

A JOURNEY TO GENEVA, a Vietnam memoir
~~SOUVENIRS de GUERRE, 1970-1971;~~

By

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my wife, Judy and our wonderful children, Van, Cathy, and Mary Beth and Platoon Leader Moi, who, after having three of his sons killed by the V.C., joined the South Vietnamese Army. He was seventy-three years old.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

~~The press is our chief ideological weapon.
Its duty is to strike down the enemies of
the working class, the foes of working people.~~

~~Nikita S. Krushchev
New York Times Magazine
September 29, 1957~~

In May of 1971, my boss, the Commanding General of the Delta Military Assistance Command, Major General Hal.D. McCown, near the Cambodian border, introduced me to the Secretary of the Army, The Honorable Stanely R. Resor, as follows, " Mr. Secretary, I would like you to meet the best Information Officer in Viet Nam." I started to look around to see who he was talking about. I was speechless. I shook hands with Mr. Resor and walked away in shock. Before that day, General McCown had never told me what he thought of my work in the ten months I worked with him and I had made a couple of mistakes that year.

I had not won the confidence of General McCown by being a friend of the American press. In fact once I realized what I was dealing with I thought of all of them as the enemy and covertly acted accordingly. Years later the world would be informed that *Time* magazine had employed a Vietnamese journalist in its Saigon office. He was Colonel Pham Xuan An of the North Vietnamese Army. ~~In short,~~ he was an enemy spy. I never met him, but I am sure that the damage that he did to the allied war effort was profound given his access to the Vietnamese and American military installations and personnel.

On April 28, 1997, in New York City at a meeting of the Asia Society in which, now General, An was invited, but not permitted to attend by his government, his former pals, such as Frank McCulloch from *Time*, Morley Safer from *60 Minutes*, David Halberstam and Stanley Karnow, both Pulitzer Prize winning journalists, would be more irked by the refusal of his government to permit General An to attend the meeting than the fact that as an enemy agent he had betrayed them and their nation in the mist of a very bloody war. This incident at the Asia Society meeting is symbolic of the monumental philisophical corruption of the American news media as a whole both during the war and for years afterwards. In their world, in which they think of themselves as more evolved human beings that the rest of us mere mortals, its not cool to be an anti-communist. Yet like the ~~hypocrites~~ ^{hypocrites} that they are, they live in a free country and make their living with their pens dependant upon the First Amendment freedoms our Constitution provides while on the frontiers of freedom they are guarded by men ~~who~~ ^{they} were better than themselves during the Cold War and thereafterwards. At least ~~these men~~ ^{they} knew the difference between Marxist-Leinism and freedom.

The North Vietnamese had term for their political activities in relation to the American news media. It was "dich van." The term means action among the enemy. It does not mean

military action. There was another term for that. Collectively it means a set of non-military acts by the North Vietnamese against people not under communist control. Dich Van activities are highly imaginative and almost numberless. And how successful were the North Vietnamese in their efforts with the American news media?

This much is clear, for years the North Vietnamese communists fashioned opinions throughout the world which dissolve if subjected to even casual inspection. Yet that never happened during the war or in the thirty years since. They created myths with defy elementary logic yet which endured during the war and became the orthodoxy of history. The North Vietnamese turned skeptical newsmen credulous, careful scholars indifferent to data, and honorable men blind to immorality. It is my opinion that this period of the history of American journalism is one of its darkest moments. Nor would the American news media's assault upon the America effort in the Second Indochina war, or those who served in defense of freedom there end with America's defeat with the collapse of the South Vietnamese government in April of 1975.

For years after the war the Vietnam veteran would be portrayed in the media as a drug crazed baby killers. This assault on the reputation of the Viet Nam veterans would go on for years following the war. As late as June of 1998, *Time* and the Cable News Network, CNN, led by the notorious anti-American Vietnam war correspondent, Peter Arnett, another Pulitzer Prize winner, reported that American military forces in an operation in Laos used the poison gas, sarin, in support of one of its Operation Tailwind. The story quickly fell apart and was repudiated by *Time* and CNN, one of the few times that truth finally did triumph over the efforts of the American media establishment to defame the American military effort in Vietnam.

The performance of the American news media in Viet Nam is one of the most controversial issues of the war. After their portrayal of the Tet offensive of 1968 as a great defeat for the allies, when it was just exactly the opposite, the hostility of the Army officer corps to the American press became great and this hostility would live on for years. In later years the Army would go to war in Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf and wisely never again would the American news media be permitted unrestricted access to the war by the American military establishment.

So this was my enemy in the Viet Nam war--the American press. To be fair not all of them held anti-American attitudes and sought to wage war against our efforts in Viet Nam with their pens, but a large percentage of them did hold those attitudes and consequently, I came to treat all of them the same. They were not to be trusted at all. Not one of them. I was not alone in my attitudes. I had to struggle daily with Army officers more senior than I telling me over the phone "Captain you find a way to keep those bastards out of my hair" in my attempts to help them visit in the Delta.

So this was my war for my eleven months in the Delta in Viet Nam--to limit the damage to the Allied war effort that could possibly be done by them, acting directly or indirectly in response to the North Vietnamese's dich van activities. There was no prospect I could win. I could only fight them to a draw. And I think that I did. This is my story.

For various reasons, I have waited thirty years to tell it. Obviously, I do not share the current politically correct view that the American news media somehow "told the truth about Viet Nam." I think that they played a very large role in our defeat there. I will explain why I feel this way in greater detail in the Afterward. As I have no political ambitions and this is still a

reasonably free country, I intend to express my opinions without regard to what the news media may think. I feel I owe that to my children and to future historians who may read this story. I want to leave to the future historians a document that will serve as a primary source of information about the war in the Delta at a time when, according to Lewis Sorley's critically important book to our understanding of the Vietnam war, **A Better War**, the war was won. The news media that never reported this fact to the American people for a multitude of reasons some of which will be explained in this account..

I intend for this memoir to reflect the two of two Americans, my wife and I, who were caught up in the events of that war as two young people, average middle class college educated people at the beginning of the early years of their marriage. Additionally, through the medium of various news articles and documents I have attempted to give the reader an idea of the war in the Delta in 1970-1971 in all its various dimensions. The Delta was a laboratory of war in all its forms and for eleven months I was able to watch and observe some of the best military people this country ever produced.

I did not go to Viet Nam with the negative attitude about the press that I had when I came home. When I arrived in-country I was a blank slate, modestly educated with a B.A. Degree in History from L.S.U. and two years and some months in the Army. I had tried to stay current by reading histories and news magazines. My family had no relatives in the news media nor did we know any news people when I grew up. My political orientation was then and remains today what might be called "center right" on the ideological spectrum. After my Viet Nam experience I became a determined and fierce anti-communist, or as Whittaker Chambers would characterize himself, a counter-revolutionary.

My mother gave birth to me on 26 November 1945 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She had been an industrial nurse at the local ESSO plant on the Mississippi River. My father worked there as a chemist when they met three years before. Dad graduated from L.S.U. with a degree in Chemistry and Physics in 1939. He spent the war helping to manufacture the high octane gasoline used by the allies in their war planes. Mother had six brothers, five of whom served in World War II. All of them came home. On neither side of my family did we have a military tradition, although my father had a couple of cousins that graduated from West Point.

I attended public schools in Baton Rouge and graduated from Baton Rouge High School in 1963. I played left offensive guard on the football team and lettered my senior year. It was there that I met my wife to be coming down the stairs between classes one day in January 1963. We have been together ever since.

Judy Anne Begue, like me, had been born in Baton Rouge. Because she was Catholic she had attended parochial schools in Baton Rouge until her sophomore year in high school when she came to Baton Rouge High School. Her father, like mine, was employed by the ESSO plant as a design draftsman. Unlike my family, whose background was English, Irish and Scottish, her family was of French descent on her mother's and father's side. While dating her I had to adjust to her mother's highly seasoned French food to which I was totally unaccustomed. Her family had another characteristic---the women are beautiful. I fell in love with her very quickly and remain so today.

I began L.S.U. in the summer of 1963. In the fall I joined the Sigma Chi Fraternity and began in the R.O.T.C. program. It was a time of the great L.S.U. football teams and we spent

many a Saturday night in Tiger Stadium, "Death Valley" to opposing teams, half drunk cheering the "Fighting Tigers" to victory. In those days every male L.S.U. student was required to take two years of R.O.T.C. training in either the Air Force program or the Army program. L.S.U. began as a military school and its nickname was the "Ole War Skule." During World War II it produced a very large number of reserve officers for the Army. As the Vietnam war was heating up, I decided to take the advanced R.O.T.C. program that would lead to a commission as a second Lieutenant in the Army upon graduation. I attended summer camp at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in the summer of 1966. I did well at summer camp. My platoon mates voted me the best cadet in the platoon and my last year in the R.O.T.C. program I was selected to be a D.M.G.i.e, Distinguished Military Graduate, and a Battalion Commander. I commanded three companies of a hundred men each. I really became interested in the Army as a career by my senior year in college and selected the field artillery as my branch, I liked the intellectual effort required to be an artilleryman, and to become a Regular Army officer upon graduation.

Meanwhile my future wife, after a semester at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in the fall of 1963, transferred to L.S.U. My father had expressly forbidden me from going to U.S.L. He had gone there on a football scholarship at aged seventeen and had so much fun that he flunked out and spent five years on a dreg boat in the Achefalia swamp and running airboats before he returned to college at L.S.U. determined to get an education. She became a member of the Delta Zeta Sorority. In those years that sorority was famous for having the most beautiful girls on campus and they were really fun girls to be with. She fit right in. Shortly after she graduated in May of 1967 with her degree in Secondary English education, I proposed on the L.S.U. campus. Three months later we were married.

She got a job teaching English in Plaquemine, Louisiana, while I finished my last semester at L.S.U. graduating in January 1968 with a B.A. degree in history. The Army commissioned me a Regular Army officer the next day. After a short honeymoon in Cozumel, Mexico, we reported to Fort Bragg, North Carolina and the 82nd Airborne Division.

The Division assigned me to Battery "C", 1st of the 320th Field Artillery. The battery had three privates, and fourteen second Lieutenants. Eighty percent of the enlisted men were veterans of Vietnam and some of the noncommissioned officers had two tours there. They did not think much of fresh second lieutenants even though they saluted and said "sir." Three weeks later I went to airborne school to become a paratrooper. There used to be a saying in the Division, "if you aren't airborne, you ain't shit." I promptly seriously reinjured my left knee that I had injured playing high school football. This time I did it permanently. I would not run again for eight years. I came back to the Division and my battery on crutches and in a cast. My dreams of becoming an airborne ranger and ultimately a Special Forces officer were at an end. In May of 1968 the Artillery Branch sent me to the Field Artillery Officer Basic course for two months. There met a good friend, Gene Swanson, from Wyoming. Months later Gene was assigned to Vietnam and one afternoon would win the Bronze Star with a "V" device for calling artillery fire down on his position to break up an N.V.A company assault. When the rounds began to land in front of him, the enemy assault line was thirty yards from his position. He killed more than thirty enemy that afternoon and walked away with only his ears ringing from the sound of the artillery shells exploding around him. It was at Fort Sill that I received word that my close friend at L.S.U. and farternity brother, first Lieutenant Clifton P. Moak had been killed as an armor

company commander leading his company to break up an ambush. I shed many tears and swore that I would kill at least one enemy for Cliff.

Upon our return to Fort Bragg, I promptly wrote a letter to the field artillery branch and requested a transfer to the air defense artillery branch. As my injury prevented my from being a combat leader, I chose another branch where the necessity to walk or run would not be important. On September 1, 1968, I reported to the 15th ADA Group at Fort Bliss, Texas. There I was assigned to the first activating self propelled vulcan cannon unit, a battery, in the Army. The Battery was in its first week of training at Dona Anna Range Camp twenty-six miles north of El Paso. Although I was the ranking Lieutenant in the Battery with very short hair, and highly polished airborne boots and a hard attitude typical of junior officers in the 82nd, the battery commander asking me to straighten out the training program for the battery for its training cycle, as the first week had been a mess. In ten days I had the operational plans worked out for the next four months of training. In January 1969, when the battery returned to Fort Bliss proper, I worked on the Battalion staff for a few months and when the first towed vulcan battery activated in the Army came into existence in May 1969, I became its battery commander. I was twenty three years old and I was responsible for 120 men, five officers, and twelve cannons and thirty-seven trucks. The unit was Battery B, 5th Battalion (C/V) 67th Artillery.

Lieutenant Colonel Jermoe C. Milam commanded the battalion. He had commanded six field artillery batteries and was considered by the field artillery branch to be one of its most promising officers. He was one of the finest soldiers I ever met. I would follow him anywhere. While assigned to the Pentagon, he had become friends with an Army infantry officer named, Colonel David Hackworth. After doing Hackworth's work for him in the Pentagon, they did not part as friends. Later in Vietnam I ran into Colonel Hackworth as the Senior Advisor of the 44th Special Tactical Zone in the Delta. After leaving Vietnam, he went Australia where he felt he had achieved true happiness as a waiter. Years later Hackworth would achieve greatly undeserved fame in this country as a media favorite commentator about the Army and a correspondent. Frankly, he never had the intelligence to be a general and everyone who knew him knew it. This is a fact that his ego will not accept even today to the great detriment to our public conversation about defense issues about which he feels he is an expert.

My good friend, Lieutenant Richard Jones, was my battery executive officer. As the unit was brand new to the Army we had to develop the employment tactics, made equipment modification suggestions, and organizational change suggestions as we worked with the new system in the field and on the firing line. It was a very exciting time and Rick and I worked together as a really good team. In October 1969 Rick volunteered for Vietnam and left the unit. That same month I came home from work one afternoon and saw a portion of Vice President's Spiro Agnew's famous speech in Des Moines, Iowa, criticizing the news media. Patrick Buchannon wrote the speech. The Vice President's comments started me thinking along with the realization that LTC Milam would be leaving as battalion commander in the spring. What would I do with my last year in the Army?

At that time in the Army many were really disgusted with the conduct of the liberal democratic wing of the American political spectrum. American soldiers were engaged in combat against a vicious and brutal enemy. Its viciousness we were daily exposed to from the stories of the men with whom we had to deal on a daily basis who had returned from Vietnam. We all

believed that all men had the right to be free from communist totalitarianism and that the anti-war movement people were absolutely wrong, as history would prove. We felt that they were destroying the social fabric of our country. As I felt that I did not have a future in the Army as a combat leader because of my knee injury, I wanted to go to law school and perhaps get involved in public affairs. When the Vice President made his speech I began to think about the news media. I reached no definite conclusions at that time, but there were all these thoughts in my mind.

In December 1969, Judy and I left El Paso to go home for Christmas leave. We drove to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. While driving through the desert in west Texas in the early morning, Judy was asleep and very uncomfortable because she was five months pregnant. Out there on the road all alone it all came together. I decided to volunteer to go to Vietnam. I did not have to go; my knee injury could have kept me out of it. In fact, my father used to say many times that it saved my life. Considering the extent to which I was a war lover at that time, he was probably right. The course of action I would pursue to reach a political career would be as follows: I would go to Vietnam as an Information officer. I had read and studied the Army organization and discovered that there was such a thing as an Information Officer. It would give me an opportunity to learn about the news media, which would be important in a political career. Second, I wanted to learn about the war and being an Information Officer places one at a very high staff level as a very junior officer. I felt Vietnam would be an issue in the future politics of the United States and I wanted to learn all that I could about the war. Third, I wanted to improve my writing by editing a newspaper and how journalism operates as a profession. Fourth, there would be an opportunity to save money for law school after Vietnam so my family would not be in a strain during school. Last, and importantly, there was a war on. It was my generation's war and I truly felt that when there is a war it is a soldier's duty to go. I had lots of friends volunteer and go. I simply did not want to miss it. I felt it was an important part of my education as an American citizen, and I knew that if I volunteered I might have a much better chance of getting the job that I wanted. My ultimate goal was to go to Vietnam, then to law school, and then get a job in Republican politics in Washington, D.C.

One of the strangest things that happened to me in my life at that time was that while on the drive through the desert at night, as I projected my thoughts into the future, you might say, I actually had a kind of vision, if you will, about where I would work in Vietnam and what it would be like. I can remember in the middle of the night in the desert out in West Texas driving this long lonely stretch of road and thinking in my mind that the place I would work would have to be a two-story white building on a busy street in the Delta and that I would be the boss. As it turned out, the only thing different about that apparition and the reality that occurred seven months later was that the building had three stories instead of two.

After spending Christmas in Baton Rouge with our families, on January 7, 1970, I called the Air Defense Artillery Personal Branch and volunteered to go to Vietnam as an Information Officer. They programmed me for the Defense Information School and Vietnam by July 1970 and confirmed the orders. This would put me home in July of 1971 in time for law school. Then I came home to tell Judy later that day. I vividly remember her reaction. At that time she was six months pregnant. That wonderful sweet and kind girl cried daily for the next three weeks. She was not happy with me. Then she recovered her balance, did some thinking and came to the

conclusion that if I was going to pursue my dreams this way she would spend the year in Hawaii! Naturally, I could not say no.

The second week of March of 1970 my battery command changed. I had been such a hard ass that frankly I think many of the men were glad to see me go. In hind sight I regret how tough I was, but I was young, determined not to fail and under a lot of strain. My good friend Lieutenant Rick Jones used to tell me that I was one of the the most willfully mean son-of-a-bitches that he had ever seen. But our battery was good and our men did soldier. The 82nd Airborne Division left its mark on me and I left it on the battery.

Shortly thereafter, Judy flew home to Baton Rouge. She was eight months pregeant and just did not want to be that uncomfortable in the car for that long ride back home. When she left El Paso, I think she had the feeling that she did not ever want to see me again. We had been under a lot of stress from the battery, she was pregeant, and I had volunteered to go to Vietnam. She was not a happy camper. I drove back to Baton Rouge and arrived about April 1, 1970. She had planned to stay there until she had the baby. Then on April 4th in the early morning her labor started and by 1208 our first child came into this world. He was a boy. We named him Van Michael Davidson III. Eleven days later to the amazement of both of our parents we started for Indainapolis, Indiana, and Fort Benjamin Harrison for the Information Officer Basic Course. A couple of days later we arrived in Indainapolis found an apartment just outside the front gates of the Post and I reported to the school.

At the Defense Information School we learned about the print media, how to set up newspapers, how to write articles, how to give speeches, the public information policies of the Department of Defense, how to write television broadcast scripts, news programs, how to write radio scripts, radio news broadcasts and public affairs. It was an exceptional training in the field of journalism. I became friends with a Vietnamese Lieutenant named Lieutenant Minh and a Greek Army colonel who had fought the communist guerrillas during the civil war in his country after WW II. At graduation on June 18th, the speaker had been the Information Officer for the 1st Cavalary Division in Vietnam. He spoke about the lack of trust between the news media and the military in Vietnam. I listened intently as I was shortly to be there.

We returned to Baton Rouge to visit our families again. I requested an extra two weeks leave. My scheduled date to depart for Vietnam was July 19th. We spent those lasts days at home. We also took a ten day trip to Key West, Florida. I did some spear fishing and scuba diving. We visited Hemingway's house, had a drink at Papa Joe's and tried not to think about the enivitable separation that was coming up fast. We took Van. We could have left him at home, but I was leaving for a war and I might not see him again. I wanted those days with my son.

I made the final arrangements for my departure, leaving a letter with my father-in-law to open in the event of my death. Judy made her plans to go to Hawaii. She planned to drive to San Fransico, California, and put the car on a ship then fly to Honolulu and find a place to live. After I left Judy, Van and my mother drove accross the country to California in August.

On the 18th of July we spent the morning at my parent's home we had to leave for New Orleans at noon. I held Van all morning. It was very hard to make conversation with my parents. They had that look that all parents have when their son is leaving for a war. Now that Van is a U.S. Marine Corps Captain and AV-8B Harrier jet pilot, I can understand how my parents must have felt watching me leave if I had to send him off to a war. Finally, the time arrived to leave I

gave my son to my mother, shedding tears and we left and drove to New Orleans. Later that day we had dinner at Antoine's in the French Quarter. The next morning we rode across the street from the hotel to the airport. I swear the radio that morning was playing the song *Leaving on a Jet Plane*. Once in the airport, we discovered the flight had been postponed an hour. We went to the bar and had a drink and tried to pass the time. I thought the gods were trying to torture us. Finally, the time came to finally say good bye and get on the plane. As I left Judy and walked down to the airplane my face was filled with tears. I was in uniform, a U.S. Army Captain in the Air Defense Artillery. Several people noticed my tears. I took my seat on the plane and soon stopped crying. The airplane finally took off and I was on my way to the first of the three great adventures of my life.

In a very real sense when I left for Vietnam I did not realize that I really never ever come home again. Shortly, I would end up in the most important area of Vietnam--the Delta, where most of the population lived, at a time when it was considered the most important region of the country to South Vietnamese government by MACV, headquarters. For years afterwards the experience seriously affected my relationship to my family, my country, and my dream of a political career never came to pass. In the Delta, I became a witness to the reality of Vietnam at that time in the war, a reality that the American people were never told by their press, which helped to cause the nation to fail to achieve its objectives of a free and democratic South Vietnam that could withstand the aggression from the North. I became a witness to a major felony against the American people by its commercial communications corporations..

THE DELTA

The IV Corps Tactical Zone included sixteen provinces. It was bordered on the north by Cambodia and the III Corps Tactical Zone, on the south by the South China Sea and on the west by the Gulf of Siam. The IV Corps covers an area of 37,057 square kilometers and at that time was populated by approximately 5,780,000 people, which represented one third of the total population of Vietnam. The sixteen provinces were subdivided into four Division Tactical Areas, the 7th ARVN Division, (th ARVN Division, 21st ARVN Division, and the 44th Special Zone, on the Cambodian border.

The Delta region is characterized by a flat, poorly drained surface, criss-crossed by numerous tributaries of the Mekong and Bassac Rivers and a dense network of canals and smaller streams. The elevation of this area does not exceed 20 feet above sea level with the exceptions of the Seven Mountains area in Chau Doc Province and scattered small hills in An Giang and Kien Giang Province.

Included in this region are broad-leaf mangrove swamps of the coastal plains and the Mekong Delta with its wet land. The north central section of the area includes the sparsely populated and unfertile Plain of Reeds in Kien Tuong and Kein Phong Provinces.

The climate in the Delta is divided into two seasons, the monsoon season from June through October and the dry season from November through May. During the monsoon season the maximum average temperature is eighty-eight degrees and the minimum is seventy-five degrees. The dry season average temperature is ninety-three degrees and a minimum of seventy-four degrees.

During the dry season there are over 2,100 kilometers of rivers and canals with a draft of six feet or more. In the monsoon season, this increases to over 3,300 kilometers. The canals are primarily used to irrigate rice paddies, but also are navigable by sampans. There were less than 1,700 kilometers of "highways." The "highways" of the Delta were its waterways.

Included in the IV Corps Tactical Zone were Phu Quoc Island, in Kien Giang Province. Phu Quoc island was home to a very large ARVN prisoner of war camp. It was located off the west coast of Kien Giang and had at that time a population of 11,200 people.

THE DMAC COMMAND

At this stage in the war in the Delta there were no American combat divisions. There was only one American infantry company in the Delta. It was attached to the 164th Combat Aviation Brigade. DMAC used it for special situations, such as securing the area around downed U.S. helicopters or in one case in the spring of 1971 to extract a group of advisors to the 9th ARVN Division that had become pinned down in the Seven Mountains.

The DMAC command comprised Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps elements. The Corps staff was a joint service staff. Most of the officers were Army officers. The Corps staff supervised all the American units in the Delta and serviced as advisors to the Vietnamese IV Corps staff. There were approximately 21,000 American servicemen in DMAC. The Army units for example were psychological operations units, military intelligence (radio research) units, engineer units, quartermaster units, medical units, including a hospital, and a combat aviation brigade that provided the aviation support. The Navy units included Seals, helicopter units, and port units. There was an Air Force advisory unit in the Delta that advised the Vietnamese Air Force units flying the A-37 in ground support missions. B-52 support was available as needed but rarely used.

DMAC was unique among the Corps commands in Vietnam in that the pacification programs supervised by the U.S. State Department, called CORDS (Civil Operation for Rural Development Support) directly reported to the Corps Commander. At this stage of the war pacification of the Delta was the objective of the command. Found in each of the sixteen provinces of the Delta was a province senior advisor, normally a Colonel or a Lieutenant Colonel and his team. Found in each province were various districts. There an American Major or Captain would service as the district senior advisor. Within the districts there were the villages and hamlets. There would be found the MATS (Mobile Advisory Teams) teams. These were five man units supervised by an Army Captain and his noncommissioned officers. The MATS teams would be assigned to various villages in the district. The village chief would be required to sign a "contract" with the MATS team specifying the responsibilities of each. Not every village in the Delta had a MATS team. Their deployment to a village just depended upon the individual circumstances of the village and its pacification status.

The American Corps commander also supervised the military effort of the Vietnamese units in the Delta. The military advisory effort supervised the 7th, 9th, 21st, ARVN Divisions and the 44th Special Tactical Zone on the Cambodian border. At each of the DCATS (Division

Combat Assistance Teams) would be found a American Army colonel, and various staff officers. The Vietnamese regiments had an American Army Lieutenant Colonel advisor and each ARVN battalion had an American Major or Captain as the Battalion advisor. All of these various levels of command also had noncommissioned officers assigned to them. At this stage of the war the big ARVN units were focused on the very remote areas of the Delta where there could be found battalion sized NVA units.

At this stage in the war MACV and the Vietnamese government considered the Delta to be the most important Corps area in Vietnam. It is where one third of the people of South Vietnam lived and it was the rice bowl of Asia. This is reflected in the caliber of people that were assigned to DMAC at this stage of the war. Major General Hal D. McCown commanded DMAC. He had served in three wars and served as the Secretary to the General Staff for General MacArthur's occupation of Japan following World War II and managed the logistical build up for Vietnam in the Pentagon. General McCown had been a 1940 graduate of L.S.U. He always kept the big picture in mind, was calm, dignified, determined, and let his subordinates do their job. He did not scream at people he just firmly talked to them and told them what he wanted done. I spent many hours watching him interact with Americans of all ranks and the Vietnamese. I never worried about what kind of decision he might have to make at 0200 in the morning because he was always calm. As a very junior officer this quality greatly impressed me as a tremendous strength that gave his subordinates confidence in him. Of course, I later realized that his demeanor and mannerisms were a carbon copy of General MacArthur for whom he had worked. Having read Louis Sorley's book, *A Better War*, I realize General McCown carried out General Abrams' strategy and orders to the letter at this stage of the war. The events described in this memoir are a reflection of General Abrams' vision for the war.

General McCown's deputy for CORDS was the legendary John Paul Vann. I normally saw Vann every afternoon at the evening briefing at 1730. Vann was short, about five feet six or seven, slightly balding and wore civilian clothes. As an early advisor in the Delta in 1963 he had achieved some notoriety as he felt the war was not going well which was contrary to the way the effort was being portrayed by the command in Saigon. Neil Sheen wrote a biography of Vann, *A Bright Shinning Lie*. In Washington, D.C. in 1979 or 1980, I met Sheen, gave him my card and offered to tell him about Vann in the Delta during this time period. I never heard from him. Sheen did not discuss Vann's great contribution to the war in 1970 and 1971, which resulted in the pacification of the Delta. In Chapter Six there is an interview with Vann and his assessment of the war in the Delta. This assessment is worth the price of this book alone. In March Vann and William Colby rode motorbikes from one end of the Delta to the Cambodian border without incident to prove just how successful pacification had been in the Delta.

The CORDS pacification programs included the "Land to the Tiller" program, which redistributed the land to those who farmed the land. "The People's Self Defense Forces" which taught the Vietnamese villagers how to use small arms and passed them out to the people to defend themselves, and the "Phoenix Program" which was designed to rid the countryside of the V.C. infrastructure influences. Other programs advised the Vietnamese how to upgrade their agricultural practices, introducing the Miracle Rice, advised the Vietnamese how to upgrade their schools, public health, and all other areas of Vietnamese national effort. These CORDS advisors were normally civilians however, some military officers were assigned to CORDS for

administrative support. CORDS also evaluated the pacification status of the Delta with the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES). HES measured the pacification progress throughout the Delta. The HES consisted of a monthly form filled out by the District Senior Advisors that rated the villages and hamlets with a ranking depending upon various factors, such as enemy incidents, elections, children in school, ect. Ambassador William Colby's book *Lost Victory* describes the CORDS programs and their success.

General McCown's military deputy was Brigadier General John H. Cushman. General Cushman graduated from West Point and had a M.S. from M.I.T. in engineering. In the early days of Vietnam he had been a senior advisor to the 21st ARVN Division and latter a Brigade Commander in the 101st Airborne Division in 1968. He was directly responsible for the direct military effort of the three ARVN divisions and the 44th Special Tactical Zone. We all nicknamed him "Blackjack" because he used to holler and scream at everyone all day long. As a junior officer I had only seen that type of officer leadership in the 82nd Airborne Division. The Division Artillery Commander was like this. It was not uncommon in the General's Mess that General McCown or General Cushman would speak to the assembled officers. I used to worry about what kind of decisions General Cushman would make in the early morning hours after he had exhausted himself screaming all day long which manifested itself in an inability to even speak in a coherent paragraph in those situations in the General's Mess. In May 1971, General Cushman became the Commanding General of DMAC and he stopped screaming at everybody, but I did not want to have anything to do with him so I found a replacement and headed home shortly thereafter. I had seen the incredible and cruel abuse his aides had taken. I just did not want to possibly be exposed to that type of leadership for any length of time as one of his personal staff officers. One thing about General Cushman was that there was no doubt about his intelligence. He was a very smart fellow. He ultimately became a Lieutenant General.

In August 1970, the South Vietnamese government assigned Major General Ngo Quang Truong as the commander of the IV Corps. General Truong was the very best general in the South Vietnamese Army. He commanded the three ARVN divisions and all the province chiefs and district advisors in the Delta. He was very tough and expected the very best performance from his staff and subordinate units.

These were the major figures in the Delta in 1970 and 1971. They were the very best people in the American and Vietnamese government. This is a reflection of the priority the Delta had in the war at this time.

Major General McCown had three personal staff officers, an Aide-de-camp, a Staff Judge Advocate (the lawyer), and an Information Officer, which on 1 August 1970 I became. I reported directly to General McCown and no other staff officer could cut off my access to him. I often coordinated staff actions with the Deputy Chief of Staff or the Chief of Staff, but I did not report to them.

When I arrived in country I was assigned initially to the 9th ARVN division DCAT for one week. Then I was assigned as the Information Officer for DMAC. The day I arrived at the press camp I noticed that the press camp sign was hanging at a crooked angle from its sign post. My first order was to get somebody out to get the sign fixed properly. It was an indication of the bad state of affairs of the office. The press camp was three stories high. It held our offices on the ground floor, along with a photography laboratory. On the second floor was my office and

and a large open room with bunk beds where visiting correspondants could sleep. On the third floor was a separate bedroom for female correspondants. The staff consisted of one Navy junior officer, and five to seven enlisted people from Sergeant First Class to Private First Class. I had a Vietnamese secretary and maid. We all became very close to them.

The office published a weekly fact sheet for the headquarters command, "The DMAC FACTS" and a monthly newspaper of 4,000 circulation titled, "The Delta Advisor." I dealt personally with all correspondants and in my absence my Navy assistant took over. As a twenty-four year old Army captain it quickly became my job to explain the pacification events occurring there to the American news media. Rarely, has one so young and inexperienced been entrusted by the Army with such a delicate responsibility. An Information Officer can get a general officer in more trouble, more quickly, than nearly any other staff officer in a command. I immediately felt the awesome weight of responsibility of the position.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The chapters that follow contain my letters to my wife and a few to my parents, transcripts of a few tapes that I recorded and mailed to my wife. These letters have been slightly edited and there are some deletions of matters that are not important to this story or are too personal to be published. At the conclusion of each month's letters I have included the various stories that appeared that month in the command newspaper which I edited, *The Delta Advisor*. These articles through the year represent the pacification effort, the South Vietnamese Army war, and other stories about the American effort in the Delta in 1970-1971. Of particular interest to future historians is John Paul Vann's assessment of the status of pacification in the Delta in the December issue of *The Delta Advisor*. This assessment is consistent with Mr. Sorley's contention in his book, *A Better War*, that there came a time when the war was won. Mr. Vann's assessment I know to have been absolutely accurate and is the story that the American people never came to realize, because of the press reporting from Vietnam. It is my hope that at the conclusion of this book the reader will have a good understanding of the allied effort in the Delta at this time. Also included are several stories of South Vietnamese officers who were legitimate heroes of the ARVN Army. The South Vietnamese did have brave soldiers in its Army just as in the American Army.

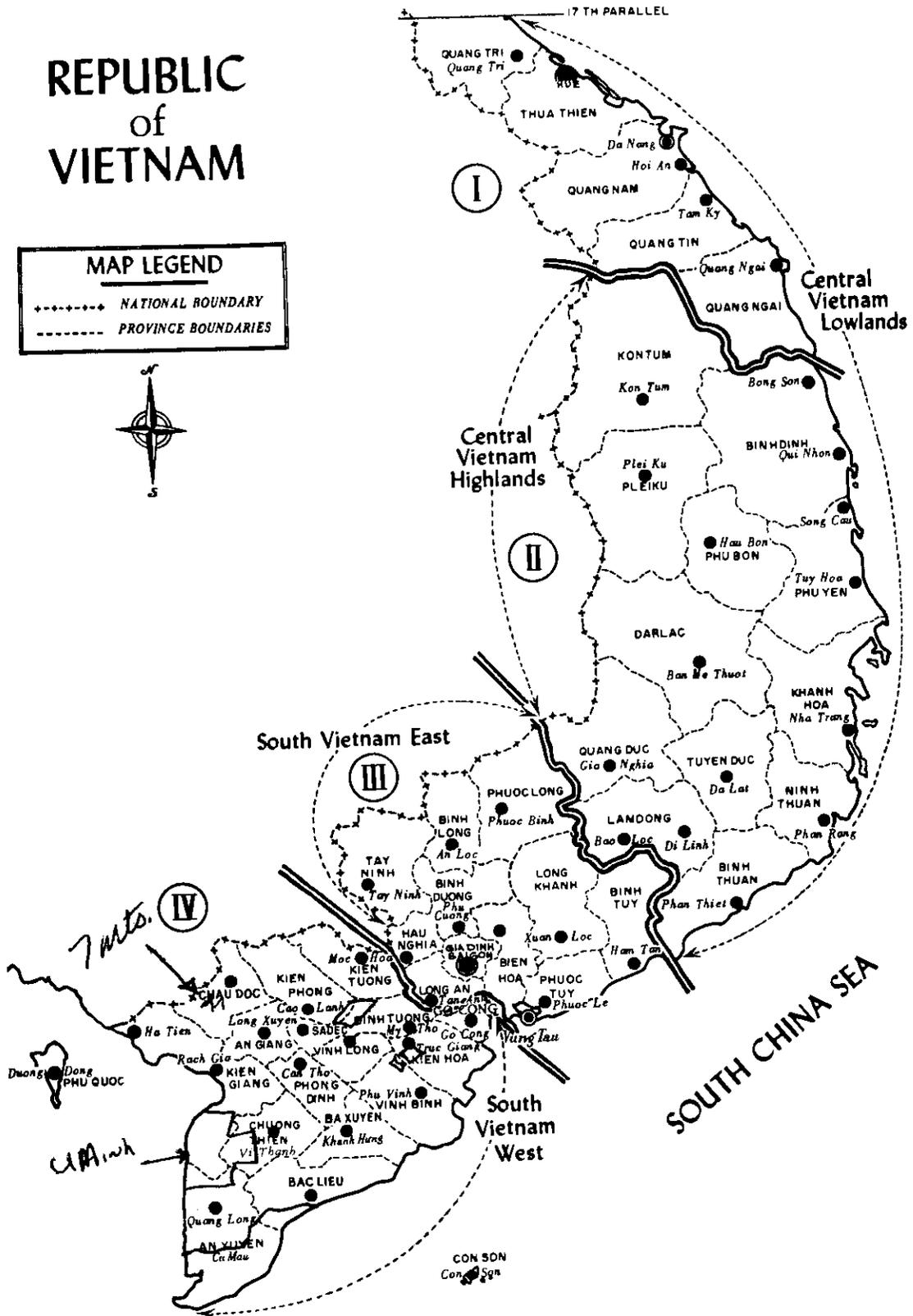
In my letters, the reader will see a young man trying to make decisions about a future career, where he might live permanently in the United States, coping with the cultural shock of the exposure to South Vietnam and its people and the loneliness of separation from his family, reacting to the low standard of discipline in the American Army in Vietnam at this time, my reaction to working on a general staff for the first time in my career, and my reaction to the American newsman, which went from trying to be helpful to after six months in country treating them like the enemy and trying covertly sabotage their efforts to get stories in the Delta.

In the Afterward I will discuss my reaction to my return home, and the passion the experience created in me to understand my experience, the war, and why we lost. For years I would study communism, war, and history. Ultimately, years later, I would end up in Geneva, Switzerland in October of 1987, having just been asked to leave the law firm in Lake Charles, Louisiana, in which I was a partner, attending an international conference concerning

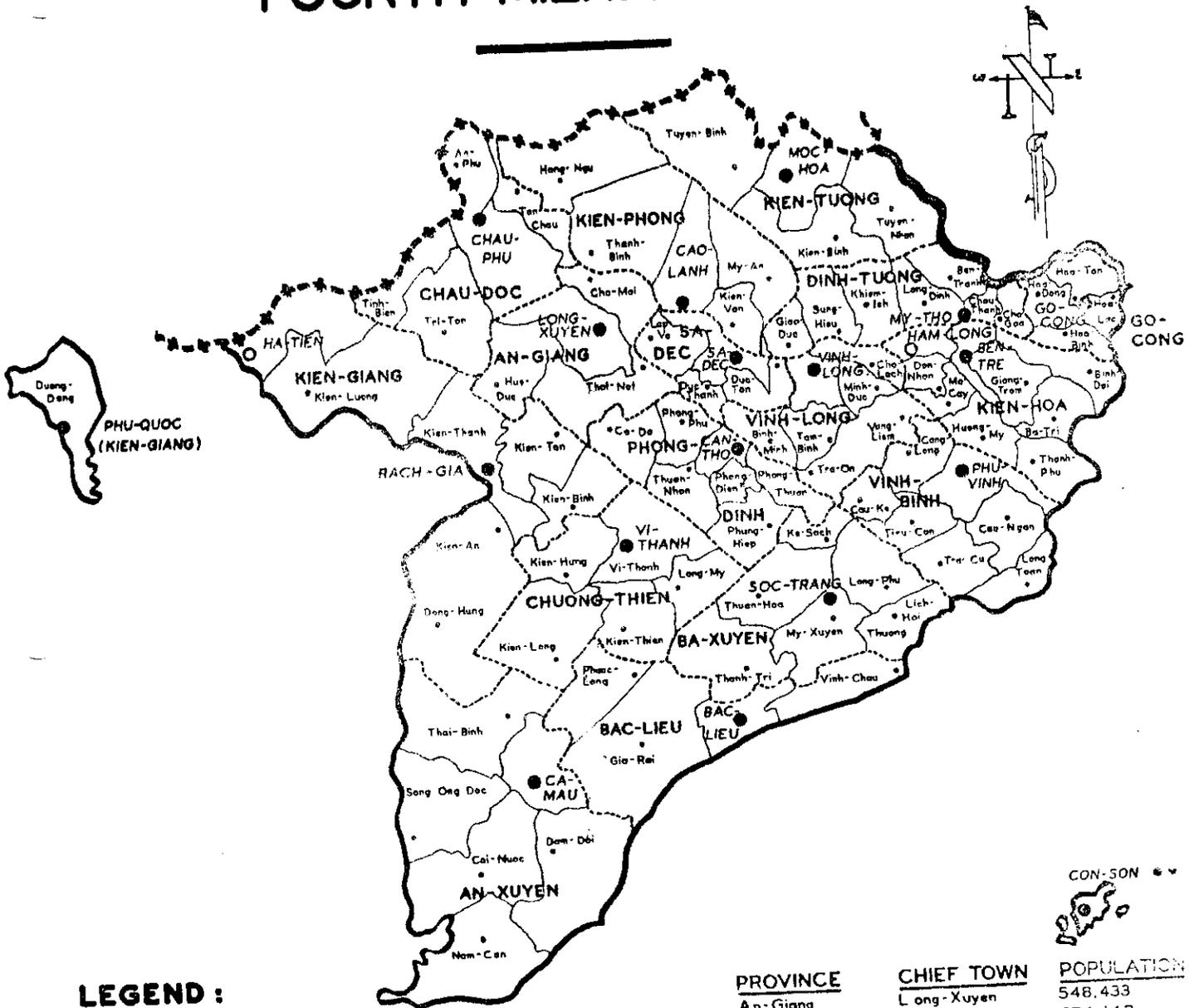
REPUBLIC of VIETNAM

MAP LEGEND

- NATIONAL BOUNDARY
- PROVINCE BOUNDARIES



THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM FOURTH MILITARY ZONE



LEGEND :

- NATIONAL BOUNDARY
- PROVINCE BOUNDARIES
- DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
- PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OR CHIEF TOWN
- OTHER IMPORTANT COMMUNITIES
- DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS



SCALE : 1:1,000,000

• Estimated 31 December 1968
 • Administrative Delegation as of April 21, 1965 and included in Special Capital Zone.

PROVINCE

An-Giang
 An-Xuyen
 Ba-Xuyen
 Bac-Lieu
 Chau-Phu
 Chuong-Thien
 Dinh-Tuong
 Ga-Cong
 Kien-Giang
 Kien-Hoa
 Kien-Phong
 Kien-Tuong
 Phong-Dinh
 Sa-Dec
 Vinh-Binh
 Vinh-Long

CHIEF TOWN

Long-Xuyen
 Ca-Mau
 Soc-Trang
 Bac-Lieu
 Chau-Phu
 Vi-Thanh
 My-Tho
 Go-Cong
 Rach-Gia
 Ben-Tre
 Cao-Lanh
 Moc-Hoa
 Can-Tho
 Sa-Dec
 Phu-Vinh
 Vinh-Long

POPULATION

548,433
 274,142
 358,756
 323,635
 489,572
 248,324
 612,271
 1,69,427
 382,271
 548,599
 355,103
 46,903
 457,265
 275,796
 414,363
 491,266
 Total 5,996,184





Judy and Van in Indianapolis, Indiana in June
1970



Major General Hal D. McCown Commanding General
of the Delta Military Assistance Command.



Major General Ngo Quang Traung Commanding General
IVth Corps. He was the best General in the South
Vietnamese Army.



My troops; left to right first row: Miss Loan my secretary, me, Ba Ute the Press Camp Maid, SSG Itank Bartley; Lt(jg) Edward Groenert, an unknown SFC whose name I do not remember; Second row left to right Sgt John Wimbush, my driver, SSG Matt Glasgow directly behind me; SP4 Steve Nelson, SP4 Steve Coble; USAF T/Sgt. Lui and PFC Verne Barlow



Platoon leader Moi receiving the Bronze Star w/ "V" Device for leading an ambush that killed five NVA soldiers. He was 73 years old. General MacCown presented him his medal. I made this photograph.



NVA medical supplies captured in the U-Minh Forrest in November 1970. A box of these type of medicene was captured. It had been furnished to the NVA by the American Friends Service Committee



My last night in the General's Mess. I am receiving the plaque from Mr. Wilbur Wilson who took over the CORDS program in the Delta after John Paul VanW was assigned to II Corps.

telecommunications on a mission to write a paper of the impact of the coming telecommunications/ information revolution on the Soviet Empire for one of highest officials of the American government at that time. It was the third great adventure of my life. But that's getting ahead of my story.

Chapter 1

Travis Air Force Base, California
20 July '70-0835

Dear Judy,

It is hard to express the emotions I feel concerning leaving for Viet Nam. Right now I have gotten on the airplane at Travis Air Force Base.

The flight from New Orleans to San Fransico was uneventful. Because the tourist accommodations were filled I rode first class. The food was pretty good. I won a bottle of champagne on the flight because I correctly guessed the time we would be over a certain geographical point. However, since I did not feel like drinking champagne and generally felt pretty low I gave the bottle to a stewardess when I arrived in San Fransico.

I caught the bus from San Francisco to Travis and arrived about 3:00 p.m. their time. I spent the night in the BOQ, had dinner at the Officer's Club and did not sleep at all.

I wanted to call so much, but I knew that might only make it worse so I didn't. In fact, I have refused to look at the picture of you and Van in my wallet, because I would just feel worse than I already do.

Last night while walking back from the Officer's Club, I really felt adrift in a sea of insane human madness and folly. Having been severed so abruptly from everything is emotionally jarring. As soon as time passes in Viet Nam and I make some new friends at least I'll be on a life boat in a sea of madness.

I feel as if I am on the verge of a priceless man building experience and have the butterflies in my stomach as I look around at my homeland for the last time before taking off. I keep hoping that for some reason we'll get off of the plane and everything will return to normal again. (Just like waiting for the coach's whistle to blow to start the first football practice of the season.) The door just closed and the stewardess is announcing our stops-Hawaii, Guam, Clark Field, and Saigon. The plane is starting to taxi out on the runway. Going to war is HELL!

1220 Continued

We are now out over the Pacific about 1000 miles. We are flying at 39,000 feet. If you can imagine looking down and seeing the sky looking up you have the prospective. This giant silver cocoon is filled with people, kids, babies, civilians you name it. And it is cold.

I feel better now. Boy, getting on the airplane put another lump in my throat. In fact, now I am rather anxious to get there now. So I am told, if you can remember the airport at Merida and imagine some rocket holes in the building that is what Saigon looks like.

We are getting ready to eat lunch and I am starved. Just had a pint of milk for breakfast. The flight to Hawaii will last about five hours.

The passenger terminal at Travis Air Force Base (dependants) is very much like a civilian airport. There are many people there to help. And everybody is going somewhere at all hours of the day and night.

While in the airport I picked up some information and maps of Travis. I think if you read the material closely and plan on arriving at Travis the morning before the flight you will have no trouble. I recommend that when you arrive you go to the information desk and confirm your flight. Then get a motel room that offers coach service at to the terminal as the transient quarters on base are not air conditioned. Then take the car to one of the establishments outside the gate and for \$20.00 they will insure that the papers are straight and the car is put on the ship. You can expect the car in 30-45 days. Rent in the Pearl City area is not bad. You might consider an apartment (two bedrooms). Some very modern ones have been built in the area. Also, apply for on post-housing at Scofield Barracks. Sometimes waiting wives can get in after a wait. Your chances of getting a teaching job is really good. I met an Air Force Lieutenant Colonel who was a Sigma Chi nineteen years ago at Missouri and he lives in Hawaii. He was my source of information.

6:00 p.m.(P.D.T.) Continued

We are about two hours out of Hawaii and we are still not half way. You will land at Honolulu International Airport when you come. The airport is huge and very decorative. The main island is beautiful from the air. The water appears crystal clear from the air. In five more hours we will land in Guam, then two hours to Clark Field in the Phillipines, and then four hours to Saigon. The plane filled with people again after dropping some off in Hawaii.

21 July 70- 4:20 a.m.

We landed at Guam and I mailed a post card to you. The B 52's there looked like huge black spiders on the runway. The airbase is huge.

Flew for three hours, now we getting ready to take off from Clark's Field in the Phillipines. It is black outside and about 7:20 p.m. local time. We'll be in Saigon in two hours. The people here look well fed and the island -from the air-looks more developed than the Yuccatan. Am lonely, dirty, hungry, and tired. Have been reading two books and will probably complete one in the time remaining . Just cannot sleep.

We arrived in Saigon at 10:00 p.m. 21 July and it was midnight before I got to bed. We were herded into a barracks like cattle and given sheets. My legs are holding up O.K. So far. I have not called Lieutenant Minh yet, but I will today.

22 July 70

Just receive my assignment. I am to be the IV Corps Information Officer in Can Tho. Presently the job is being filled by a major. Needless to say I'll be running my ass off. I will not be an advisor, but the Information Officer. Of course this assignment is subject to change once I arrive in Can Tho.

I called Mike DeGuire today and he has had a son. He was very excited about it.

Still can not get over my assignment. I'll be working for some hard-ass general, but will get an opportunity to see the delta and learn about the Vietnamization program. The enemy is so weak in the III and IV corps areas that he is not expected to be able to do anything for the next six to eight months. I am safe.

The war zone around Saigon is really loose. The barracks look like the Mexican Army. The food is horrible and I have quit eating. The malaria pills have given me the runs as expected. Feel better to have an assignment now, but am still home sick.

23 July-0745

Today I am going to mail this letter. I need some shower shoes. So if you can get some I sure would appreciate it. This is the second day of processing. Today, we draw our equipment and in forty-eight hours I'll be in Can Tho. Everybody is really friendly here. Went drinking last night in the Massachusetts BOQ. Saigon looks worse than Merdia. All males have a uniform

on. While waiting for the bus we saw two accidents in the space of one hour. The traffic is three times worse than anything you have ever seen. The maids, "Mamma-sons" have arrived and people walk around naked or in their underwear. Nobody cares. The Vietnamese are kicking the devil out of the N.V.A. All the main roads in the delta are safe by day. The climate is not at all like New Orleans, however, it is very cool at night even here. I feel that my opinions, or "stereotyped" thoughts about the war were misconceptions. I can feel my attitude changing about it all as I continue to learn more and more. Americans have such a shallow understanding of the war, because of television. I guess this will be a good experience.

Boy, I sure miss you. Last night I looked at you and Van's pictures for the first time and got homesick. They say the homesickness goes away after three months. I sure hope so because I want to go home already.

Love,

Mike

Can Tho, RVN
24 July 1970- 1400

Dear Judy,

I wrote a letter to my folks today. By now you should have received the post card and a letter.

Can Tho is out of sight. You just would not believe the filth and poverty. The war has been rough on the people.

There was some rifle fire about 1:00 p.m. down the road and the hotel's phone is out. I am staying in the transit BOQ and will be here for three nights. The red light district is 300 yards down the road. (Do not worry about me.) The hotel has a small bar on the fourth floor and movies are shown every night. There are six Captains staying in a room meant for one. The place is crowded.

Seeing this place is a hell of an experience. I am glad to have it for one year, but after that its bye-bye Army. I just cannot understand American college students who are against the war. How shallow are they. Baby, you would have to see this place to understand. One could read volumes about the war but until it is seen first hand all thoughts are shallow as hell.

I am fascinated with this place; however, the language escapes me completely. I tried to count to ten and I get tongue tied on one. I feel like a ding-a-ling too.

There is a good chance that Keith Phelps will end up on a Mobile Advisory Team. I hope so. He needs to be shot at some.

The day I came into Saigon the priorities for assignment were IV, III, II, I Corps. There was no way I could get to Da Nang.

Drinking could get to be a problem for some people here. At night there is nothing else to do.

I am anxious to get to work and make some close friends. The transient status is hell on

my home sickness. I look at your and Van's picture every night now and try not to think of you in the day time. But I usually just think about you all the time regardless. There I have gone and gotten that god dammed lump in my throat again.

This year will end some day. You know the worst thing about the MACV annex were the billets were full of men out processing. Boy some would really rub it in to. I can not imagine that feeling yet, but in time this will end.

The delta is really quite now. The Cambodian invasion hurt the N.V.A. badly. There really is not much they can do. President Nixon is right on target with this war also. There is no need for American infantry. The Vietnamese did not mobilize for this war until 1968. The Democrats did a miserable job of running the war for seven years, just miserable.

The Regional Forces and Popular Forces companies are really good fighters. For some reason as soon as they got the M 16 rifle their morale soared and they kicked the hell out of the Viet Cong in every engagement.

The South Koreans have a kill ratio of thirty-three to one. They do not take prisoners. Today is already the twenty-fourth and it is hard to remember where the last three days went. Just do not think about it other than to relate to you what is going on. I think the days will begin flying by very shortly.

God I miss you.

Love,

Mike

Sa Dec, RVN
26 July '70

Dear Judy,

I have been tentatively further assigned to Sa Dec Province as the Information Advisor to the 9th ARVN. Of course this means nothing until the Senior Advisor for the 9th Division decides I am to have the job. I talked with the personnel officer this morning and he said that because of my profile I'll either get the job or go back to IV Corps Headquarters. The slot is open, however the last Information Officer did not have anything to do so he was sent to the field as an infantry battalion advisor. I guess sometime in the next few days the Colonel will decide what he wants to do with me.

Sa Dec compound is very secure. It has been eighteen months since the place was mortared and twelve months since any sniping. The province is rated as the second most pacified province in Viet Nam. The 9th ARVN division is the second best division in Vietnam. In fact as far as I can tell the Vietnamese here need us only for medical evacuation or Corba gunship support. The battalion advisors are just glorified radio telephone operators.

You just cannot believe how slow things are. Nobody is in a hurry and nobody seems to have much responsibility. Boredom is a way of life and everybody counts days.

The Sa Dec compound for Americans is small, comfortable, and well equipped. There is

a tennis court here, a small Officer's Club, a pool table, weights, achery, ect. Working hours are from 0730-1200 and 1400-1730 and most people have to look for things to do. This is the aspect of the assignment to Viet Nam that disappoints me the most. You would think that in a war zone everybody would be jumping through his ass, but it is quite the opposite. The Americans have become Vietnamized.

Funny things happen to one's mind over here. In just six days memories of home (U.S.A.) are fading fast. It is just hard to remember the U.S.A., its traffic, cities, ect. It seems as if it is twice as far away as it is.

I rode in a helicopter to get here and that was really fun. The people that drive those helicopters think and act like pilots of an earlier era (WW I), loose, dangerloving, and aggressive. Everybody (E.M.'s) wants to be a door gunner.

Its 1200 and I have to go eat shortly. This place will be shutting down for the rest of the day now. I guess I'll do some reading, write some letters and be bored. What a hell of a way to fight a war. Maybe all wars are just one great boredom mixed with brief periods of action.

The poor infantry officers (Captains) are coming back to Viet Nam for thier second tours now. Those poor bastards come back here every twelve months.

I sure do want to submit my resignation and get on with law school. Fighting like this is driving me up the walls.

Do not worry about me. This team has only lost two Americans in the past year. One by the N.V.A. and the other had to be shot by the Americans because he went crazy and started shooting at people in the compound. His mind snapped.

I surely miss you.

Love,

Mike

Sa Dec, RVN
27 July '70-0630

Dear Judy,

I am going to be the Information Officer for this team. I am also the club officer, Information Officer Advisor, and assistant administrative officer. I will have enough to keep me busy during the day.

I have move into my permanant quarters. It is rustic but comfortable. As more time passes and I acquire more things, it will seem more home-like.

I almost got drunk last night and almost cried in my Scotch. I don't see how I am going to stand this place for a year, even though the Sa Dec compound is the best in the delta.

I am pricing cassette tape recorders and will send you two when you get a permanant address in Hawaii. You will have to mail one to me.

Today I have to go to Vinh Long to get my finance records taken care of. You will get a check in the mail shortly for \$500.00. Tomorrow, I go to Saigon with the outgoing club officer.

We have to buy some things and he has to show me where to go. We are traveling on the roads. I will carry my M 16, but everything is safe, though I am apprehensive. Everybody is like that when they first come over here though.

I need to write a letter to Rick. I have not called him yet.

Sa Dec is considered to be a clean town; however, if you say the filth in the streets and smelled the stink you would think you were in a pig pen. America's urban problems are tiny compared to this place.

God, I miss you. I try to keep my sanity, but I just miss you something terrible. I think that I am going through a phase of cultural shock and homesickness. No more going off to war for me. It will be a good experience, but I really could not make a decision about the Army without being over here. Now that I have seen the advisory Army--Screw it. I could not stand the boredom like this for another year. I am getting super motivated for law school. So let's try to save money money.

Kiss Van for me and do not let him forget me! As if he every knew who I was. I miss him too.

I love you.

Mike

P.S. Please send me some large pictures of yourselves too! I will take some polaroid snap shots within a week.

Sa Dec, RVN
27 July '70- 2200

Dear Judy,

This is the second letter I have written to you today; however, you will probably receive this one a day later than the first.

Could you send me three pull over, wash and wear T-shirts (not white) and two Bermuda shorts. Because I quit work everyday at 1730, I have time to dress more comfortably than always wearing jungle fatigues.

Today I got paid. I also mailed you seven money orders totaling \$700.00. You should put this money in the traveler's checks and record the serial numbers in case they are lost. Then live on the traveler's checks as long as you can without going into the checking account except to pay the bills.

Tonight we had a Korean band and floor show. The music was fairly good for an Asian band. After the program was completed, everybody went to the club to drink. I left early, because some of the privates decided they could drink with the senior NCO's and officers. The C.O. of this detachment is having a bar built just for the NCO's to segregate the officers. Many officers (even Captains) disagree with the Colonel. I just do not understand that type of mentality. More and more I believe that I am too conscious of my military bearing to be an active duty officer in the modern permissive Army. Viet Nam is so loose in some places EM's do not

even brother to salute. I just bite my lip, because I would be fighting the world and I just do not care enough to get concerned about it. Administrative discipline and battle field discipline are not two separate and distinct entities. They go hand and hand sayth General Patton. And I agree. Oh-well screw it. I am leaving.

I mentioned this morning that I might be leaving early. If every thing falls into palce I might be able to get out of here in mid-May. Of course this means summer school, but then if all went well I could be out in two full years and our financial burden would be less. Let's cross our fingers.

Gosh, I am lonely without you and I miss you. And I miss my son.

Oh, in Vietnamese my rank is pronounced DIE-WEE or Captain. I wear Vietnamese Captain's rank on my fatigues and everywhere I go the Vietnamese say "Hello, Die-Wee!" Bright spots in my otherwise bored existance.

Please send me Gene Swanson's address.

I love you.

Mike

Sa Dec
29 July '70- 1900

Dear Judy,

How are you today? How is my son? Life goes on here at it alway's has since I have been here.

Yesterday morning the Viet Cong blew up a cafe and threw a grenade in the crowd. It was the first incident in over a year. Everbody was really surprised.

The compound at Sa Dec is called the "secret" of the Delta because the facilities are so nice. We really have it nice.

Today, we returned from Saigon. The trip was fast and uneventful. Saigon is 130 miles away. There is almost no danger on the roads around here except for the Vietnamese drivers. If you thought that Mexico was bad this place is horrendious.

Saigon is really crowded. The urban sprawl is awesome. People are everywhere and they pee on the street. Barbed wire is everywhere and ARVN troops stand guard in the bunkers.

The country side id lush verdant green. This place is truly the rice bowl of Asia. Mile after mile after mile of rice paddies. People raise ducks and water buffalo. I saw some corn and tomatos too. In purely economic terms I guess this is what we are fighting for.

Old Vietnamese women who have worked in the paddies all their lives walk in a really funny way. You know they do not sit on chairs, they squat. Endless squatting and rice paddy farming gives them a slew-footed, bow legged, suffling gait. It is really goofy looking.

To give you an idea how well pacified this area is, the Vietnamese from Cambodia are being settled in here and it is estimated that thirty percent of them are V.C. If the Saigon was so weak they would never let them in. They would have just let the Cambodians exterminate them.

People are on the roads by the hundreds. Nobody here knows where they are going, why

they travel, but they do.

The kids on the road are just like your stereotyped mental images of kids in a war zone with Americans. They smile, wave, yell "Hi, Joe," and often hold up the peace sign with their two fingers.

In any crowd one sees the results of years of war. Amputees are quite common and facial wounds are especially shocking. Most young men are in uniform, but seem to be aimlessly employed. Most carry a rifle also.

I believe that I see the beginnings of a Jeffersonian democracy here. Give a man a rifle, some land, a school for his children, and a road to get his produce to market and he has a stake in the system and will fight for it.

While on Guam, I bought a book by President Nixon titled U.S. Foreign Policy For the 1970's, and read it on the airplane. I think barring some unforeseen circumstances there will be a chance for lasting peace in our lifetime. Once the N.V.A. go home or give up the V.C. movement is going to collapse. They just do not have the men to strategically effect the pace of pacification. The middle east seems to be defusing, maybe and if it does, hurrah. I have been reading that the President is pulling troops out of Korea and the Phillipine Islands. And this is bound to made the Red Chinese less fearful of our intentions. I think we are seeing the work of a truly great President. Time will surely tell. Frankly, I just do not want to be away from my family again. Leaving you all for a war is just plain hell and I don't want to do it again, unless called as a Reserve Officer in a national emergency.

Judy, I am learning so much. I am really enthralled with it. I know for a fact that no college student who is against the war and has not seen this place is an absolute fool. How foolish have we been to allow them to become a political force at the urging of pseudo-intellectuals. It makes me puke. We have indulged our children.

Only 355 days to go. Cannot even see the light at the end of the tunnel yet and I am counting the paces.

God, I miss you.

Love,

Mike

P.S. Please buy me a good 1970-1971 Almanac and a book of Kipling's poetry. I am going to start a news letter for this province team and need these books for irrelevant data. I need these ASAP. Also please send me my sandals from Key West. And please write. It has been ten days and I am dying to hear from you.

Love again,

Mike

Sa Dec
30 July '70

Dear Judy,

Today was really interesting and ended disappointingly.

I met my Vietnamese counterparts, Captain Fung and Major Dong. Major Dong runs the political warfare section of the division and Captain Fung, the Information Officer, works for him. You can see how interesting my job was to be. I was really looking forward to fighting "Charles" with words.

Captain Fung took me to his home in Sa Dec for a lunch, which lasted two and a half hours. I ate dried fish and cucumber salad, then we had boiled eels and vegetables, and then broiled fish, rice, and fish gravy. We also drank a bottle of Cognac. I got very stoned by 1330/

The Vietnamese eat very slowly. They say only a poor man eats fast that's because he must work a long time. A rich man eats slowly with deliberation.

His wife was very young to have had three children and she was nice looking, except she did not have any front teeth!

I even ate with chop sticks which took some doing.

I returned to the compound and went over to the Officer's Club to have a long talk with the NCOIC. See, I was supposed to take over the club as of 25 August and the present Club custodian is so unpopular that often people will not even go to it. Last month it lost \$625.00. I was looking forward to straightening the place out.

This fellow is also my roommate. He is the type of guy that buys a whore then takes polaroid pictures of the two of them with a self-timer. He has three kids, too! A real gem, but he has been helpful to me.

After that I got a haircut and went to the briefing at 1715 where I was told that indeed I was to return to Can Tho to be the IV Corps Information Officer after all. I got a case of the ass, but who cares I have 354 days. I really did not want to leave Sa Dec. It is very clean, relatively, and peaceful.

Screw it all. This place is unbelievable. Nobody does anything. I could see so much room for improvement in the Information Officer job and the club. I hear that the Information Officer at IV Corps is as bad as this place, also!

Can Tho is a filthy city. It just plain stinks; however, the Corps Headquarters compound has a swimming pool though.

I am going to buy two rifles to bring home to the States. I simply must have a war trophy or two. Someday Van will think his daddy was hot shit to get V.C. rifles. You know how little boys are. (Grown men are that way sometimes.)

I am looking for some Vietnamese cook books for you. So far, I haven't seen any, but my love I know where I can buy the most beautiful Princess rings you have ever seen. How many do you want? The selection is enormous. The one Jimmy gave you is very small and dull compared to these.

Gosh, I miss you. Writing down my thoughts in the only way I have to communicate. And since it has been eleven days since I last spoke to you and I am going nuts.

I love you.

Mike

Sa Dec
31 July '70

Dear Judy,

You just would not believe this place. It is about 1400 and in a few minutes I go back to work.

I spent the lunch hour over in the Aid Station drinking orange juice and 190% proof alcohol! The alcohol was in a five gallon can. I just cannot believe it.

The V.C. blew up a pool hall in the town this morning and now everybody is starting to get a little jumpy. The compound has not been mortared since December of 1968 and everything is really loose.

I'll be leaving for Can Tho tomorrow at 0830.

I went to work figuring our assets for this year and the results are surprisingly good if you get a job in Hawaii. I take home \$770.00 a month. As soon as you are squared away I am going to start putting \$600.00 per month at ten percent interest. That's almost \$6,600.00 to go to law school. We could afford to have another kid and you would not have to work while I was in school. It is something to work for.

I took my "pill" yesterday with no ill effects. Now I only have fifty more to take.

I mailed a letter to my folks asking them to help me process some of my application forms to Ole Miss. I want to get this done ASAP so I will have my certificate of acceptance ready when I submit my resignation. I am really excited about it. There isn't much else that lifts my spirits as much as knowing that I have something to fall back on after the Army.

I sure would like to get a letter from you. I still have not received a damn thing. Mail service is slow here.

Today I have not done a damn thing except wait for tomorrow. I could have left today, but mamma-son had already started washing my fatigues. What the hell, I'll leave tomorrow. Nobody gives a shit away.

I have been carrying the vocabulary cards in my pocket. I usually pick the ones I do not know in a section and study those. So far the words have not crept into my vocabulary, yet. Maybe it is best they don't. Nobody would understand me. However, to make my formal written word more exciting and clear it will help

CONTINUED LATER

Tomorrow is the 1st of August. I think I will feel much better when this date has arrived. The agonizing month of July will be history.

I was just looking at my arm and the mosquitoes have eaten me alive. Funny thing though they do not fly around your ears and keep you awake. At least they are polite.

This is a copy of the Vietnamese Command Information newspaper which is published every week. Their concept of information is to use it as a weapon. Truth at the right time is

worth a thousand armies.

Captain Fung told me today that he could get me a rifle free. I think I'll get him a bowie knife, if he does. I cleaned my rifle today. It was filthy. I hardly had anything else to do.

I miss you.

Love,

Mike

Chapter 2

Can Tho, RVN
2 August '70- 0015

Dear Judy,

Today, I arrived in Can Tho to become the Information Officer for the 4th Military Region or otherwise known as IV Corps.

I met the Navy Lieutenant who has held the job for the last six months and he really helped get me settled into the compound.

The job is exactly what I had in mind when I volunteered to come over here. I shall get a chance to meet a tremendous number of American correspondants and television news commentators and at the same time observe the war from a high enough staff level to see trends, ect. Also, the job is time consuming, lately because of the cutbacks in military personnel everybody is short Americans. The Information Office is losing everybody in three months so there will be some problem solving in the days ahead.

The V.C. mortared the Can Tho airfield last night and eleven G.I's were wounded. For some reason everywhere I go the V.C. follow. Ekin Compound where I am staying is in downtown Can Tho. The facilities are nicer in some ways and poorer in others. I am just glad to have a job that will run my ass off. The days will fly.

When I arrived in Can Tho, I had a long talk with the Administrative (Personnel) NCOIC about involuntary extensions, and early outs. If things keep going the way they are, I'll be out early. Boy that's great.

I still have not received a letter and I am climbing the walls for news from you.

Everything is looking up. Only have fifty more malaria pills to take.

Keith Phelps is going to take my place at Sa Dec and they are going to send him to the field as an advisor most likely. That tickles me. The first time a bunch of gooks get captured the ARVN are going to kill them. That's just S.O.P. Keith will profit by the experience. I'll be seeing him Monday.

I miss you and Van something bad.

Love,

Mike

Can Tho, RVN
2 August '70

Dear Judy,

I received all of your letters today. I cannot tell you how happy your letters made me. I am just in complete ecstasy. Communication means so much. If you have not received a letter how did you get my address? By now you have probably received some of my letters and I hope that they have made you as happy as yours have made me.

This check is forwarded to you to cash. Spend it on yourself.

When you get your address in Hawaii, I am going to start sending you some presents I have had my eye on. I think you will be astounded at my selection. You would not believe the prices.

I must write a letter to Colonel Milam and thank him for everything.

I have not seen Rick, but I have tried to call him twice and yet to get a call through. I have written him a letter and maybe soon we'll have a reply.

Minh did not show at the airport. I have not seen him yet, but when I go to Saigon Tuesday this time I am going to look him up.

I must return to Saigon to meet all the Information Office people. The bastard Adjutant General at MACV Headquarters did not bother to inform me that I was to meet them. Since I am to be the head turd here I must establish some type of rapport with the shit heads.

As for the experiences, everyday is a new one! I am really tickled about this job, because I receive blanket travel orders for Viet Nam. Anytime I want to go somewhere or see somebody I can. Also, we have a photo lab in the office and I intend to make good use of it, and at the same

time learn dark room techniques.

Well, you might not receive this letter for a long time, but please do not stop writing. Mail means everything. It is my tie with sanity.

I have mailed all of my law school applications to my parents for them to complete. I forgot to tell them to forward my U.S.F.I. scores with the application. Would you do this?

You have written of Norman and Elaine, but you did not tell me what sex kid that they had. I am really interested. I would also like to know his address.

From your letters it sounds like you are getting yourself into good shape. I just cannot help but believe that you are in better shape than some of those people you are playing bridge with.

I just can not tell you how good it is to go through your letters one by one and answer your questions or make a comment here and there. It gives me a joyful feeling, it really does.

I am going crazy for you. You will be glad to know that my self discipline in this regard is holding up quite well. There are so many opportunities to lay really beautiful women over here you just would not believe it. Many married men even make "arrangements" for \$250.00-\$300.00 per month for a second wife. Like I said before you just would not believe this place. Some even tell their wives they cannot get leave and then go to Australia! But though the temptations are near, you are most dear, so never fear.

Your comments about a normal family situation are so dear. I just could not remain in the Army and be separated from you and my son. Going to war is hell and I'll have no more of it. I'll fight inflation with all the other middle class clods than be separated again.

....

The dogs over here are all monguls. I have yet to see one decent looking one yet.

You were so energetic to clean up the car. Thanks.

I think your decision to leave Baton Rouge without your travel orders in your hands or a confirmed mailing was a poor decision. Do not let yourself get pressured into decisions you know yourself to be foolish just because a particular individual who happens to have lived longer than you says so. If you are sure you are right plant your feet in the rock and stand firm.

God I miss you so much. The separation is tough, but we'll endure. I am glad I came, but I love you too much to leave for another war as a volunteer again.

Please write soon.

Love,

Mike

Can Tho, RVN
3 August '70

Dear Judy,

Today, I did not get a letter from you and I was really hurt. It is probably no fault of yours, because the mail service is shotty.

Tomorrow I fly back to Saigon to get all the Information Advisory briefings I missed when I came into Viet Nam. I may or may not spend all night there; it will just depend on how much I can get accomplished.

The Army Regulation on early outs for school has changed. Now a person can get up to thirty days before the date classes are to start. I could get out in April.

Not much happened today. Mostly I just studied regulations and made myself familiar with everything in the office.

I still have the runs from eating Vietnamese breakfast with Captain Fu. It is not the Mexican two step through. It is not as violent.

Keith Phelps spent the night here last night. He is going down to Sa Dec to become the Information Officer. However, he is likely to end up in the field. I talked to him quite a while about his feelings towards the war and he seems to be mellowing with age and experience. He just needs to get shot at some and I think he will become a moderate.

The correspondents I have seen so far are a motley looking bunch; however, most are open minded so I hear. The 101st Airborne Division has gotten some bad press lately, because they withheld a story about a firebase getting badly mauled. The press is on to it now. I do not even think MACV-IO was made aware of the situation. Two infantry companies took fifty percent WIA and KIA and the Battalion Commander was killed.

The personnel situation is bad and there are no replacements in sight. The Americans are going home fast. I just caught the tail end of this war.

The only thing that bothers me about this place is the fear of a kid throwing a grenade. It is always there like a dark cloud in the back of your mind; however, remote the possibility. I'll be glad to get back to the States and not have that damn feeling. Everybody has it, so it is not unusual.

Whenever I get in a crowd, I always watch the arms and hands of the Vietnamese. It is just an unconscious habit one acquires fast. I still have not gotten a pistol, but I sure would feel better with one.

Some of the homesickness is going away now, since I am getting wrapped up in this job. I am tickled to death about it. I shall be well informed about the progress of the war and will get a chance to travel all over the delta.

You probably will have completed your travel, by the time you receive this letter. Not hearing from each other is emotional jarring. It just plain hurts.

I love you.

Love,

Mike

P.S. AFVN radio is playing a record called "I Can't Stop Loving You" by Ray Charles and I am getting homesick. Remember Rip's? The years have passed so fast. I love you.

Can Tho, RVN
5 August '70-1220

Dear Judy,

I did not get a letter from you yesterday. Fortunately, I was busy in Saigon and I did find out about not getting a letter until I returned this morning. Mail will be distributed at 1330 so maybe I will have a letter from somebody.

I met all the personnel in the MACV-IO advisory division. Boy, they sure have it easy. It is as nice as working in the states. Those damn people do not do a damn thing. Colonel Woodside, who is the Chief of the division let me sleep in his roommates air conditioned room. I even had hot water to take a shower. I had a steak last night, too. It was so plush. Of course, I got very high drinking Scotch and water. I am amazed at my capacity to consume liquor and walk. Of course everybody here has a hard liver so I am not out of the ordinary by any means.

Do you remember hearing about the two frenchmen climbing on that statute in Saigon and waving a V.C. flag? Those guys are in jail, but and get this, the frenchmen say that an American brocasting company paid them to stage it. CBS is the most disrespected news service over here. Many indications point to the fact that they stage "incidents" for money. I can not prove anything, but the circumstances surrounding CBS's timing of the release of news and the type of news is terribly suspicious.

More and more I believe that the greatest mistake made in this war was the decision not the censor the newsmen. The effects have been far reaching and terrifically damaging to the U.S. military. The south Vietnamese have been unbelievably patient with U.S. newsmen. They are rude and pushy and unscrupulous.

America has been very tolerant of the excesses of its news media, but I think now we must emasculate them. We need laws like England.

As I sit at the desk here and write to you the pictures of the nude broads stare up at me from underneath the glass plate and all I can do is think of you. God, I miss you.

You just cannot imagine how much mail means. You hear people tell you about it, but until one is separated from his world and everything in it, one just does not realize how much it really means. Like I said before, it is a man's tie with sanity.

Continued

Well, I made both mail calls and did not get any mail from anybody. I am down in the dumps about it.

One bright not today. As a result of being a member of the General's personal staff, I am required to eat and drink in the plush general's mess bere at the compound. The Commanding General of IV Corps is a graduate of L.S.U., class of 1940. This means I spend more money on food.

I got a call from Keith today. He got shot at on the road from Vinh Long to Sa Dec! I have ridden that road six times without that ever happening. He was scared shitless about it. He had packed all his M 16 ammo in his duffel bag, too. He could not shoot back. It was his first trip on a road in Viet Nam. So you see, one really cannot think about getting zapped. They are

everywhere.

On my first trip to Saigon, I rode through a province that is seventy-five percent V.C. and the hamlets and villeges looked acaudal the same as around Sa Dec. How does one tell? You just cannot by the faces of the people. Funny goddamned war.

I miss you.

Love,

Mike

Can Tho, RVN
6 August '70-2000

Dear Judy,

Today, I recieved you letter dated 31 July and 1 August. Funny how we communicate with such a long time lag. It is trying as hell.

I also received your "care" package. I cannot tell you how much I appreciated seeing those pictures of Key West, Danny, Van, and you. I had been waiting for a letter for quite a long time (three days). It seems an eturnity when I do not hear from you.

As you should know by now alcohol is a depressiant. If you are really feeling low do not drink for it will only make it worse. I am trying to cut down. As a result of eating in the general's mess my living expenses are climbing and I just do not want to buy any more liquor.

As a woman you do not have the latitude that men do in regard to drinking and meeting people. It is one of those crosses you (women of virtue) have to bear.

You know I miss you terribly. I said once before this was the last war I'll ever volunteer for and I mean it. The Army has been good to us, but I just could not stand another separation.

My job is going to be quite time consuming and interesting. I go to work at 0715 to 1200 and from 1400 to 1800. Then comes the command performance with the general from 1845 to 2000 everyday.

On the 11th, I am to meet Bernie Siebert of U.P.I Features and adroitly tell him nothing of value. Also msut learn patience and tact. The slightest mistake could cause one hell of a problem and I am playing it every formal and cool. This is going to be the best training for the type of job I want after law school around. It is ashame that we must be separated, but our time in hell will end.

A secondary side effect of this job will be that I will become somewhat of an expert on pacification in the delta. I am delighted about this too.

You just would not believe what kind of slobbs American news men are. The press camp here is very tightly run. For example, the bastards will not even pay for the cokes in the refrigerator in the small lounge on an honor system, so we quit providing them cokes. The used

to receive information packets with biographies of all military personnel of star rank in the delta, well they started making airplanes out of them and sailing them off the balcony. They are really slobs.

I was so delighted that you told me something about Van. Two days ago he was five months old. By the time I get home, he'll probably try to beat me up when I grab you. You know "Hey, mister get away from my mommie!"

I have quit counting days and feel much better about it. I must make a mental effort not to though. Everyday, I think I want to go home. Everybody does. I am going through a period of cultural shock right now to the Vietnamese. The filth, the stink, the traffic, the thieves, the whores, the totally selfish attitude they exhibit when driving, the motor cycle "cowboys," the shitty climate, and the orphanages with babies abandoned by their mothers is turing my stomach. I am making every effort to understand them, but I sure do not think much of them right now.

I tried to call Minh when I was in Saigon, but Minh gave me the wrong phone number. Screw him.

I received a letter from Mother and she gave me the Morale's address.

Danny's pictures were great. As soon as you get settled in Hawaii I will begin mailing things back to you, plus some other goodies and surprises. And now I will close. I am going to close my eyes and think about you.

Love,

Mike

Can Tho, RVN
7 August '70

Dear Judy,

Well, today I did not get a letter from anybody. I feel like shit! It is very depressing not to receive mail. I just live for mail call at 1330 and 1730 everyday. It either makes or breaks my day.

Today I attended my first daily IV Corps staff meeting. It was really very interesting. Up in the northern IV Corps today the V.C. shot sixty rounds of small arms fire into a group of fifteen kids, killing four. Made me sick. The V.C. are such bastards. I heard the Black Panthers want to come fight with the V.C. Our country is plagued with educated idiots that piss me off. I just cannot wait to get to law school.

I saw some round eye nurses driving into the compound today. One had long black hair with a cute face. It made me so homesick I could die. I think about you constantly. I just cannot make myself believe that this separation is going to last almost a year. Everybody thinks that way at first. No more wars for me. This is bull shit.

Mr. Franklin of the 5th Battalion (C/V) 67th Artillery sleeps down the row from me.

My information office is depleted of personnel and we have many jobs. If I do not get somebody quickly I am going to be in deep trouble. There is just too much to do and not enough

people.

Living in this compound reminds me so much of a Boy Scout camp. Americans really do not realize it, but we really train our youngsters to be soldiers from Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, ROTC, then service. Would you believe that I have spent a total of twelve and a half years of my twenty-four wearing some type of uniform. Viet Nam makes one think of the things like this.

Yesterday in the general's mess, I sat next to a young West Point Airborne/Ranger infantry Captain with one month in grade. The guy was sharp, but the military mind he exhibited made me disgusted with it all. Just narrow as hell. Of course, not all are this way.

One thing I have observed is that the Majors and Lieutenant Colonels are able to accept one hell of a lot of boredom. I just cannot get used to that idea. I always feel I must be doing something constructive. You know it's a funny thing, but I feel I must not let a day go by when I do not read something educational or do something educational. When I do not I believe that time is passing and I might not learn all I want to learn before I die. I am goofy.

Writing letters to you improves my morale, because I feel I must express myself on paper. And the more I write to you the better writer I am going to become. A 600 word essay to you everyday is bound to be educational. It is sure better than drinking.

In this place a man's ability to rationalize is the only thing that will keep him sane. One must rationalize his separation, the war, the gooks, and the stink away some way. I keep saying to myself day after day "Mike, you are going to be a better man for it, now just grin you SOB!" The cultural shock is something I have never experienced before. Even I am starting to hate them. I hope I get out this train of thought, but every morning when I drive by a garbage dump on the street, the same one everyday, the odor makes me sick. I pass by it three or four times a day.

Then you see grown men pissing everywhere. Just drop your drawers, it makes no difference. There the old, old women chew bettle nuts which makes their mouth look like an eight year old using his mother's lipstick for the first time. Then there are the whores that blow kisses at you from the edge of the road and the cowboys who ride Hondas and try to grab your watch. It is a cancer on the penis of the earth, and a syphillic penis at that.

I must stop bitching if I verbalize to much I'll really begin to believe it. After all I am the Information Officer for the IV Corps Military region. Officially I am here for their freedom and to make the world safe for democracy. Additionally, the ARVN's are the best army in the world.

I think you can now see the inner rage and struggle I am going through and will go through this year. This is an exercise in self discipline and to think I volunteered. Oh well, this is my last one.

You know, for all America's problems we are still an extremely civilized nation with a sense of public consciousness, even the Koreans have it; however, "Marvin the ARVN" does not. I guess in a nutshell this is what drives me up the walls the most. It is just plain uncivilized. Scotlandville in Baton Rouge is a palace compared to the well off residents of Can Tho and Can Tho is a high class place over here in hell.

Well, now that I have told all what I dislike or am sad about I feel much better. I have to tell somebody and even though you might not get this letter for a long time and it will be much longer still before I get a reply you know my inner most feelings. There is no way to tell what my feelings about the war will be a year from now. The jury is out.

I really miss you and Van so much. I just cannot believe this has happened to us. I suppose that these emotions are common to many of the 2.5 million men that have been over here.

Have a safe trip, be careful with your money and write to me as soon as you receive that \$700.00 in money orders I sent to you. Watch your finances closely.

I love you.

Love,

Mike

Can Tho, RVN
8 August '70

Dear Judy,

I received your letter of 29 July today. All the letters you had airmailed under a separate cover arrived last Saturday. Since the last three letters I have mailed are going to the Morels you will possibly be reading these before my other letters catch up.

All of the questions you asked in your letter of the 29th, I have long since answered in other letters.

I was so pleased to receive your letter. I always am. I sure wish you would get your ass settled in one place so I could call you sometime. The U.S.O. is not far away and one Sunday it would be no problem for me to call. Also, I will have shortly many pictures to send to you.

To give you an idea how bad the mail is, I received mother's card of 2 August today also and it was mailed with a regular stamp. This place is goofy with mail.

I have a photographic shop and am learning how to print photographs, blow them up, and also take pictures. On 1 September I am going to order a 35 mm camera with a zoom lens like Rick's. Then next month I can start mailing some silver to you. I have picked out some items that you drool over everytime we visit a silver shop.

We are short most of our authorized photographic equipment. And in my job I must have a camera quickly.

I am applying for R&R around late December. Then I am going to take leave in March and be out of the Army in May. Just thinking about leaving in December gives me something to really look forward to. So far I have just thought in terms of a hell of a long time, but I feel better because December really isn't that far away. It really gives us something to look forward to.

Then two and a half months later I'll be back on leave to Hawaii. I might keep my sanity after all.

I am sitting here at my desk and the hours are dragging on. There really aren't many correspondants in the Delta right now.

Heh! I heard that Willie is getting married. Please send me their address.

Mother also sent me a clipping saying Mr. Cooley had died. I was sorry to hear that. He was a fine man.

The commanding general here is a graduate of L.S.U. (1940) R.O.T.C. and a Distinguished Military Graduate. How about that? His aide leaves in November. I am dreaming again. He'll be back off leave in ten days. Everyone is anxiously awaiting his arrival. The Deputy Commanding General is pro-information, but is a pushy, demanding SOB from Massacuhetts with an M.S. from M.I.T. in some form of engineering. It shows up in his demands for briefings. All must be analzyed for this or that which means nothing. Numbers are killing the briefings and really do not mean anything. General Patton would roll over in his grave and puke if he saw an American Army run this way. O'well I am leaving.

I miss my son. When you write would you tell me all about him, too. In many of the letters I have received you do not even mention him. I want to know all about both of you in every letter, please.

Well, its Saturday night and I'll probably spend it drinking and playing pool. I still have to go to work through.

Please write soon.

Love,

Mike

P.S. I spent tonight playing bridge and drinking.

Can Tho, RVN
9 August '70

Dear Judy,

I revceived you letter today of 2 August. Looks like our mail is finally starting to flow with a minumim of delay.

Thanks for the lock of hair. As I held it in my hand I felt so much better and less lonesome. I felt you were very near. It was a wonderful feeling.

Mother had mentioned that Willie and Jane were getting married, but thanks for the clipping.

Gland you enjoyed your trip to the Rainbow Inn. I had shrimp creole in Saigon a week ago and it tasted like dog piss.

I hope you all have enjoyed your trip, but I am disappointed you are not going to see Gene.

Hey! In the daily news up date we are in the paper everyday. Anything you read about

the Delta is written in my office. Of course this is a very sanitized version, but you get everything that we get.

I am glad to hear your father helped you take care of the Cougar.

My opinions about the war have been shallow, because I have never really been exposed to it face to face. As the Information Officer I attend all the staff meetings and the amount of information presented to the public is extremely vague. I'll hardly release anything or make any comment that is not favorable. Everyday as I get exposed to more and more data I realize how truly little I knew about the war. You can imagine on a relative scale what the average American's understanding of the war is. It is going to take me at least four more months to develop any perspective at all. That's how complex the Delta is. Can you understand the snobs mentality who say we are wrong. I find them very sophomoric. The American people have been fools about professors and students. We are raising True Believers not educated minds. I think television is greatly responsible for this mentality.

It sounds like my son is progressing fast. I miss that I could be there and watch him change. When I see him on R&R, I probably won't even know him he will have changed so much. Easy with the eggs, he has all his life to eat them.

Today, I wrote up my resignation. I am going to have my typist get it ready with the date of 14 January 1971 and keep it in my desk. I also wrote a letter to ADA-OPA telling them I intend to submit my resignation. It really made me feel good.

TACT IV CTZ means something like Tactical Command IV Corps Tactical Zone.

I am having three slides blown up. One 5X7 of Van and me in Tennessee at Nathan Bedford Forrest Park. One 8X10 of us at Van's baptism. I intend to keep the two 8X10's and send you the 5X7's.

Well love I miss you something terrible. Just to talk to you would be a real treat.

Love,

Mike

P.S. What did you do about the insurance policy on your ring? I carry my M 16 in town. Everybody thinks I am nuts, but I am not taking any chances.

Can Tho, RVN
10 August '70

Dear Judy,

Not much went on today. I am starting to come to grips with the job. Keith Phelps came up today and we compared notes on how homesick we were.

I had one of the most shocking dinner conversations with two Captains I have ever had. The Major across the table got to talking about how one of his best friend's wife started running

out on the poor guy while he was in Viet Nam. Then one Captain says "Yea, that happened to me on my first tour." (He had two kids.) And the other says "Yea, that happened to me in Korea." Well at that my jaw hit the table! Both have gotten divorces.

Seeing how you are susceptible to compliments about your looks, you better steel yourself to men who are going to say how good looking you are. You have always attracted men like a magnet does iron filings.

I feel very distressed.

The V.C. are going to start a propoganda campaign aimed at the ARVN's treatment of prisoners, ect. You should be on the look out for the first indications of this type of attack against the war in the U.S. Would you please note for me which of the city slicking liberals take up the cry against the G.V.N. (The Government of Viet Nam.) I think it will be interesting.

I meet my first correspondants tomorrow. I am going to play it cool.

Well you good looking blue eyed black haired honey I miss your warm body something awful. God I wish this separation would end and it would all be remembered as a bad dream. I miss holding my son and making him smile. I really love you both fiercely.

Love,

Mike

Can Tho, RVN
11 August '70

Dear Judy,

I received your letters of 30 and 31 July today. For some reason the sons-of-bitches in Saigon forwarded my mail to CORDS (Civil Operations for Rural Development Support) rather than to the tactical command. Consequently, your letters are arriving three days later than they should. This place is screwed up.

I went swimming tonight. I just had to get some exercise. I was really getting jumpy and there has been only one night since I have been over here that I have slept all the way through the night. My body clocks are still screwed up.

I called Rick tonight and got him on the telephone after a week of trying to get through. He is doing fine. Playing it straight and he misses Frieda; however, he has gotten over his homesickness.

In my long letter to you I was moping. The shock of parting is absolutely the most earth shaking emotional experience I have ever had. This includes the Sigma Chi initiation, too! I am slowly adjusting to this place. I am trying to understand these people but when you drive down the road in a jeep and the people throw rocks at you it gives you a case of the ass. The stink is just out of this world. It is gross. I am going to take some pictures of my favorite garbage dump that I pass everyday. I'll never forget the smell.

The south Vietnamese sometimes act like they do not give a shit about anything! Absolutely no sense of civil responsibility. The place is unbelievable. When I see you again I

am going to tell you some tales about our American advisory effort for the last ten years you won't believe.

When I talked to Mike DeGuire on the phone I do not think he was aware that Carol had had a Caesarian section. I sure was not very happy when I talked to him. He was quite proud of his son. You were lucky.

Well, you better goddamned well love me pretty much after all or I'll kick you ass. And yes I have been stoical and unfeeling for two and one half years. The Army and jump school are to thank for that. It was only with Van's brith that I began to get my mind back on the right track. It is hard to share one's personality with a spouse when you are rocked by self doubt. I just thank God that Colonel Milam wandered into our lives when he did.

On the 26th of August, I am the escort officer for a retire Brigadier General who was the production manager for Twentieth Century Fox! He produced Patton! I'll be taking him all over the Delta to meet Americans. He is looking for material to make a movie about Viet Nam. I am going to bend his ear one hell of a lot.

Judy, you just would not believe the American correspondants. They are exposed to about one half of the information that I am exposed to and they write the stories you read in the paper.

A Miss Judy Coburn from Pacifica Radio came in today. She was about twenty-four or twenty-five, yankee, shewd, fat, pushy, neo-leftist type bitch I have ever met. I am polite to them all. But I am going to begin recording my impressions about each one. This story has got to be told.

I hope you enjoyed your trip to San Fransico with my loveable old mother. I am sure she filled your ears with hours of sagacious about this or that.

I got a letter from Dad. He said, "Don't take any chances." Well, I am not. I have gotten just the job I wanted. Babe, I am going to meet some people this year! I could not ask for a more perfect job, except, of course, as an infantry Company Commander.

Well, my paper goes to press the 16th. Around the 5th or 6th of September you'll receive a copy. I run a newspaper the size of the "Daily Reville" at L.S.U. Isn't that something?

I love you so much. I jsut cannot believe that I asked for this. So far the shock of being just over here has not worn off and my prospective about the future is clouded because of it. Hopefully, as time passes and I'll be more at peace with myself.

I have three fine roommates. We all get along quite well. But our living quarters are cramped. The Army has run out of sheets, and tolit paper for all of Vietnam. I sleep between two of the clamest gridiest pieces of canvas you can imagine. Mamma-son washes our sheets in the river and it worse looking than the Mississippi River. Oh-there isn't any hot water. This place is gross.

I love you.

Love,

Mike

Can Tho, RVN
13 August '70

Dear Judy,

I received your insured package today. Thank you "beacoup" for the package. Now if I were just at Sa Dec I would have time to wear the clothes.

Since I am working in an understaffed section and eating in the General's Mess, I hardly have time to do anything. Soon, I hope to get some more replacements.

Those pictures are being mounted right now on heavy cardboard backing. I am going to keep the two small one's on my desk and take the 8X10 to my billets.

AFVN radio is really good right now. Its playing "Surfer Girl" by the Beach Boys and I an see us at Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. It is funny how I associate songs with times and place when we were together. Music is very soothing to me.

Glad to see that you finally have my correct address. Now my mail will get here several days quicker than it has been.

I am at work right now answering you letter. Because I must be on the job so long I have no quams about penning a letter or reading a book when nothing is going on. I just really do not care to set the world on fire.

The acting commanding general here is a guy named Cushman. He is the supreme example of the airborne mentality. He is tactless and pushy and he does not hesitate to really chew out grown, mature staff officers who are trying to do a good job. I have had no problems with him yet, but I sure stay out of his way.

Dealing with these newsmen is an exercise in mental gymnastics. I avoid telling them anything, by asking them about themselves. I just love to verbally fence with them. It is a challenge that will pay dividends as a lawyer. I also portray a very outgoing, hail-fellow-well-met type to put them at ease. And I am making a concerted effort to remember people's names. I think this job will be very good training for an introvert like me.

I did not receive a letter yesterday and I was too busy to write. I was taking care of newsmen right up to 2130.

The Navy Lieutenant that was in this job will be going home soon. He is an unflappable personality. Absolutely nothing gets him upset. His girl friend put the screws to him and told him they better get married by 27 November or else. She's been waiting ten years!

Well love, I am going to continue this letter later tonight. I might get a letter this afternoon.

Later

I did not receive another letter, but that's O.K. When I got your package today I felt like an eight year old whose grandmother has given him a present for being a good boy. Just makes me happy as hell.

I am starting to really get a case of the ass at the Vietnamese. Those sorry bastards. You know for so long I at least believed some of the rhetoric of the politicians who supported the war, but now having been over here almost a month I see why American troops get disillusioned.

These people are so sorry that they steal the very rocks on the road. They do not care if it cost the G.V.N. mucho to have them shipped from III Corps to improve the roads. They steal all of them and sell them. I am having my doubts about our involvment. If thes people want to save their country they better change their attitude, because they just do not care about anything. When you have an Army that loots from its own people, there is no discipline.

I can tell you tales already of incompetence you would not believe. They could stop this war over night if they wanted to. They do have enough men under arms. But they do not give a shit about killing the V.C. It just escapes me.

I wrote a letter to you previously telling you about a V.C. propoganda campaign concerning V.C. P.O.W's The date of the V.C. Directive was 27 April and I believe in mid June two California peace nick Congressmen visited Con Son. The time lag is just about right. It makes you sick to think that possibly our own Congressmen have such good contacts with the V.C. either knowingly or not. The V.C. smart They use the American press with great expertise. We need censorship badly.

Well, I must go to eat at the General's Mess now. Would you believe that when I talked to him today he even smiled at me. Boy, I was surprised.

I miss you both so much you would not believe it.

Love,

Mike

Can Tho, RVN
15 August '70

Dear Judy,

I received a copy of your authorization to travel to Hawaii. I am glad that you are getting out of Travis on the 16th. You are going to arrive in Hawaii at night though and you are even landing at Hickam, Air Force Base. I was sure you would be landing at the international airport.

I also received the letter you had mailed form Flagstaff. It is so funny to be receiving replies to my questions with seven or eight days log. I guess I really am half way around the world. Did you know I am closer to New York City than San Franisco, that's something.

It sounds as if you want to go back to the southwest. It is really great out there.

Those goddamned hippies and spoiled brats give me a case of the ass. If guess irresponsible conduct like you said they were exhibiting deserves stern sentences from hard ass judges. There just is not any other way to deal with undisciplined punks! That's why its law school for me. The very indea that those bastards would paint their names all over natural rock formations in a national park is sickening.

You be careful with that pretty smile. Some old men with big hairy hands might get you!

The rear shock absorbers need to be changed. The shocks on the front are new. Once you get on the island there won't be any high speed driving. After you get the car and get set up

then have the ball joints changed in the front and the shocks in the back.

I was glad to hear that Van is progressing fast. I sure wish I could be seeing him right now. I miss him.

My mother is a goofy driver as I am sure you are aware now. However, she'll tell quite proudly that she has never had an accident. She is nerve wracking behind the wheel though.

Sounds like Van is getting to be mighty strong rolling over like that in the Doctor's office. He must be changing so fast. This is my last war. This is bull shit not being able to watch your children grow up for some goddamned gooks.

Yesterday the ARVN's kicked the hell out of the V.C. Lots of people are saying there is much progress in the war. I guess so. But sometimes when I am dealing with my counterpart I start getting pissed. You just would not believe what a hardship saving face plays in a working relationship with these people. Also, and get this, one must never make another feel bad by fussing at them. Can you imagine running an Army that way.

Shane is a smart dog alright. I do not like leaving my dog either to serve in the Army. This is bull shit.

I have received the shower shoes and shorts and pictures.

One of my roommates went home today. Last night, I really got down in the dumps a little. We were starting to become good friends. My other roommate is an infantry type and he is going home in ninety days.

You it is funny, but both of those boy's fathers served in World War II and both of the fathers hated draft dodgers in WWII. I can not help, but believe that Van will grow up with the same attitude towards those M.F.'s that Dave and Jerry have. Our nation has been at war so much this century. Just think, a second generation of veterans already. A photographer in my office here is finishing his third war. The military is so much a part of our psychology and background.

Continued Later

I received a letter at the 1730 mail call too. Boy this has been a great day. Three letters, and a postcard from mother.

Did you know Jimmie Steward's step-son was a Marine Lieutenant who was killed in Vietnam in March '69. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action, too. One of my roommates, Jerry Jackson, was his good friend. He says that the senior Stewart is a really fine down-to-earth person. His son was to.

There is a big battle brewing in Ding Thuong province north of here about thirty miles. Several V.C. units have been infiltrating into the area and MARVIN the ARVN is moving some regiments into the area. Also the moon will be at 100% illumination during the period 19-24 August. This is when the high point is expected. The level of enemy activity is dropping off in preparation for the high point. Once this high point is over intelligence says that all will be quite until Tet.

On V.C. battalion in Ken Hoa province is converting from Soviet Block weapons to American weapons. The Cambodian operations have hurt the supply channels that badly.

The commander, General Dzu, of the IV military region is a corrupt fool. He watched Vietnamese troops loot and rape a Cambodian village. When his aide said "Sir, do you realize

what they are doing?" General Dzu replied, "When I want your advice I'll ask for it" and shipped the aide to the 21st ARVN Division, but not before Die-Wee Boz had told General Cushman what he had seen. It really starts at the top.

I read all the recent articles about the war that are being published in the states about a week later. The information is furnished by D.A. so I.O.'s can get an idea what is being written. Let me tell you that you are being fed so much Bull Shit that it is inconceivable to me that the American people could have allowed such an institution to become so corrupt.

I have so far met a French correspondent who had been here twenty years, Henri Heut. He is the best source. Barney Siebert of U.P.I Features writes with his eyes open. I tried to help him all I could. Boy, some of them are pushy. Real SOB's and course I must remain tactiful. I am enjoying verbally fencing with them immensely.

Also, today in my readings of current news stories, several prominent scholars are saying that we (America) has lost its will to be a world power and that we are now evolving into a low profile status which abdicates our position to the Soviet Union. Additionally with the Soviets moving ahead so rapidly with the pace of nuclear arms development, the authorities are saying that we are not likely to survive the next confrontation with our prestige. I think that Germany's non-aggression pact with the Soviet's is blatant recognition of this fact. Three times the Germans and the Russians have signed non-aggression pacts or Treaties of "Rapallo." The last time was in 1939!

I cannot believe I have written so much today. I am making a concentrated effort to record my thoughts, experiences, and feelings about this war. Maybe someday they will make interesting reading especially if I get a wild hair to write an article about war correspondants in the Delta.

Thanks a million for the letters. They really keep my morale up. I miss you both desperately.

Love,

Mike

P.S. I met one of my old ROTC instructors at L.S.U. here today. Small world!

Can Tho, RVN
16 August '70-2005

Dear Judy,

I did not receive a letter today; however, I have been so busy that I would not have had time to read it until just now. As I write this letter the time back in the states is around 0500 in California. You probably won't receive this letter for sometime since it will be forwarded from California to Hawaii through the Morales.

I hope that you have enjoyed your stay in California. You have been very lucky this summer to have done as much traveling as you have. Probably never again will you get such an opportunity.

Today, I was the escort officer for Colonel Leonard, who is the new MAVC-IO. We flew up to Chu Doc, which is right on the Cambodian border, to the forward Headquarters of the 9th ARVN Division. Keith Phelps met us and escorted us to a briefing which was given in a tent.

The terrain we flew over is flat as a billard table. There just is no appreciable elevation at all. The land is beautiful though. There are just miles and miles of rice paddies as far as the eye can see. Flowing through this are two broad belts of brown silt with literally thousands of small tributaries. All the water is light brown, there just isn't any blue water. Along the tributaries and rivers are tree lines filled with small time covered houses. Anyway close to the Cambodian border jutting up out of this plain of green are the Seven Mountains

The mountains are maybe two to ten miles from the Cambodian border and have been held by the Viet Minh and the V.C. The 9th ARVN is engaged in operations to surround the mountains, cut off the N.V.A route of escape and strave them out or nullify their effectiveness with a minium of troops. The N.V.A have three 51 mm antiaircraft radar controlled cannons that have already knocked down three Cobras. The mountains are huge, maybe 6,000 feet high of rock granite with forrest on the sides. We were going to fly around some of them, but bad weather forced us to abort the flight. In the meantime we flew right over the Cambodian border. Cambodia looks just like Viet Nam.

We flew back to Sa Dec and droped Keith off then returned to Can Tho. On the way back we watched a bunch of Huey Cobras pound an area from the air. They just blow everything to hell. (50% of enemy casualties are killed by air.)

Oh, get this, while the American advisors were in Cambodia with the 9th ARVN Division, when the ARVN's reached the 21.7 mile mark the Americans got off the tracks and were being left alone along the side roads to wait for somebody to pick them up. It is a hell of a way to fight a war. Stupidity reigns supreme.

The Cambodian operations of the 9th ARVN Division kicked the hell out of the N.V.A. Most of the rear area support units of the N.V.A. were mauled. I had no conception of just how badly they were hurt until the list of N.V.A. units (and types) was read off in the briefing. Personally, I think we have bought more than six months, even as much as a year. They were hurt for more than what they television news media led you to believe. They (the N.V.A.) are fighting on shoestrings. Just imagine if the N.V.A. ran over, maintenance battalions, administrative battalions, and communications and supply battalions in the American rear. We would be in bad trouble.

Tomorrow I must rise at 0545 and go wake the Colonels up. This escort duty is bull shit. I sure get tired of this.

I received the slide and 5x7 of Van and me in Tennessee. As soon as I get your permanent address, I'll mail it to you. Van smiling and he looks really cute.

Very shortly, I will have been here a month already. Boy, time is flying. In a 150 days I'll be going on R&R. That's not so bad.

My personnel situation continues to grow worse. I am losing all my expertise. It is the same old story of holding up a brick house while the foundation is being weakened by people pullin the bricks out. It happened a Fort Bliss so it's nothing new. Only this time I am not going to get upset. I'll do the best I can in the circumstances. Fighting City Hall is too emotionally tiring and the results are negileable anyway.