

1969

Dave Fetters' Audio Transcription - 1969 - Tape 10

David Fetters

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Dave Fetters' Audio Letters - 1969

Tape #10

It goes on the overlap, about the second button down. All I have to do now is get some CIBs and strap it on. That reminds me, CIBs are hard to buy over here. In fact they're impossible to get unless you get handmade ones made by the Vietnamese. They're real sloppy looking. CIB, my Jump Wings, my Good Conduct Medal, my National Defense ribbon, Vietnamese Service ribbon, some other ribbon you get for being in Vietnam, Vietnam Campaign ribbon I guess it is, the Army Commendation Medal, and that Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, whatever it is. I have about six of them, that is if I don't get any Purple Hearts, Bronze Stars, or Silver Stars or anything like that, which I don't care to get anyway. Six are enough for me.

Let's see, oh, I was going to tell you. I told you on that other tape I was going to get those two pictures to send to you. Well I went back and checked the drawer that they were in and they're both gone. So I guess you won't get them after all. And that's all I have to say. I might as well just quit. I've got nothing else to tell you except I'm tired and I think I'll lie down and snooze as soon as I finish up this tape. Get an hour's rest this afternoon, hour and a half. Get up and putter around until it gets to be time to leave on the operation. I wish I didn't have to go out.

One thing will be nice. When August rolls around, I'll go on my leave. Let's see, I'll probably leave here maybe about the 12th of August. I won't be back until about the 25th. By that time it's pay day time, so I'll have to stay here to pay. Then on the first of September the captain will leave for R&R in Hawaii. He'll be gone for two more weeks. So that's a stretch of about thirty straight days, almost a whole month. In fact it will be a whole month, maybe even over a whole month that I won't have to go on operations because I'll be the only officer on site while the captain's gone. I won't be required to go out. That'll be a real nice break for me. I'm kind of looking forward to it.

Thursday

26 June 1969

I've got my Hiatachi radio hooked up. I spent a little time doing that yesterday. I put up a great big hairy antenna outside and that picks up AM real fine, but I still haven't got FM yet. The operation that I went out on was pretty decent. I left here Tuesday afternoon and spent one night out and came in the following late afternoon. We were supposed to stay out that night too but because of the fact that the Drama Team from the B-Team came to camp, we came in early. While we were out walking through the jungle, we came across an unexploded 500 pound bomb. Boy is that a, that gave you a hairy feeling on the back of your neck to walk by that thing, to just

see it laying there. Nobody touched it of course. If they had, no telling what would happen. It might go off, maybe not. Next time an operation goes up in that area they're going to take some explosives up there, put a great big long fuse on it, and see if they can set it off.

I called in artillery twice while we were out. Once because we heard a gun shot about a klick and a half away from where we were. There wasn't anybody else supposed to be out in that area so I called in artillery on the gunshot. Later on when we were up north near that big clearing I told you we were going to see, I called in artillery on the clearing because that's usually where VC like to hang out. The whole time we were out there which was only a little over 24 hours, we didn't see any VC, but we had a couple, I guess you could call them, close calls. While we were setting up in a perimeter there were a couple of scares. Some of the guys around the outer edge of the perimeter called in and said they heard VC moving through the brush maybe a hundred meters away from us. Of course you can't be sure if it's VC, or pigs, or tigers, or what, you know. Just some big jungle animal, or VC, or what?

But other than that, that's about all that happened. It rained a lot out there, which is nice. It sure felt good. It's a lot better than constant heat from the sun and of course we were wet most of the time out there from the rain but it still felt good. Mosquitoes are extra bad this time for some reason. Usually we don't have very much trouble with mosquitoes but this time it was real bad. The mosquito stuff that I use didn't do the job. I had some kind of a gooey liquid I put all over me but it didn't do the job so I'm going to have to take a different kind out next time to combat those lousy mosquitoes.

That Drama Team that I talked about is a combination of male and female Vietnamese young men and women, youngsters. I don't know, maybe they're anywhere from 16 to 25 or so. There's about 15 of them total. They travel around from each A-Camp, carrying their guitars and instruments, drums, flutes, and their own lights and sound equipment, microphones, amplifiers, and speakers and their own scenery. They build a little stage and put on shows for all the CIDG in camp. The first show they put on was Wednesday night. It was all in Vietnamese because it was for the CIDG, but because I was the S-5 officer I had to attend. So the captain and I and Holck went over, got seats right in the front row. They played fair. Nah, I won't even say that. They were kind of poor really, poor guitar players. They made a lot of noise but they didn't work together very well. Their instruments weren't tuned properly but they had a lot of singing, all in Vietnamese of course, and some dancing and a couple of skits and shoot, the whole thing lasted almost two hours.

It must have been a pretty good hit with all the CIDG because we had about 300 or 350 people crowded around out in front of the stage watching. It was a homemade stage, set up on 55 gallon drums. They had little curtains and everything. I should have taken the tape recorder over there but I didn't think of it at the time and I could have taped a lot of that Vietnamese music and

singing for you so you know what it sounds like. It's real weird stuff. But I thought well, I'll save it for the next show.

As it turned out, the next show that they did that evening was done in the LLDB club. It was strictly for Americans and LLDB but that night I had radio watch so I got out of it nicely. I didn't want to attend anyway because whenever they have stupid little parties like that everybody starts drinking and throwing beer around and getting drunk and just acting like a bunch of stupid fools. Since I had radio watch from 8 to midnight I had a good excuse for not going. Then today, they had another show this evening, or last evening rather, in our mess hall. Again that was strictly for Americans and LLDB. They had dancing and stuff. The Drama Team itself had about four girls travel around with it and of course our bar girl and our cook was over there. Most of the team went over except for Ingram and myself. Someone had to stay and watch the radio. We volunteered.

Again, it was another one of those stupid drinking parties. Just a lot of noise and bashing around and all the Vietnamese crammed in there. Shoot, some of these Vietnamese are so horny. They're girlish. The men, you can't call them men, they're big babies, they dance with each other. Shoot, they drape all over each other's shoulders and arms around each other and everything just as if a woman and man would do. Almost all the CIDG in camp have this real long, flowing hair. They look just like any hippy back in the United States. They all have long fingernails. They're a good, let's see, who can I compare them to? I don't know, but they stick out at least a quarter of an inch, sometimes three eighths of an inch. For some reason they like to let their little finger nail and their thumbnails grow much longer. They stick out sometimes up to a half inch. That's on the men. I don't know why they do it but they do. They're such little girlish creatures sometimes.

A lot of times when you're riding around in the truck and you have a truckload of CIDG, they put their arms around your neck or they try to, just to hang on. They rest their hands on your leg and your thigh. Hit a bump and their hand slides up. It keeps on going like that. It's only happened to me once. Some guy was standing on the running board next to me. I was driving. He started resting his hand on my leg and kept sliding it up. So I just stopped the jeep, or the truck rather, pushed him off and continued on my way. He may not have understood why I did it, but that's what I did anyway. A lot of time if you have to push your way through a crowd of CIDG or something you'll feel them grabbing for you. I don't know, it's just fun and games for them. It's just a stupid thing, that's all. They get such a kick out of doing that, I don't know. They walk around arm in arm, hand in hand, arms around each other's shoulders. Such funny people.

They live in bunkers like everybody else in camp. Shoot, when they have to go to the bathroom or something they'll step outside their door and just pee right on the side of their

bunker, just right out in the open. Just wherever it's convenient. If they see a barrel or a post, or corner of a bunker, or sometimes they just go right into the little ditch that runs by their bunkers. The women are the same way. They just step out of their bunkers and squat down and just piddle wherever it's convenient. Kids, the same way. They don't have any sense of cleanliness or, what's the word I want, sanitairiness. They just go where it's convenient, whenever it's convenient. They don't really care. Oh, let's see.

When I went over to see the first Drama Team show it was Wednesday evening after I had come back off the operation. I had my uniform on, my shirt and my beret, so I had Ron take three pictures of me, one close up, one medium shot, and one full length shot. So as soon as I finish this roll of film I'll send that to you and then you've got three nice color slides of me in my uniform and beret, ta-da. One of these days when I get out there with the movie camera, I'll have somebody take pictures of me with my uniform on for you. It's so corny just to stand around and pose for a movie picture. There's nothing else I do with my uniform on that would be worth taking movie pictures of. One of these days I'll get some shots for you.

This is the bad time of the month again, all my doggone paperwork. I spent all day yesterday doing paperwork, getting that squared away. Today I've got to put up with the harassment of a visit from the S-5 officer from Nha Trang, and the colonel and his counterpart, and the S-5 officer from the B-Team. Naturally they're going to want to talk to me because I'm the S-5 officer out here, supposedly. They want to know what kind of great PSYOPS activities are going on and what Civic Action programs I've got going. Shoot I'll just tell them like it is. Nothing. Ain't got nothing. Today the CIDG pay will be coming in so I've got to start breaking that down and getting ready to pay. Tomorrow and Sunday I'll be paying and then Monday I'll be typing up the funds report. Next Wednesday I'll be going to Tay Ninh. In fact the day you get this tape I'll probably be going to Tay Ninh, if you get it on Wednesday.

Do you know that there are only about 45 days before we see each other in Hong Kong? Isn't that great? In 45 days I will have been here, let's see March, April, May, June, July, August, I will have been here 6 full months. That's a long time, hon, without seeing you. A real long time. But the time seems to be going real fast for me. I hope it's going the same for you. It's hard to believe that it's pay day again already. The months seem to be slipping by rather nicely.

We had lots of VC activity around here lately. Probably read about it in the papers that Tay Ninh City was having its share of trouble. You know that real neat big ol' Cao Dai temple place I was telling you about? Well, the whole complex is real big and it's surrounded by a big, high stone wall, maybe about 15 feet high. It's got about 10 gates throughout. Well, the VC tried to take that last week. They snuck in real early one morning, about six o'clock in the morning, and tried to storm the temple area and overrun it and hold it. The American 25th Division got there about the same time the VC did and they had a big fight there all day long. I don't know

what the final outcome was as far as VC killed or anything but they didn't get the temple. If they had it would have been a real strategic piece of property for them to hold, because they probably would figure that we wouldn't bomb the place because, shoot, that's South Vietnam's national Cao Dai temple and shrine. It would have been a lot of pressure brought to bear not to bomb it and to just storm it with troops and try to take it back. I'm sure that would have led to a lot of American deaths, but luckily the VC never did get a foot hold in the place.

Also in downtown Tay Ninh itself, on the northern edge of town, there was quite a bit of fighting, street fighting, that kind of stuff, house to house fighting. It just seems funny that the VC can just get inside the city like that, carrying weapons. Nobody tries to stop them. Stupid Vietnamese people, they won't try to stop them because they're afraid of them. They just let them come in, you know, take over the place. Of course it's always up to the Americans to throw them out. I keep saying Tay Ninh City. I don't know what the papers call it. I think they call it Tay Ninh City also, but actually the downtown section of the city itself is only two blocks long. It's a real dinky little downtown shopping area, real tiny. In the back streets they've got a few open air markets and vegetable type vendors and something like a stockyard, you know, where they bring their cows and their chickens, and their pigs and all that stuff to sell. Real stinky, smelly, dirty back streets. They're so narrow a jeep can just barely get down them. There's all kinds of crap in the gutters, you know dirt and filth, and all that junk, cow pies and pig pies, and everything else.

The weather here has been real, real humid. You can hardly go out and do any kind of work at all without just becoming completely drenched in sweat. You find yourself almost short of breath it's so hot. It's stifling, miserable, but at night it gets cool enough to enjoy a good night's sleep. Of course, I never have trouble sleeping. In fact yesterday afternoon after I ate lunch I came in here and slept from 12 to 3. I was so beat. I had a headache and everything so I just laid down and "click," next thing I knew it was 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Then I went to bed last night about 11:30. I did a little extra homework last night to make up for the time yesterday afternoon that I was sleeping. Then I went right back to sleep without any trouble.

Saturday,
28 June 1969

I'm munching cookies tonight because I'm hungry and if you stop and think for a minute you will realize one thing. So stop and think. Okay. I gave you a chance, now I'll tell you the answer. I got my package from you. I'll come back to that. First let me check the tape to make sure it's recording okay. Okay, it's recording real fine. I'm sitting in my room, on my bed, with my Hush Puppies on and my white Levi's. I've got my radio going, my fan blowing on me, my fluorescent light on, my door shut. I'm starving. Therefore I'll munch on cookies. And I'm tired.

Tired. Because, at the time we only have five members of the team present, which means that everyone will have many radio watches. I had one last night from 12 to 2. I stayed up until 2 am. I was doing paperwork and watching a movie, catching up on some reading, just generally loafing around until midnight. Then from midnight to 2 I was on radio watch. Went to bed at 2 and got up at 7 this morning. I had a real busy day. It was raining all day.

We had three planes come in with a whole bunch of junk we had to pick up off the turn around point and load onto the truck and carry in, unload, put away, all in the rain of course. And we had two helicopters come in, one of which was the chow chopper. And we had to ship out that Drama Team that was here, gather all the food in, backload a big net full of wire, barbed wire, fifteen rolls of it. We traded that to another A-Team for some .50 caliber ammunition. We had enough parts to put together a .50 caliber machine gun. So we've got that sitting on the roof of the teamhouse right now. Besides that we were digging ditches out in the turn around point to drain all the water off. Boy there's a lot of water too. Everywhere you look there's water. Water, water, water. It's kind of fun, though. I enjoy working out in the rain because it's always cool, cloudy, usually a breeze blowing. The rain varies. It comes down real hard sometimes. It just mists at other times.

Of course in our trips with the truck we use both three-quarters. Ron Ingram will drive one or Holck will drive one and I usually get the other one. We usually race out through the puddles and everything. The clearance on a three-quarter is about at the lowest point it's probably a good 14 inches off the ground. That's right where the differential is. The water in some of the puddles comes up to the running board, the clutch and gas pedal and all that stuff of the truck, which is probably two feet off the ground. We go flying through those puddles and spray water like maniacs. But, it's fun and it kind of relieves the tension of hard work and makes us forget about the war and just have fun.

So, after doing that all day I was pretty beat tonight. I had to write up an award citation for Ingram because he's going to be leaving in August. Whenever a guy leaves you write up some kind of service award for him like an Army Commendation Medal or something like that. So I spent an hour doing that, taking care of a bunch of other paperwork. I got my payroll in. I have to pay the CIDG. That's got to be ready to go out of here Wednesday. We have a big operation up north right now, 180 people, that's half the camp. They're not due back in until Monday sometime. So between the time they come in Monday and Wednesday morning, I've got to pay 500 people plus type up all the funds reports and everything and get it all ready to go.

So, tomorrow I'll be busy for a number of reasons. The first one is, the captain is out on the operation. They're having a captain's, a CO's meeting, at the B-Team tomorrow from 10 to 2. If you remember way back about a month and a half ago or two months ago there was another one of those things and the captain couldn't make it so I had to attend. So I've also got to attend

tomorrow. I'll be going into Tay Ninh on the work chopper in the morning about 9:30, be coming back about 1:30, 2 o'clock in the afternoon. That kind of ruins most of Sunday. As soon as I get back I've got to come in here and start counting out money, separating it all into the envelopes. That will take care of all of Sunday afternoon and Sunday night. Starting Monday morning through maybe dark Monday night and Tuesday morning to probably 4 o'clock Tuesday afternoon, I'll be paying. Right after that I've got to start counting up my left over money, typing up my funds reports and all that stuff. That will take most of Tuesday afternoon, Tuesday night. Wednesday morning I get up, pack my bags, and take off to Tay Ninh again, turn in my funds reports, mail this package to you, and get a hair cut which I need badly, go to the PX. If I can I'll come back here Wednesday afternoon because there's a lot of work that has to be done around here yet. If I don't make it then I have to stay on the B-Team until Friday, which I don't want to do because it's boring. It's a waste of time for me because I'd just be sitting around down there doing nothing when I could be back here doing so much work that should be done. So, I'm going to try to come back here Wednesday afternoon if I can, but we'll see.

Pardon me for my lousy enunciation, but it's was kind of hard to talk with a crumbly cookie in my mouth. Besides all the other things we're doing around here, we're also putting up a windsock. It's about four feet in diameter and about fifteen feet long. We already sunk a great big four-inch diameter pipe in the ground and cemented it in out near the airfield. So now all we have to do is get that big windsock up on top of the pole, which is probably fifteen feet up in the air. So we'll have to back the deuce and a half up to it and build a big platform up on the bed of the deuce and a half and get that windsock up there. The windsock, shoot, that thing weighs about fifty pounds. So that's going to be quite a strain getting that up there, but we will manage.

As I said, I got your package. I'm munching on the cookies. Those sandals are neat. And you'll never guess what. There's a guy here from California who's got a pair exactly like mine, and in fact, today he got a package from his girlfriend with three more sets of those sandals in it. Exactly like mine. He ordered them for some of his friends. They're neat sandals. I like them. They ought to last a long time. I know the doggone tread's not going to wear out on them. If anything the leather will, and it takes quite a while to wear through the leather. I don't know if you can hear that radio in the background or not. It's kind of noisy. Let me shut it off and see if you can hear it. Yes, you can hear it all right. So I just got up and turned it down a little bit.

It was kind of funny when I first put those sandals on. After wearing my boots around all day, I'm used to wearing something with heels on them. My boot heels are probably an inch and a half high, that big cleated rubber sole I've got. I put those sandals on and it felt so funny, it seems that my heel should have been hitting the ground sooner than it did. For a few minutes I walked kind of stilted, you know, kind of flat footed. I'm getting used to them. They do feel rather different. But again, I was in bare feet rather than wearing socks with them. But I enjoyed

wearing them. I got a lot of comments on them too. I told everybody they were the American bourgeois Ho Chi Minh sandal. A real Ho Chi Minh sandal is made out of just a plain chunk of tire, and they use inner tube for straps. That's all there is to it. But they're pretty good. I think I sent you a picture of that shoe that I had, or that set of shoes, whatever it was.

Today, or this morning, right after lunch we were coming back from breakfast and we got a call on the radio from what's called an "uptight" aircraft. It's a Mohawk. I doubt if you know what a Mohawk looks like. It's got three vertical tail fins, two big propeller engines, kind of a little bubble nose. Kind of a squat, funny looking thing. It reminds me of a toad, but it really flies neat. It's a spy type plane. It's got all kinds of fancy radar equipment, camera equipment, stuff like that. We usually have one every day come up around our area and they always call in and say, "Well, we're in your area. Have you got anything for us to look at?" Today, we asked him if he wouldn't fly over the camp, say maybe 200 feet, and take a panoramic shot of the camp and then drop the film off whenever he gets it developed. So he said "sure." So we all raced around, grabbed our cameras and everything, and jumped up on the teamhouse roof. He made one low pass at about 200 feet. I had the movie camera and I got a real good shot of him coming at me. And it was on telephoto and I didn't feel like zooming it to wide angle, so I just left it on telephoto.

When he flew right over the teamhouse roof he was so low that all I got was a big, black blobby blur of his belly. Of course it took me a fraction of a second to find him after he zoomed by, but I caught him then as he was flying up and away. Then he circled the camp for awhile and I wanted to take some more pictures of him, but the camera didn't work. I had the camera on unlock, you know, on run. I punched the trigger and nothing happened. At first I couldn't figure out what was wrong so then I thought well, I'll push the little battery check button and sure enough, my little pen light batteries are kaput. So as soon as you can, hustle some pen light batteries over to me, because from now until I get them I won't be able to take any movie pictures any more.

When I was out on my operation I found a leaflet that was made from the first Chieu Hoi that we got. It was his picture and then a handwritten message by him on the leaflet. If you'll remember in Gabriel demonstration on how those leaflets were made, well they're made the same way here. It only takes a day to make maybe a100,000 of them or something. So a light plane took those and flew up over the area where this guy was from and dropped them all over the place. I found a few of them while I was out on my operation. I picked one up and brought it back, but then I forgot to take it out of the radio pack where I put it. If I can remember, I'll go check and see if it's there and if it is, I'll send it to you. It's no big thing. It's just a picture of some goofy VC and some scratchy, scrawling, writing on a piece of white paper.

After driving around here in these three-quarter ton trucks, I feel, as well as everybody

else around here who drives them, that that is one vehicle that the Army didn't get screwed on. They may have paid a lot for it, which I'm sure they did. I think it's something like \$5000 or something. Maybe that's not a whole lot. But anyway, it is probably the sturdiest truck the Army has ever built. I know that for a fact, because the way we drive these trucks around here, you would be appalled, Hon, really, the way they're treated. It's just fantastic. It's bad enough that the CIDG drive them. They're notoriously bad drivers anyway. But when we get a half hour off or something and want to goof off we jump in the truck and take off, go out to the runway and mess around.

You wouldn't believe the bumps and the holes and stuff out there that we have, and the ditches and the puddles that we run through. We go quite fast. We're not reckless and careless but we still go fast and hit some big bumps and stuff. Boy, that truck bounces so hard sometimes that the front and back end just bounce right up off the ground. Both wheels just literally bounce right up off the ground. The truck keeps right on charging. It's got an old flat-head Plymouth truck 6 cylinder engine in it. Of course we very, very, rarely get stuck. We have to get in some real thick deep miry muck to get stuck because the thing's got 4 wheel drive. A lot of times we get stuck, just pop it into 4 wheel drive and grind our way out, no sweat at all. From one end of the runway to the other we can get the truck going a maximum of about 55 miles an hour. Of course we can't run quite the full length. We have to allow for braking room. Although the road extends off each end of the runway, the road is so rough and rutty that we can't take the truck on it, besides that, it's dangerous because of mines and stuff possibly around there.

I've already taken some pictures of Wes and I playing out in the puddles with the trucks. They ought to turn out real good. Ought to be real interesting watching. What I'm going to have to do now is as soon as I get some batteries for the camera, I'll take it out on the turn around point. There's a section of field out there that's nothing but bumps. I'll have somebody stand at one end and I'll get down at the other end in the truck and just race through the bumps. Boy, wait until you see how that truck bounces, and how I bounce around in the truck. It's really fantastic. We'll blast through some more puddles for you. It'll make some interesting movie watching.

Well I'm quite positive that by now you have your birthday present. I hope you like it. As soon as I get confirmation that you do have it, I'm going to send you a little folder that they sent me with all the rest of their products that they make. They've got a beautiful thing in there that I'd like to have. Well, I'll tell you about it later because I'm not sure whether or not you've got your present yet. It's the same as your present, only a little different. I can't tell you how it's different yet. Like I said, I can't be sure whether or not you got your present. Anyway, at least I know the thing is paid for and the order will be sent. No sweat there.

I flew to Tay Ninh Sunday for that Commander's Conference. I was the only 1st Lieutenant there, the rest of them were captains. Scully was there, Captain Scully. Nothing

special took place, just a bunch of yakking from about 11 to 2, ate lunch there, then flew back. On the trip back I had a seat in the door of the helicopter so I took some pictures of the mountain, a couple of them, a big panorama view of all of Tay Ninh area from about 3000 feet, which is the height of the mountain. It shows a good picture of the view from the top of the mountain that those guys up there see all the time, except when they're clouded over. And you can see, I think, a plane about a 1000 feet underneath the helicopter was flying by so I got that in the picture, plus a couple of rain showers back in the distance you can see. I caught a flight of helicopters from my helicopter. I also took somewhat of a distant shot of that burned up C-130 at Katum. I've got about 1 or 2 more pictures and I'll be able to send you another roll of film. It's got pictures of the dog and mama-san and Co Ba, which are our two house girls.

One of the house girl's names is Co Ba and the cook's name is Co La. The bar girl's name is Co Soung. I'll explain more about them later. No, I better do it now so I don't forget. Mama-san, there's only one mama-san. The other one, we call her Sue. We call the cook La or Co La, and we call Co Ba, Co Ba. So when I refer to mama-san, that's the old bat. She's got twelve kids, so she's not one for playing around. She's a funny old fuddy-duddy, you know, laughs all the time. Just a corny, screwy old woman, that's all. Co Ba is youngish, about 20, ugly. Co Soung is about 19. She's our bar girl. She's got the best body of all of them, but her face is kind of ugly. Co La's about 30, 32, somewhere about there, but she's P.G. [pregnant]. That's the way it stands.

This afternoon I pay the last company, which means paydays will be over with, thank goodness. Then all this afternoon and tonight I'll be typing up the funds report and getting it signed and everything. That all has to be turned in tomorrow. I had planned on going to Tay Ninh tomorrow to take the funds report in, but since I've got this stupid heliborne operation going way up north then I'm not going to be able to go in. We're still waiting for the actual final word on whether or not we're going. It's real stupid. If something's that big and that important you think they'd give you at least a week's warning, even three or four days. But we don't get that. We get 24 hours warning. That's barely enough time to get all your crap together, you know, just fill your canteens full of water, get your food and your rucksack packed and everything else. It's real sorry the way things are run around here, pathetic really.

(Gap in the tape) ... it's not quite ooo-wee that you're going around the world, woo, big deal, you know, I be a rich bastard and that kind of stuff. I just kind of smugly smiled at him that's all. I got your ao-dai sewn together at one of those little gift shops. Not a nice big tailor shop like I got your coat made in. I don't think this woman really gave a shit whether or not it fit. I told her how, your size is and everything. They probably don't care, "What the heck we sell the gift, big deal, he pays for it and that's the last we'll ever see him. So, go ahead and send up to Flossy. I paid \$8 for it by the way. But if you can't get any from her then sell it for \$6. It's not

that big of a deal. We'll get you a nice one in Hong Kong.

By now you should have gotten your other gift, the one in the big box, the little flimsy one. That was meant to go with the ao-dai, but since it doesn't, I mean, since you don't have your ao-dai yet, then just wear it to the beach or something. Don't get rid of the thing that's supposed to go with your ao-dai. Keep it so when you get your own you can wear it. But that thing that I sent you in that big box will be nice to take to the beach, as long as it isn't too windy.

I was trying to think what manual on Honeywell Pentax that you've got because I've got a manual here that tells me all about it, how to work it, I think. Maybe this is just a catalog thing. Let me see. Yeah, this tells me how to work it and everything, too. I can't recall which one you've got, but go ahead and read it thoroughly and learn as much as you can about the camera before I see you in Hong Kong. When I give it to you, it won't take that much understanding and everything to run it. I've been reconsidering a little bit about giving you the Pentax. Sometimes I have my doubts because it is a nice camera to have over here and it's great for taking pictures but I hate to get the lens chipped by flying gravel or anything, and I hate to get the thing full of dirt and grit and grime like my Yashica. So no matter what I think about keeping it, I think I will give it to you just to keep it safe. Like I said, I'm getting this other package ready to go out to you, so I'll have two more packages to send to you.

I sent you a letter today with another one of those neat little joke books and a couple of pictures taken by Larry. I also got paid today, another \$247 dollars, plus every team member made about \$130 profit this month off of our club fund from selling beer, sodas, and cigarettes to the CIDG, so that's nice. I had \$200 left over from last month, \$247 paid to me this month, so that's \$447. I had 15,000 piasters paid to me last month, for last month's profits. In most places you can only change it over for 150p's for \$1. I slyly got rid of mine to artillery people for 120p's per \$1. So I got rid of 10,000p's, or a little over 10,000p's, somewhere around 10,000p's, and I've already made \$100 off of it, and I've still got another 5000p's to go, which will be close to another \$40 or so. So I'll make \$140 off my 15,000p's whereas all the other team members will only make about \$100 even. So I get money there plus the \$130 that we got from profits this month. So now I'm back up to about \$400, I mean \$600. I haven't really got anything to spend it on so I'm just going to hang on to it and when I meet you in Hong Kong I'll have lots of moola. So if you want, you can save all your money, your travelers, oh man I keep burping lunch, save all your travelers checks and just spend my money. Then it won't seem like you spent so much money on your round the world trip.

Otherwise, things are moving along nicely. We're getting an awful lot of action around the Tay Ninh Area, I'm sure you're reading about it in the papers. All kinds of B-52 strikes and shoot, one of the fire support bases killed 400 VC in a 30 hour battle just last week. They found a 90 ton cache of rice, arms, and ammunition up in Tay Ninh area here, I mean up between here

and Katum. So things are still hopping like crazy around here although the camp isn't getting hit, luckily, nicely. That's about all I had to say on this tape, hon. If I don't go on the heliborne tomorrow then I'll be able to whip off another tape to you, probably, or a letter, or something. I got a nice letter from Chris out in California, so I'll have to write to her. I have to write to my folks. That's the tape.

Wednesday,
2 July 1969

(Gap in the tape)... There was something that happened the other day. We have two safes in my office. One is for me, my funds' safe. I keep all of my CIDG funds. The other one is for the team fund. Sergeant Bozeman, our medic, is in charge of team funds. They're both the same kind of safes; they have four digit combination locks on them. However, the lock on the team funds' safe was broken, or so they told me, and they were using a padlock on the safe. Well, he lost the key to the padlock and had to smash it to get into the safe, and had no way to lock it up afterwards. I said, "Okay. Let me get a little screwdriver and see what I can do about this lock." Everybody on the team said "don't bother, sir. We've had six people out here and none of them could fix it. We had the S-2, the super spook, and everybody else out here, specialists from A-Company out here to try to fix that lock. Nobody can do it. Nobody can set the combination." I thought, "Okay. I'll try it and show them all that I can do it."

I spent about a half an hour working on the thing, and sure enough, I took it all apart and found out what was wrong. There's about four little dials that spin inside and they have to catch each other at certain intervals, and there's little prongs sticking out of each one of them to catch the next one. Their only trouble was that one of those tiny little prongs was bent so that it wouldn't catch the prong sticking out on the next spool. So I just bent it back into shape, put it together, and figured out what the combination was. I could have changed the combination on it but I just used the setting that was on it, figured out the combination and got it so that it was working fine. I told everybody, well I just calmly walked into the club while everybody was sitting around. Of course they're all looking at me and saying, "Give up, huh?" I said, "No. I didn't give up." I handed a little slip of paper to bac-si and said, "Here's the combination." Boy, that floored them all. They said, "Hey, what was wrong? How'd you do it?" I said, "Ah, nothing a little ingenuity couldn't figure out." I just left them hanging in mid air. I thought that was neat.

It's getting to the point now where anytime anybody has any ideas on anything, like putting addition on the teamhouse or cementing this or doing this or that, they always come to me for a check. They say, "Hey, sir. What do you think about this idea? What do you think about that?" And call me the engineer on the team and all that kind of stuff. Shoot, I bet if, well no, I won't say it. I was going to say if anybody on the team had just set himself down in front of the

safe and taken it apart and looked at it closely and carefully for a couple minutes they could have figured it out. But, realizing that not all people have the same gifts, I came to the conclusion most of them couldn't have figured it out because after being in the Army for a certain amount of time I think their mind grows mossy or something. I don't know. It just grows, what's the word I want? Feeble? No, not that bad. But it loses its sharpness because the army isn't much of a challenge. Any doofus can remain in the Army and make it a career and make as much money as the next guy. Until you get way up in the upper brackets like an E-8 or an E-9, you don't have to have any smarts. You can just make it up to an E-7 and live comfortably for the next 20 years as an E-7 and make plenty of money to live off of very comfortably. They just let things ride. They don't exercise their mind or their brains. They just, I don't know, they just get kind of a cobwebbed brain, you know, kind of screwed up, mixed up, that kind of stuff. At least that's the impression I get. These guys just aren't as sharp as they could have been if they had kept at it and kept trying to improve themselves, that kind stuff. So, I don't know. They all say, "Well, I didn't have the chance to go to college like you did and all that stuff." Shoot, my college training didn't teach me how to take apart a lock and look at it and see what's wrong, fix it, and put it back together. Anybody can do it if they just want to sit down, take the time, and just look at it, fiddle with it until they figure out what's wrong. That's no big deal, it was very simple in fact. I didn't tell them that, but it was. Very simple indeed. Oh well, enough of that. I'll talk to you later.

Bits of conversation between Dave Fetters, Co La, and Co Soung:

Viet. Ladies: You know yesterday, we saw a rat, he going to bite us.

DF: A rat?

Viet. Ladies: Yes. He bite us.

DF: You can have the other package of matches too if you want. Inside the box there.

Viet. Ladies: (Some talking in Vietnamese)

DF: I think there's some more. Are there more matches in there?

Viet. Ladies: No more.

DF: Oh, I'll get you some more sometime.

Viet. Ladies: (Some talking in Vietnamese)

DF: Yes, junk. Get me a little box, little cardboard box.

Viet. Ladies: (Some talking in Vietnamese)

DF: Okay, I tell you what. You put that stuff in there and then you can have that one.

Viet. Ladies: What that? You send that home?

DF: Nice box, huh? It's a mirror. Number #10. Yes. Right there.

Viet. Ladies: Good night, (more Vietnamese conversation between Co La and Co Soung)

DF: Good night.

I don't know how well that turned out on tape, I'll play it back in just a minute, but that was Co La the cook and Co Soung the bar girl. They knocked on the door and asked if they could come in because I'm the one that keeps track of all the soap suds and dish washing powder and the Brillo pads and the light bulbs and all that stuff. They needed a new light bulb. As soon as they came in they started oohing and ahing at the pictures and things that I have around the room and asking me questions. "Is this your wife," and questions like that. So let me stop and play this back and see if it turned out. I hope it did.

It didn't turn out too badly I think. I missed quite a bit of the first part of the conversation because I wanted to turn the recorder on without them knowing about it. They were both standing right in front of me looking at me while they were asking some questions so I couldn't very well turn it on. Then while they both weren't looking I quickly turned the mic on and put it in a strategic position. The cover was down on the tape recorder so they didn't notice it was on. If they had they probably wouldn't have talked so freely. They kept switching from English to Vietnamese, it's kind of neat to hear them talk.

That noise in the background, besides the music, is the static coming off the radio. Some nights it's clear, some nights it isn't. I'm also swatting flies like crazy. I've beaucoup flies in my room tonight. I went out this evening to try to catch some frogs in the ponds and the dumb things are too fast for me. I used to be a good frog catcher but those were big old clumsy bullfrogs and these are tiny, fast, squeaky things. So I got a board and I waited for one to surface in a mud puddle and took that board and splatted the top of the water to try to stun them, but I killed three of them that way so I gave up. One of these days as I turn over a barrel or a log or a board or something I'll find a frog and nail him. These flies are terrible pests. I've got to do something to get rid of them. Either catch that big lizard or a bunch of frogs.

This is called 'Nashville Blues Round Up.' I always thought it was something else. Oh, let's see 'Golden Wildwood Flower' I thought it was called. This is a good song to end the tape with so I'll say goodbye here hon. I'll send out another tape real soon, probably start tomorrow and send it out Sunday. This will go out tomorrow morning. It's been a pleasure, Good bye, love ya.

4 & 5 July 1969
Friday/Saturday

Hello sweet thing. I didn't feel like particularly making a tape tonight. I was going to sit down and write a letter but I'm too tired to do that so I ended up starting this tape to you. I sort of didn't think I could fill up an hour tape so I'm just going to settle for this little half hour job and just kind of sit here and moan and drone on about what's been going on the last couple days. That's about it. There hasn't been anything too spectacular going on. A few things that upset me a little bit, but that's not unusual.

One thing is real funny. This is supposedly the rainy season but we're getting very little rain, and as a result, our water table is real low. Everybody's complaining about the lack of water. If that wasn't bad enough, the generator that runs our water pump went kaput yesterday and the water that we have in our water tank is shared by all the Americans, the stupid LLDB, because they're too lazy to hook up their own tank and pump and everything, and artillery, who are also too lazy. So yesterday morning, we ran out of water, and well we knew it was coming because we couldn't get the generator started. So, when we finally ran out I had six full canteens in my room as did most of the other guys on the team. We had a lot of water stored up in the mess hall to cook with. But of course nobody could take showers or shave or just get a drink of water in the middle of the day unless we tapped our canteens. Our ice machine quit making ice, little things like that. Of course artillery didn't have any water and everybody's jumping up and down.

The artillery demands to know why we don't have any water. And..., they're real stupid people. We told them, you know, the generator doesn't work, so our pump doesn't work, therefore we don't have water in our tank, therefore there won't be any water flowing out of the tank into your water cans. Most of those drips over there keep calling over, "You got it fixed yet? You got it fixed yet?" You know, instead of volunteering to come over and help, or do what they can, you know, advice, anything. They just sit over there and just keep calling about every 20 or 30 minutes to ask if we have it fixed yet.

I personally spent all day from about 7:30 this morning until 5:30 tonight working on it. I took time for lunch and that was all. We couldn't get it going. We tried everything, a couple of different generators and crossing wires and different pumps, and everything we could think of, but we have such limited facilities here that we can't get it going. I'm not going to go into detail about what was wrong but just, it was something to do with the distributor.

So, we got on the radio and called A-Company. We bypass the stupid B-Team. We don't get any support from them at all, especially from the S-4 officer, who used to be the XO of this camp. He knows the troubles that you have out on the A-Site and everything, yet he won't go out

of his way to help you. We backloaded a 5 KW generator, which is the kind that runs our water pump, about six weeks ago to have it fixed and sent back out. We kept calling him once a week for the past six weeks, "Well, you got that generator fixed for us or anything?" He kept saying, "Oh, it's backloaded to A-Company, they're going to fix it." We called him yesterday and said, "Hey, what about that 5KW generator we gave you to fix?" He said, "Oh, it's down at A-Company, they're working on it."

So tonight, after working on it all day and not being able to accomplish anything, we called A-Company and said, "Hey, Lieutenant Calvert from the B-Team said that you were working on our 5KW generator. How about giving us a status report?" They immediately said, "What 5KW generator? We never got a 5KW generator from you or from Lieutenant Calvert." Boy, I thought my team sergeant was going to jump through the roof. Boy, did he get mad! He immediately called down there and got a hold of Calvert and he called him some names that you wouldn't believe, and that's to an officer, too. I was there to back him up 100 percent. That drip never did send that generator down to the A-Company. I don't know what he's done with it, but he didn't send it down there. Boy, we were hopping mad. So I think we finally got things straightened out. Good old Calvert's butt's going to be swinging if he doesn't get on the ball and get us a little support.

Yesterday, well the day before yesterday, we had a shipment of rice come in. We counted forty bags of rice but it was right at noon, it was lunchtime, it was hottest part of the day so we said okay, we'll let the bags sit out there for awhile and come back and pick them up in a couple hours. We went back two hours later and there were three bags of rice missing. At the time it started to rain and we couldn't spend time looking around for the three bags because we had to get the rest of it in the shed before it got all wet. So yesterday morning I went out and started scouting around and I found the three bags hidden in the grass off to the side of the runway. So I picked them up, and put them in the truck and at the same time there was a Caribou coming in.

The Air Force had gifts for all the A-Teams with runways. For each A-Team they gave us two boxes, one contained six bottles of booze and about thirty cans of 7UP for mix. The other box contained a whole bunch of stuff like powdered milk, Kool-Aid, a great big 20 pound ham, marshmallows, doughnuts, fresh rolls, all kinds of good stuff like that, tomato juice, and grapefruit juice for mix. In turn we gave the pilots and the crew an AK-47 with three thirty round magazines full of ammunition. Boy, you should have seen those guys. I was the one who took it into the plane and gave it to them. They were so thrilled they didn't know what to do. Boy, they were all smiles and laughing and looking at the thing. They kept shaking my hand and patting me on the back and saying, "Thank you, you know, we can't get over this. It's such a fabulous gift." Big deal. It wasn't anything for us but those guys don't have a chance to pick up stuff like that so they were really happy. Of course we were quite pleased that they spent the

time and the effort to collect some goodies for us and drop them off. In each box they had a piece of paper with the 535th Caribou Wing or whatever they were called with all the pilots and crew member's names signed on to a kind of a little card for us. It was a real nice gesture on the Fourth of July to go around and give gifts out like that to everybody.

So we had that to drink last night. I didn't drink any. I had a couple cold 7UPs and that was about it. I went to bed early. In fact I went to bed at 8:30, listened to your tape, crawled in bed, and then got up at 10 o'clock because Artillery was going to fire some HE [high explosive] and some Willy Peter and some flares up in the air for a Fourth of July celebration, which they did. It was a pretty neat show. They fired about a hundred rounds or so, just plain old high explosive. They shoot it into the woodline, which is about 800 meters away. They shoot air bursts about 100, 200 feet off the ground. Whenever it hits a tree limb or anything like that it explodes. It's a brilliant flash and then a horrendous explosion. In the still of the night it's really a resounding explosion. Then they fired some white phosphorous air bursts. That's a brilliantly white explosion. It's real soft, you can hardly hear it. It's just a little pop and great big billowing clouds of white phosphorous smoke, and then they shot about 15 flares up in the air all at one time. The whole place was just lit up. Not quite like day, about half as bright as the sun would be. They had flares all around us. Then the smoke from the Willy Peter rounds had settled down to the ground. There was a big smoky haze all around the camp on the ground. It was really weird. Kind of neat.

I was going to take pictures since I have black and white film in my camera but I woke up at 10 o'clock and I was kind of groggy and I didn't feel like getting the camera out and fooling around with it in the dark so I just said "forget it." I came back and went down to bed about quarter after 10, slept until 12, had radio watch until 2, went back to bed at 2 and then got up at 7 this morning for a full day's work.

Anyway, I was telling you about those three bags of rice that I picked up. I had them in the back of the truck and I drove in, parked it right in front of the teamhouse by the gate and Wes Holck and I picked up the two boxes and carried them in. We weren't gone from the truck six minutes and we came back outside and a bag of rice was missing. Those cotton pickin' thieves. They must watch us all the time. As soon as no one's around, they run up and steal something, and run away again. So, needless to say, that gave me a royal pain in the butt. We have to keep the truck locked up at all times otherwise they'll take it, tear up and down the runway with it, and just keep it from us all the time.

I keep telling you that we run up and down the runway and run through puddles and all that stuff. Sure, we do. But we always do that while we're working at the same time. Like if we have to go out and pick up a load of dirt or pick up something off the turn around point or meet a plane. On the way out or on the way back, shoot, we'll tear up and down the runway and splash

through puddles and stuff, but at least we're working while we're doing that. But the stupid CIDG, they'll take the truck and steal it from us in the morning, and they won't bring it back all morning unless we go chase them down. When a plane comes in we haven't got a truck to go out and meet them. We've got three trucks, a deuce and a half and two three quarters.

Well, the CIDG have complete control over the deuce and a half. We don't even bother to try to lock that up. We figure what the heck. If we give them the deuce and a half maybe they'll leave our two three quarters alone. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. But anyway, the CIDG, there are a few of them that know how to drive, and they come in, pick up the truck, and take it out. But they go around and pick up all their friends, go out on the runway and let their friends drive the thing. As a result, every three weeks or so we burn out a clutch. So at the present time, it's deadlined with a burned out clutch.

Our other three quarter, our new one in fact, the one we got in just three or four weeks ago, also has troubles. The pressure plate, the throwout bearing, in the clutch assembly is shot. The generator's kaput, the voltage regulator is kaput, so we had to send all that junk in. We're waiting for parts. Again, we have to wait for Lieutenant Calvert to get off his royal ass and get to work for us. So I don't know how much longer that truck's going to be deadlined, but if anything happened to the one three quarter that's running now we would really be in a strain because we wouldn't be able to go out and meet planes and bring in the cargo or anything. Therefore, I keep it locked up. I'm the only one with the key, me, alone. It's kind of bothersome, every ten minutes somebody comes in and asks to use the truck. But at least I know who's got it and who to blame if something goes wrong or if something is missing, or if they used to go out and steal 55 gallon drums of fuel from us and take it to their company areas, all that kind of stuff.

Anyhoo, let me check the tape. It seems to be recording okay. Yesterday since it was Fourth of July, we had a little fun with explosives. We've got this great big old tractor at the southern end of the runway, off to one side, that hit a land mine way last September, October or so, and has been sitting there ever since. Most of it has been stripped away except the frame and the transmission, gearbox assembly and all that. I bet that alone probably weighs about ten thousand pounds. Such a big chunk of solid metal, it's really something. Anyway, I think I told you a couple weeks ago that we set off an explosion and blew part of it up. So, on Fourth of July we decided, "Well, heck, let's go out and really do a job on that thing."

So the first thing we did, we took a forty pound shape charge and set it on the ground between the two big frame members of the tractor and set that off. Now, a forty pound shape charge is forty pounds of that plastic explosive, shaped so that it focuses the blast downward at one point. That shape charge blew a hole in the ground about a foot and a half wide, and about twenty feet deep, right down to water, just a perfectly round hole, twenty feet deep, real deep. That's all it does, and that's what it's for. Then, we took 50 pounds of TNT and dropped it down

the hole and then about 20 pounds of C-4 plastic explosive, and dropped that down the hole, and then also a whole bunch of odds and ends like a bunch of 57 mm recoilless rifle high explosive rounds and stuff, threw them down in there, a bunch of unexploded grenades that we wanted to get rid of, and some extra det[deonating] cord. We threw all that junk down in the hole and put a nice long time fuse on it and drove way down to the other end of the runway and then set that off. Boy, was that a horrendous explosion, just a terrific blast.

Then we went back down to check the damage. It blew that tractor in about ten big pieces and blew a crater, oh, about 15 feet deep and about 30 feet around, a real big hole. So we took care of that. Then we went to the turn around point and every time we get a shipment in that's on wooden pallets we save the wooden pallets. We put them all in a great big hole off to one side until we have a stack of about 40 or 50 of them, which we did yesterday. To help them burn we took a 55 gallon drum of gasoline and usually open the gas up and douse the pile with the gas and then set it ablaze. But today, or yesterday, we thought we'd try something a little different. We took a full drum of gas without opening it and put it right on top of a stack of wood. Then we took another drum of gas and took, oh, about two gallons out of it and soaked the wood real good. Then we got off quite a distance and each of us had two white phosphorous grenades. As soon as I get some batteries for my camera I'll take some shots of a Willy Peter grenade going off. It's really neat to watch.

Anyway, each of us threw our two grenades at the pile of wood soaked with gas and that went off with a great big "poof," and clouds of white smoke and everything. Then the, of course the gasoline on the wooden pallets caught fire and started the whole thing burning. After the pile of wooden pallets started on fire, we all got in the truck and drove way down the runway, oh, about halfway down the runway, turned around and just sat and watched it because we knew that when that 55 gallon drum of gasoline eventually broke, or exploded, or whatever it was going to do, it would be quite a spectacle to see. So we called in and told everybody in camp what we were doing and a whole bunch of guys jumped up on top of bunkers and stuff to watch. We waited and waited and waited until the blaze was burning furiously all around the can or the drum of gasoline and all of a sudden it blew up. Boy oh boy, you've never seen a fireball in your life like this one. Just a fantastic fireball. Just a great big billowing cloud of fire ringed with black smoke. It must have gone a 100 feet in the air. It looked just like an H-Bomb cloud slowly raising up in the air after the fire finally burned out, just a big column of black smoke with a mushroom on top.

So the next time we ever do that I'll be sure to have my movie camera and take a movie of it because boy, that's fantastic to watch. Gee, I've never seen anything like that. It was really neat, make a beautiful movie. The only thing is you don't know exactly when that drum is going up so you might waste a lot of movie film shooting the fire, waiting for the thing to explode but

boy, when it does, it's really neat to see. So we'll have to do that again sometime. I would have done it yesterday except that I don't have any batteries for my movie camera.

Well, I got four frogs now in my room here in a cage. Believe it or not it seems to have really done the job on the fly problem. In fact looking around right now I can't spot one fly flying around this room. So apparently it works, although I'm not sure if I can keep them in here or not because the water is still and eventually it will get stagnant. It's kind of hard to keep it clean all the time. It's kind of a pain in the butt to take the top off, catch the frogs to keep them from jumping out, put them some place, and then take their pan of water out, dump it, clean out the pan, put it back in, fill it with fresh water and put the frogs back in and then tie the top back on the cage again. Shoot, I'll have to do that about every three or four days so that water doesn't get too rotten and stagnant and smelly.

So I'm going to make an effort to catch that big lizard that's in the commo room. I'm going to have to come up with some fantastically good idea how to do it though. I'm not sure how to go about catching a lizard. I'll have to lure him in to some kind of a trap, I guess, if I can, because there's no chance of grabbing him while he's sitting there on that screen. He's at the end of that tunnel in the commo room which is about eight feet deep and I don't think I'd be able to crawl down it. It's not quite that large. There's no other way to reach him way down at the end of the tunnel except by means of a trap or one of those snake catching gadgets, it's a long pole with a little loop of wire or string at the end. I don't think the lizard would allow me to get that close to him with a gadget like that, so I don't know. He'd be perfect to have though, because a lizard only uses a tiny amount of water, you know, just enough to drink every now and again. I think he'd be perfectly at home in a cage like that. Throw a little dirt and some grass in there that will grow or some kind of leafy plant or something. Put him in there and I think that'd be much better than these old frogs. But anyway, we'll see.

Do you remember my talking about a girl named Minnie Mouse? Well, she left us about two months ago to go have her kid, and she just came back today, which was perfect timing because our cook and our bar girl went on leave today for four or five days to Saigon, so she immediately stepped in and took over the cooking. Now we've got so many girls we don't know what to do with them all. We've got five girls. We definitely want to keep Minnie Mouse because she's a cute little thing and she speaks very little English but she understands a lot of it, and she's a good cook, also. So we think we'll keep our present cook plus Minnie Mouse and either get rid of our bar girl, which we don't really need anyway, or either probably Co Ba. She's one of the girls that works in the, supposed to work, in the teamhouse, sweeping floors, making beds, polishing boots, washing clothes, that kind of stuff, although lately they've gotten real lax on us. You always got to keep after these stupid people. If you don't, you won't get your proper clothes back, you won't get your boots shined, they never change sheets unless you tell them.

Like this mat on my floor here. They won't even sweep that. They'll sweep around it, unless I tell them to pick the mat up or sweep over the mat, either one of the two.

If they see things laying around that they like, like a can of fly spray or an extra light bulb, or anything like that, they'll just pick it up and walk off with it. You never see them. You just cannot catch these people stealing. They're so doggone sneaky, you just can't catch them thieving, but you know they do it. There's no way you can prove it. Very, very occasionally you can catch one stealing, but there's not really anything you can do to them. You can't hit them. You can't threaten them with anything, except, well in the case of our mama-sans here we could say, okay, if you're caught stealing we're going to fire you. You know, but shoot, you never can catch them. Things just disappear. I caught her giving butter away one time and I fined her 1000p, which is about 1/5th of what she gets paid. Boy, she's still mad at me for that. Heck, it's her own doggone fault. So, that's the way things are.

Things have been pretty quiet, fighting wise. Not too much going on around camp here. A lot of bomb strikes and stuff going in all around us but as far as right in our particular area of responsibility, there's not too much. So, we're all just making all the improvements we can before we get another mortar attack. We're getting a lot of cement put around the teamhouse on the walls, covering the sandbags up on the roof to waterproof it. The interpreters are building a big bunker right next to the teamhouse, attached to it. In fact it's attached to my, the long axis wall of my room here so that gives it triple duple super duper protection on this side. This wall must be eight or nine feet thick here. It really deadens all the sound. There's not a bit of sound that comes through the walls. The only sound that comes in my room is through the door. My door happens to be fairly close to the front, the main door into the place. I still get quite a bit of noise coming in there occasionally from the mortars shooting or the 105s going off. But otherwise it's a real snug quiet room. In fact it's like walking into a sound proof room except for the doorway. Of course with the little bit of the ventilation it gets kind of warm and muggy and a little bit stale. I have my fan going 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; in fact the poor old thing never gets a rest. But heck, you need it. That's the way life is over here right now.

8 July 1969

Tuesday

Hi hi hi. It is the 8th, Tuesday, 20 minutes to 5 in the afternoon. I've got 20 minutes before chow time so I thought I'd start this tape to you anyway. Thank you for the dates for the R&R. I shall request R&R in October on the 15th through the 21st. I'll put that paperwork in in a few days. Tomorrow morning I'm leaving on an operation. It's tentatively scheduled to go for five days and four nights, which is a long time. So if I am out that long, there won't be any mail

going out on Friday or on Sunday. So that will be quite a dry spell for you unless you start getting more gifts in the mail.

By now I'm sure you have that straw hat I sent you and also I should think your watch because I believe I sent that air parcel post. In fact in the mail that'll come in tomorrow, you'll probably say "thanks for the beautiful watch." However I won't be here to read my mail. I've got to wait all the way, let's see, from tomorrow which is Wednesday until late Sunday. That's a long stretch without mail and I've already waited two days, Monday and Tuesday. But those are the breaks of the game.

Boy the past four days, well, up until last night, three full days we've been completely out of water. Not a drop. We didn't have any to drink, to wash with, to wash in, shave with, wash dishes with, cook our food with. Boy, it's kind of hard to get by without water. We've been trying to take water from some of these wells dug around camp here, but most of them are in bad shape because the water table is so low because of lack of rain, lack of abundant rain that is. We still get rain. We were taking water out of the well directly behind the teamhouse across the fence. It's about 22 feet deep, but the water level is only 4 inches deep in the bottom and it's very, very silty, a lot of silt suspended in the water. It's so fine that you can't separate the silt from the water without letting it sit for a number of hours and as soon as you pick up the container to pour off the clear water the silt just mixes right up again.

After the first day, well yeah, at the end of the first day we all went out and got as much water out of there as we could and took baths in silty water. The following morning we went out to try to get some water to sterilize to drink and we found a rat swimming around in the bottom of the well so we forgot about it. We've been drinking Cokes and stuff in the meantime, which at least have been cold. The problem was our 220 volt generator went on the blink and it happened to be the only 220 volt generator in camp and that is the only thing that ran our electric water pump. We had two 5KW generators which are the kind needed for the water pump, but we backloaded one about six weeks ago to have it fixed.

We backloaded it to the B-Team and (interrupted by someone). I was busy talking about the water problem. I think where I left off was the fact that we sent in a 5KW generator about six weeks ago. We turned it into the B-Team. They were supposed to forward it to the A-Team, or the A-Company, to the C-Team to be fixed. He hadn't done it. All this time we've been waiting for our 5KW generator, our new one, because we have to get rid of the old one. We knew it was going to break down sooner or later. So, I didn't keep pestering the S-4 officer because I have better things to do. He's supposed to be able to do his job. Well he didn't.

After the first full day of being without water we called the B-Team and told them our problem. We told them to start, do something, or call A-Company and find out where our 5KW

generator is. We found out from other sources that the 5KW generator hadn't even been backloaded to A-Company. So, we called the colonel and said, "Look sir, your S-4 officer screwed up. He's got our 5KW generator down there. He's had it for six weeks and hasn't done a thing with it. Now when it comes time where we need one badly, he hasn't got one for us." So needless to say the colonel jumped all over that First Lieutenant. Calvert's his name. He used to be the XO up here before I came. So he got right on the phone and said, "Yeah, okay, I just shipped it out, da da da. It'll take two weeks." So I said, "Okay. In the meantime you get us another 5KW generator up here just as fast as you can because we are out of water." He said, "Okay. I'll see what I can do." He hung up.

So all the following, all the second day, we tried to get our pooped out generator going with no luck. We tried hooking up a gasoline engine driven seven horse power water pump with no luck. The pump is just shot, the gasoline engine pump, that is. Around came the third day. I, myself, worked on the water situation three full days from morning until night, from first light until it was too dark to see anything. Even then sometimes we worked with flashlights. Let's see, Sergeant Moss, Team Sergeant, myself, Sergeant Lambert, and a couple guys from artillery plus our mechanics all were working on the water problem with no luck.

Finally, about 4:30 in the afternoon of the third day I was working on the generator by myself. I got it started. It was just a temporary affair and I knew it. See, the distributor on the old one was completely shot so we requested a new part. They didn't have any of the kind we needed but they sent another one up and said, "Well, this, you might be able to get this one to fit." So I wired the piece on and held it down with a couple of oversized washers on adjoining nuts and bolts, got the distributor on and, it's a real crazy set up. I won't go into details because you wouldn't understand it, but we couldn't adjust the points to set the timing, so the only thing I could do was rotate the distributor itself, which I did. I could only rotate it within a certain number of degrees, which happened to be about 160 degrees or so. Okay, I pushed it over as far as it would go to one side, took a hammer and knocked it, bent a few pieces and knocked it a little bit farther, and it fired. It ran, but it was firing early and as a result, I knew before hand, that the thing was going to heat up eventually and probably quit.

Well, while it was running we got our electric water pump going and we got about, maybe 2 or 3 hundred gallons at most in our water tank. It's a 1500 gallon water tank. So we had just enough for everybody on the team to take one shower and everybody filled up canteens and buckets and pots and pans and bowls and everything we could find with what water we had left. We no sooner did that when the generator heated up. It's got an automatic shut-off, when it loses oil pressure there's a little gadget on there that automatically shuts the thing off. It shut off. So we let it cool for about three hours. We tried to start it again but it just wouldn't start. There's no possible way it could start.

So at the end of the third day we called down to B-Team again and told them we got a few gallons but we are completely out. Now, we can't get our generator to run, where is our new generator? Again I was talking to the S-4 officer. He said, "Well. I'm still working on it." And I said, "O.K., you keep working on it." Then he left. Right after he left, I said, "Okay, operator, you get a hold of the colonel down there and let me talk to him." So the colonel got on the radio and I said, "Look, Sir, I don't think your S-4 is putting out. I told him the day before yesterday we needed a new 5KW water generator to run our water pump." The colonel said, "Okay. You just hold tight. We'll have you one ASAP tomorrow morning," which is today.

Sure enough, first thing tomorrow morning the S-4 officer called up. He said, "Yeah, I've got your 5KW. You're going to have to backload your old one." I said, "Fine. You get it up here as fast as you can. We'll have the old one ready to go." He managed to get an extra chopper someplace and put that 5KW generator in there. That stands for 5000 watts, or 5 Kilowatts. So anyway, he got our 5KW generator up to us this morning about 9:30 or so. We backloaded the old one. So now we are back with water again. It sure is a nice feeling after being without it for three and a half days.

However, this morning the electricity to the kitchen conked out on us. It wasn't because the generator was bad, it was because, well, first let me clarify things. When I talk about electricity I'm talking about a separate generator, a 10KW generator. After the electricity pooped out in the mess hall this morning, we checked the generator. It was running fine because the teamhouse and everybody else still had electricity. The mess hall runs off of a separate line. We went to the control board and checked our switches and everything. That was fine. Then we went to the junction box in the kitchen, crossed a couple wires and didn't get anything so we knew it was the wire between the generator shed and the kitchen. All that wire is buried. So we started digging wire up all day today.

Finally we found it, where the LLDB built a sidewalk across our electrical lines and hammered in 105 canisters, which are the empty shells that 105 rounds come in. They use those to line their sidewalks on both sides. It gives it a kind of a pretty effect. I think maybe in some of my pictures you might have seen it. Anyway, they hammered those things in too deep and it sliced into one of our electrical wires. It was fine until rain water started piling up on the ground and soaking down in. We were digging up the cable and everything trying to figure out where the break could be and all of a sudden everybody started to get this tingling sensation around the damp ground around the, near the break, so we figured we were getting close. Sure enough, we dug it up right where the cable went underneath the sidewalk and there's where the break was. Somebody hammered a 105 cylinder in too deep and it sliced the wire open. It didn't cut it, it just sliced it open. Water got in there and shorted the thing out. So right now everything's back to normal.

We've got electricity in the mess hall and everything's fine in the teamhouse. We've got our water and as a result our ice machine is working again so we can have cold drinks. We have three refrigerators right now being fixed. We have two small ones and one large three door refrigerator, the same kind that you have a picture of full of holes. They sent us a new one. It ran for about two hours and then quit. We sent for a tech rep, which is a technical representative, some Filipino guy to come up and look at it and see if he could fix it. He couldn't. So we said, "Okay. We'll just send it back," which we did. We sent it back to A-Company and told them to either give us a new one or hurry up and fix it and send it back, which they're doing I guess. So we're getting things squared away slowly but surely. As you can see it's a constant hassle to keep things working around here.

Oh, the universal joint went out on the truck today, the only truck that runs. We have one three quarter that runs. The new one doesn't run right now, I told you that already, because of all the various things that pooped out on that. Our deuce and a half doesn't run because that needs a new clutch. So it's a constant hassle to keep things working around here. I sure have learned a lot while I've been here. If you don't know about something, you just take OJT (On Job Training) on the spot and teach yourself as you go along.

Other than that, things are pretty calm and quiet. I don't know what you've heard on the news lately about this pull out, this troop pull out. I heard on the news last night when I watched TV that if President Nixon had not decided to take 25,000 infantry troops, or 25,000 troops out of Vietnam when he did, Special Forces, the entire group, would have left Vietnam this month. Shock. Yes, but since Nixon decided to pull out 25,000 troops, the news man said, "It looks like Special Forces will be here to stay until the very end of the war." He also made a comment that we were the very first to come, we'll probably be the very last to leave. Can you imagine if they would have taken the entire 5th Special Forces Group out of Vietnam in July, this month? We would have probably gone to Okinawa. But heck, even in Okinawa you could have come to live, and spent the last six months together anyway. But, those are the breaks of the game.

You know, today I sat down and figured up how much money I've spent, how much money we have spent on all the camera equipment we own except for your Instamatic, my Yashica and odds and ends like slide trays, film, 400 foot movie projector rolls, you know spools, except for small odds and ends like that, I figured up that we have spent six hundred and, what was it? Six hundred and something. Six hundred and fifty eight dollars I believe, was about as close as I could come. For all the camera equipment that we own, you know, movie cameras, my Asahi Pentax and the lenses I ordered for that and the other gadgets I ordered for that, our movie projector, our slide projector. It doesn't include our splicing gadget either. Then I went through, I've got a book here. It's called the 1969 Photographic Buyers Guide or something. It's got all the regular retail prices of all the camera stuff we own. I totaled that up.

It comes to an unbelievable...