alert so there was a lot of practice, and the neighborhood, since WWII, had grown up to be right along side the base fences. The noise of the 50 cal. guns firing was very disturbing to the natives. They came to the fence many times telling us to knock it off because many times we were out on the firing range 'til 10:00 at night. One night they were threatening to climb the fence as we were exchanging barrels in the 50 cal. machine guns. I told Reingrabber to point the empty, torn down barrel at the people threatening us and we told them to get lost, to no avail they still were raising hell with us, so I squeezed of a burst of machine gun bullets (down range of course) making them run and jump as fast as they could, complaining to the commander that we had shot at them with machine guns. What fun!

A short round burst would tell the guys back in the barracks to bring us some beer. It was so hot we sometimes worked in our skivvies which was dangerous because it was a Court Martial offense to get a sunburn. The skin on the airplanes got so hot you could fry an egg on it. If you got up against the metal you would get a burn. Inside the cockpit you could still get your arm burned on the cockpit edge but it was hard to work in the close quarters with your arms completely inside.

I was never stationed overseas but I can imagine. There is nothing spookier than a rocket storage building, out in the boonies; up to six feet thick concrete walls. Out on the flight line at night you can hear crickets fart two fields away and just the sounds off in a distance can sometimes really scare you when you are on alert. One time I really got pissed at the guys in the rocket storage building. It was Christmas and snowing outside. Nothing around and no place to go, so they cut a cedar tree and brought it in. Just then I left our shop for a while. When I got back, and opened the shop door, there was the tree all decorated with what they had to decorate with that meant something to them, Playboy Centerfolds. Being brought up the way I was about Christmas it floored me 'til I really thought about it. They didn't have lights or garlands but the pictures really meant a girl or wife back home. I shut up and enjoyed the tree!

Being stationed in Mississippi in the 60s, I got a real racial education. I thought that Dad and the city of Dayton were racist but man I was in the heart of it. The locals were paying one way bus tickets for blacks to Dayton, Ohio. Every 7th or 8th bus had Dayton, Ohio on its destination screen. No drinking out of white fountains and rain or shine they ate outside at the place we ate breakfast; it was passed through a small 1/2 moon window. My closest friend would actually try to run over them as they walked down the street, even with me getting after him.

We found a private bayou where we went most afternoons, but we noticed for a few months that the few native people that shared it with us got out of the water at a certain time each day. Well we finally asked why; guess the gators come in to sun themselves. So we honored the gators time pretty much! I would actually hunt alligators, water moccasins and gar all with a bow and arrow. I shot plenty of snakes and gar but never got an alligator.

I did get in a lot of fishing but the best was at night. At lunch time we would go fishing for mullet behind the barracks and save them in water until evening when we would get a case of beer, ice it down, then go in off the wharfs and fish for the sharks and gar that came in to scavenge. Now that's fishing. You'd have to shoot the shark 4-5 times in the head to bring it up if you were going to keep it. Most times we would let them go. These were only 3-4 foot sharks.

In 1962 we returned to our base at Springfield but went on TDY to Lockbourne Air Force Base in Columbus, Ohio. During 1962 there was fear of being activated again for the Cuban Missile Crisis. I continued to serve out my reserve time at Springfield and mustered out the first part of 1963 after 6 years of active and reserve service.

All of this essay has been about being in the service but not being in the fighting. Just touching on the work day in the service but really talking about the fun surrounding service life is kind of misleading; the days were hot, dirty and generally hard. The hardest was worrying about when you would ship out to the action. Many guys have had a really bad time in the service, and I, while not having a gravy run, am very blessed for not being in actual harms way, I still feel bad about not having to be, and for my friends, especially the ones who never made it back and their families, God bless them.

As with most kids I wanted to be in the service; flying was my preference. I am glad that I served before I started a family My heart really goes out these guys just starting a family or having children and family and then having to serve in Iraq or anywhere overseas.

I talked a lot about the Air Force to my son Mike when he was small and playing Army and we went to the Air Force Museum. He seemed to always want to enter the Air Force, and at 17 years old did indeed enter. Mike always talked about going for 30 years but after 20 years he said thing were changing for the worse and the benefits weren't like they used to be, so he was bailing out at the 20 mark. Mike was there at most skirmishes like Granada etc. during his career. I'm very proud of Mike and all the guys who have given for our freedom.

JAMES SAGE
NAVY/MARINES
PETTY OFFICER 3 MEDICS

While I was still in high school I joined the Navy reserves. I was anxious to leave home as soon as possible and I knew joining the service was a ticket to do so. I didn't want to chip paint on some old ship somewhere for my time in the service, so I put in for and received schooling to become a hospital corpsman. I went to boot camp at Great Lakes during Christmas break while a senior in high school. Most memorable moments: failing miserably the swim test; going through the tear gas room; going through the smoke filled room. It was cold in the extreme. But it was only for two weeks. Ha ha.

After being sworn in after graduation from high school I was shipped to the dispensary at the Patuxant River Naval Command in Washington D.C. While there I served as a "striker" (a go-fer) while awaiting orders to Hospital Corps school at Great Lakes Naval Training Center. While in D.C. Martin Luther King Jr. held his famous march, August 28, 1963. I had little awareness of local, national or world events at the time. All I remember is that we were prepared, in our little dispensary, to "take any overflow of injured from whatever may happen at the really big march on Washington D.C.". Of course nothing happened, and I still remained basically unaware of events, their causes and effects.

I was able to do some sight seeing in our nation's capital. I learned that I couldn't drink without getting sick, and that I didn't care for the drinking scene anyway. A young man away from home, many temptations, many opportunities to go bad. Guess my upbringing had a lot to do with my staying, pretty much, on the straight and narrow. Pretty much.

The assignment to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center came through and I moved there. Great Lakes was good for me. I didn't do well in high school and didn't have much motivation, I was a clown sometimes, and didn't fit in academically or socially. In Hospital Corps school I was determined to excel. I had, for the first time in my life, a real desire to succeed and do something with my life. I did make the honor roll there.

The new knowledge I was gaining turned me on and, for the first time in my life, I was filled with questions and felt free and exhilarated to be asking all kinds of questions. I did this so much some thought I was a smart ass trying to trip up the teacher. That hurt. Still wasn't fitting in socially. Was shy, self conscious. Some thought I was a snob and a stand off, but I was really just backwards and fearful. I was pretty much a loner, though I did make friends.

One of the highlights of my days at Great Lakes was the occasional bus ride over to my big brother's in Michigan. I got to spend some quality family time there. It was a real shot in the arm. Here I am with my nieces. Also, while at Great Lakes, President Kennedy was assassinated. The announcement came to us during a class. We were let go. I remember it well. Everyone was so shocked and in disbelief. It took a while for the reality of it to sink in. My first duty assignment was to the Navy Hospital at Annapolis. The town was old, quaint, rustic, with a lot of nautical and Navy type of references, of course. The hospital, itself was right next to the academy,on a hill overlooking the Severn river.

Lots of trees and beautiful grounds. We were treated often to the sound of mockingbirds outside our quarters. Seeing jellyfish in the river was common.

Duty was good there, and I had a variety of experiences. Basically I performed nursing duties on wards, both enlisted and officers. I worked for a time in the diet kitchen, and got to hang around physical therapy, which really interested me. Work in the emergency room was really nothing compared to one in big cities. Actually, we often said the hospital itself was just an oversized dispensary. We said it was there just to serve the Academy, but there were a lot of retired military in the area. This is where I had my first experience

handling the dead. A young man of thirty six was brought in, gasping for breath and in great distress. He was terminally ill from lung cancer.

I took care of Roger Staubach, the famous football player, when he was on the midshipman's ward. Very nice fellow. I didn't understand all the fuss over him, but then I never was a sports fan. I started coming out of my shell there, and started socializing a bit, even went on a couple of dates, a big step for me back then. Being just a stone's throw from D.C. I would go there on occasion. I went to my first concert there. I was into folk music at the time. Of course I took in seeing some of the monuments and museums.

A friend and fellow corpsman who was from Baltimore took me home with him one time. His folks had family on the south shore. We went there for a weekend. It was quite a trip. The people lived on a farm. For breakfast we had an unbelievable spread of everything you could think of; ham, bacon, sausage, eggs, potatoes, pancakes, biscuits, and I don't remember what else. Of course, I ate as much as I possibly could. Later we went and got come crabs out of some traps. They fried up "soft crabs" for supper that evening and it was really good. Also tried raw clams that day but didn't care for them.

Another friend took me home to Dover, Delaware. Went to Rehoboth Beach and swam and bummed around. Cool. This is the kid who bought a new Mustang when they first came out. We were all envious. I took some art classes while at Annapolis; oil painting with a brush, and also with a knife. I didn't do all that well, but then it was only a couple of classes. I had fun, and got to get out in the world a little bit.

FIELD MEDICAL SERVICE

Before hooking up to serve with the Marines, Hospital Corpsmen were sent through advanced training called Field Medical Service. Having been chosen to serve with the Marines I naturally went to the Field Medical Service School in sunny, southern California. Beautiful weather. Beautiful ocean. Beautiful desert terrain of Camp Pendleton, the United States Marine Corps, Field Medical Service School. I learned there how to be a Marine grunt. I learned a lot about things we needed to know to get by when no doctors were available, which included everything from field sanitation to advanced first aid; that is, what to do when things were extreme and everything was hopeless. Ours was the largest class at the time ever to have been there. While still in Vietnam I found out over half the class had been killed or wounded. Probably that number increased a lot more before the year of duty there was over. The school was good, and once again everything I was learning was really interesting and challenging.

The movie theater on base was the big social thing. There wasn't much time to get around, but I did manage to see a little of San Diego. Right after graduation I received word from the Red Cross that I needed to go home to see dad, who was seriously ill and in the hospital. He died before I was able to get home. So I ended up having to attend his funeral just before shipping out to Vietnam. Perhaps it was good I didn't know, really, what lay ahead.

Two highlights of the plane ride to Okinawa where I went to await orders. One as stopping in Honolulu. Didn't get to see anything but the airport, but I can say I was in Hawaii. The other highlight was reading the Grapes of Wrath, cover to cover. It was a long way to Okinawa. Stayed there for a few days awaiting orders, then another long ride to Da Nang Stepping off the plane there was something I will remember for many lifetimes. The heat and the humidity were like being hit with a giant sledge hammer. You just wanted to run back into the airplane.

MEDIC WITH MIKE COMPANY

I was soon hooked up with my outfit, Mike Co. Third Battalion, Fourth Marine Regiment, Third Marine Amphibious Force. Whew! I was taken around and introduced to the commanding officer, various platoon officers and sergeants, and the gunny and top sergeants, who were kind of like demigods I guess you could say. These two were curt and noncommittal; you weren't accepted until you had proven yourself in the field. Of course I didn't know that at the time. Months later when I was injured, the gunny actually called me by my name and the top acknowledged me in his own way. That made me feel good.

There were so many experiences there, so many memories. We started out being based near Phu Bai, which isn't far from Hue. We were very close to the border between North and South Vietnam. Hue was a big city where we could go on liberty and did so a few times. The business men's club there had drinks with actual ice in them, which is the main reason we went there. Thirst was perpetual and often severe. They also had water buffalo steaks, which were rather good, especially after a diet of C Rations. The first C Rations we were given to consume came from out of storage and as I recall there were dates on some of them from the forties and fifties. The equipment we had, such as radios, wasn't any better. Rather scary when out on ambush patrol miles from base. Even the helicopters were vintage.

After a while, when things started happening with the war heating up, and after a Jeep was ambushed

on the road close to our base, liberty in town didn't have the appeal it used to. When we went into town we were required to wear civilian clothes and we didn't have any weapons. We were trucked into town with two drivers and two armed guards. In retrospect, we were sitting ducks. I've often thought we were all lucky to survive such an ignorant thing.

After a while we were shipped down to Da Nang to support some operations down there. It became a daily grind. We did daytime sweeps and searches, and nighttime ambush patrols. Day after day. We were sent there just to help out for a very short time. We only took what we were wearing and carrying. We ended up staying down there. By the time we got back to our home base in Phu Bai, my underwear had rotted off. Two men carried back this lizard one day. It came crashing through the undergrowth. Someone was afraid it was a tiger and shot it.

I had two little "pals at one place. These little boys hung around and bothered us, just like little brothers. I never had a clue as to where they lived, or anything else about them. The puppy, striking her universal pose, belonged to everyone and to no one. I'm sure it hung around for the handouts and the attention.

The country was incredibly beautiful. I enjoyed so much just sitting and looking at the distant hills, the jungles. There were valleys filled with the geometric designs of the rice paddies. Everything was lush and green. The black dots in the valley above right are Marines. I did not learn the significance of graves being circles. This one was very elaborate. There were grasshoppers the size of large cigars, centipedes as big as snakes, big hairy spiders, monitor lizards over four feet long, tigers in some places, and the ever present water buffalo. One charged one time when our patrol was walking by. The Marine who was being charged shot an entire clip into the animal, which fell right at his feet, knocking him over. Needless to say, he was shaken up. So was the farmer, who was yelling and screaming, probably swearing? Word was, we paid them when incidents like this occurred.

One of the unforgettable things about Vietnam was the monsoon rains. I'll never forget the times sitting in ambush when it was pouring rain so hard you couldn't see or hear anything but the downpour. You realized as you were sitting beside the trail if the enemy were passing by, you wouldn't be able to detect them and they wouldn't be able to detect you. You prayed they would not come walking by and trip over you. Then you cursed because you just knew no one else in the world would be dumb enough to be out in such a mess, so why were you? One night after an unusually heavy downpour we were surprised when we picked up to head back to base camp. The valley we had come through the night before had turned into a gigantic lake. Everywhere you looked there was nothing but water. I had a bad sinking feeling in my gut. It was a feeling as if we would never make it back. Returning, though, was not as bad as I thought it would be, except for the swollen streams, which scared me.

Once we were camped at a radio base with these neat little thatch huts big enough for two. As a medic, I was one of the few who got to sleep in one. I thought it would be great, since we usually slept under the stars. When I was ready to sack out, I moved into the hut. A fellow Marine had already set up and was reading by candle light. As I lay my gear down I noticed a very large—and I mean a very large— hairy spider on the wall above where my head was going to lay. I muttered some kind of swear word and my bunkmate pointed to the other wall. There was another huge spider. The more I looked around, the more spiders I was seeing. I picked up my gear and moved out and never went back in

At the same place where I had a run in with the spiders I had another funny experience. The guys were playing a game of volleyball with the native soldiers. Volleyball was very big in Vietnam. While sitting nearby, on the edge of a trench, reading, I noticed a couple of guys leaving the compound. They were engineers who said they were going to detonate a couple of mortar rounds that were duds. I didn't think a thing about it, but apparently no one informed the guys. After a few minutes there was a big explosion right next to our compound. I looked out toward the explosion, then back to the courtyard that had been filled with guys. There was not a soul in sight, just that volleyball bouncing up and down, all by itself. Couldn't believe how fast everyone could disappear.

Being the medic it was common for me to be swamped by villagers when we made our sweeps through the little hamlets of the countryside. It was always women and children, and old ladies with black remnants of teeth. I guess they lost their teeth by chewing beadle nuts, a local plant that has a narcotic effect. The people came begging for medicines, pointing to their heads, their stomachs, and to the scab filled sores on the heads of their babies. We communicated with signs. I never could understand the language. I handed out aspirin and put ointment on the heads of the children. We returned to our home base in Phu Bai. Hot shower. Clean clothes. Just those things were an unbelievable luxury, as was sleeping on a cot instead of the ground. I wasn't there very long before I stepped on the mine.

A loud bang. Overwhelming, all-consuming pain. All you can do is scream. I sat there in that muddy ditch screaming. When I held up my leg, blood was spurting out. Saw the faces of the men I was with. They

all seemed to have their mouths open, their eyes wide. Scared shitless. I knew I had to stop the bleeding. Fumbled around in my unit one, the bag containing all of my combat medical supplies, for a tourniquet.

In pain and panic I couldn't find one. Had an extra in my pants pocket, a boot lace. Got it out, tried to tie hard enough to stop the bleeding. I yelled for help. Chico ran up, put his finger on the lace so I could finish tying the knot. He was the brave one. I was most fearful in Vietnam lying in the field hospital worrying about the enemy sneaking in during the wee hours of the night, while I was lying helpless without a weapon.

Next came recuperation in Philly, in the big old Navy hospital. They had to open parts of the old hospital that hadn't been used in decades. There were so many wounded vets. I met so many other vets and people from the community who showed their appreciation and invited us to banquets.

There was a wealthy Philadelphian who invited vets recently-returned from Vietnam to banquets, parades and weekends in Atlantic City. Unfortunately this man passed away, and the recognition stopped. Protesting was escalating. Everything changed.

We all know the history of those decades. Like many others, I have a certain disdain for a lot of politics and those who play that game. But I have always had the deepest emotional feelings for our troops, no matter what era they come from. I tear up easily passing the countless graves at a national cemetery. My deepest respect always goes to those who endured the combat, but not necessarily to those making the decisions behind the scenes.

I did a bit of drinking and running around, which was understandable considering our situations. It did me good to have so much of my family visit me while I was there, which reminds me of a story. There was one lad on the amputee ward who always kept to himself. He never talked to anyone. He was extreme in this way. He was kind of a nerd, a loner and never made friends with anyone. We often teased him about taking him out drinking with us. One day the guys did take him out drinking. They wanted to celebrate his getting his new prosthesis the next day, and to try to get him to come out of his shell, and start talking to people. Well, he slipped on his crutches that night after a few drinks. He broke the bone in his stump. The next day his new leg was ready, and he couldn't put it on, and his family had come in from out of town to see him for the first time. Even though we felt bad for the kid, we laughed. What a situation. The "bad" boys went out on a regular basis and were known for their rowdiness. The good kid goes out for the first time and lands himself in a peck of trouble.

Vietnam, in my estimation, proved to be a coming of age process for our culture, or at least our generation. It was a war we couldn't win. It had a way of showing corruption, which is always with us, but just darkens us all the more when seen in times of the sacrificing of our youth. The young who served proved to be just as brave, courageous, and tough as any who had gone before them. In the end, so many lessons cannot be taught so well in a classroom. Each generation seems to have to learn on the job". Times of great loss, suffering and sacrifice reemphasize the need to simply follow the golden rule. If we as individuals cannot learn to live the simple virtues, no great revelations, or religions or saviors will make any difference.

Two things have really stood out over the years from my Vietnam experience.

One is the deep feelings I have, the deepest appreciation I have, for our liberties. Knowing what it is like to live in fear, appreciation for freedom of expression runs all the deeper. On the same hand, I have a deep seated repulsion for intimidation of any kind, from the common bully to the biggest dictator, to even the "get in your face" fanatic. I've found it is those who spout the most who know the least.

People sometimes ask how I, personally, was able to handle the situation of the land mine and things afterward. When it happened, in the very first second that it happened, I knew what it was, that it wasn't fatal, and that it meant I would be getting out of Vietnam, and wouldn't have to die. The fear over there was so great and constant, that losing my foot was perfectly acceptable. These things flashed in my mind by the time the pain hit. Light is not the fastest thing. Mind is.

So There

so there is change
our lives already relics
for tomorrow's scrutiny and
doubt …
matter and I growing and
breaking,
my spirit and her atoms
caught

in this mechanism of Cycles.
sweet change that lets me
remember of forget,
that takes control and offers
but the chance to wonder.
so there is an end
change held accountable
for our Grand Initiation,
the termination of our search.
so there is a lesson
in the scrutiny of relics,
in the mechanism of doubt,
and the chance to wonder.

James Sage