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Dave Fetters' Audio Transcription - 1969 - Tape 08

David Fetters

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Dave Fetters' Audio Letters - 1969

Tape #8

13 June 1969 Continued

Friday

So anyway, it was pitch black out. We could hear them shooting in the woodline, you know, little cracks, cracks, of course it goes –drrrrrr-, like that. You see all these green tracers flying over our heads. Of course I make it sound like it's nothing in particular, or nothing to be really shocked at or afraid of or dive for cover from but that's hardly the truth. I may make it sound like it's interesting, well, it is interesting. It's exciting but it's also scary. Don't ever think that I take chances or anything running out there when people are shooting at me. See, we can stand right in our front door to the teamhouse and be very well protected, but still be able to glance around a little bit. So when something starts happening, we have to determine what's happening, where it's coming from, who's doing it, what we're doing in return, all that kind of garbage so that we can send a spot report in to the B-Team and also, of course, return effective fire on the enemy. It's yours truly's job to determine that kind of information, especially in the absence of the captain.

So I was outside looking around. We saw the green tracers flying over the camp. They were a good hundred feet up in the air so there's nothing really to worry about. That's why there's a thing called the berm. Because in order for anything to hit me inside the berm, it has to be an indirect fire weapon. In other words, it has to be shot up in the air and come down in the camp. If it's a direct fire weapon like a rifle bullet or a flat trajectory weapon, then it has to glance off something or be shot from an awful long distance in order to fall into the inner berm. Either that or I have to be standing straight up on top of the teamhouse, which I don't do, especially when people are shooting at me.

So anyway, I was down on the ground looking at the tracers coming in, heard a couple of explosions from their B-40 rockets, which is actually a small rocket propelled grenade. Their RPG-2 and their B-40 rocket are one and the same. Their RPG-7 and their B-41 rocket are one and the same. The RPG has a booster on the tail of it whereas the B-40 series only has the rocket itself. They're both about the same. I hear the US Army is developing a weapon of their own similar to the RPG that the Chinese Communists use because it is such an effective weapon. It's too bad. That's a nasty weapon too. Anyway, so much for that.

Oh, when we were riding in the chopper we were also flying through clouds and just above clouds. We were flying about 3000 feet at the time. Some of the clouds are down around 2000. Man, it's kind of neat, little wispy clouds and stuff. You seem so low to the ground and

yet you're up in the clouds. Clouds are a funny thing around here. Like this evening I went up on the roof to tape this tape to you and also to the one to my folks. I could see a storm front moving in and not two minutes later it was overhead, great big thick line of clouds. Do you remember that one dark night we were up on top of that hill at the end of Maksaba Trail sitting in the car watching the storm come in? Well you know how dark, and thick, and black those clouds, or that cloud front looked as it moved in? Well that's the way the clouds are over here, only they're only anywhere from 500 to 1000 feet high. They're very, very low to the ground. It's just like a big heavy gray blanket being pulled over your head, and the wind really whipped up tonight. It was blowing pieces of tin and cardboard and crap off the roofs of some of these bunkers that the CIDG built. Sent them flying all over camp. Of course dust and grit and everything. I thought about taking a movie picture but it was about 7 o'clock at night and it was getting dark and I thought it'd be a little bit too dark so I didn't. In fact, (hic-coughed) excuse me, I haven't taken any movies yet. I think maybe tomorrow if I have time I'll go over to artillery and take a movie of their little monkey and maybe they'll be shooting something. I'll take a picture of them shooting. Just general shots of the camp. There's a lot to take movies of, I just have to get started, that's all.

I got a Banner, the first one. The guy that was sorting the mail glanced at it and thought it was a magazine to be put in the club. He didn't really look to see who it was addressed to. So I corrected that mistake in a hurry.

Cameras, yeah, yeah, cameras. Here's what I'm thinking. You take the movie camera with you. Take plenty of film, as much as they'll allow you to take. I imagine you can buy more over here. In fact I'm sure you can. Anyway, take a lot and I would say you can take your Instamatic if you want to. I don't know if there's a limit to the number of cameras you can carry or not, but you might get sick of carrying around three cameras. But here's what I was thinking. If you carry your movie camera, I will bring my Asahi Pentax with me to Hong Kong. We'll use it there, I'll teach you how to use it, and you can use it from there all the way home. That way, carry it home with you, also be able to have a 35 millimeter camera while you're travelling around the world to take pictures. Also, the camera will be home from then on. Then, by that time the Yashica ought to be fixed. From the time you leave there to Hong Kong, if you have to take any pictures you can use the Yashica. When we meet in Hong Kong I'll give you my Asahi Pentax, you give me the Yashica, and I'll go back with my Yashica and you go back with my Asahi Pentax. That's the way it will work. But, it's really not difficult at all to take pictures with it unless you're trying something real fancy like taking pictures in pitch black or in cloudy, windy weather, you know, or inside a church or something. Even then, really, it's not difficult. It's almost a fool proof camera once you understand the different knobs and dials and stuff.

I see this tape is running out. I'm just going to talk until it runs out and start another tape

to you. Send them both to you tomorrow, because I've got more to say. So anyway, you probably won't be taking too many pictures from the time you leave Grand Rapids to the time you get to Hong Kong. Anyway, anyhow, so don't worry about not knowing how to shoot the Yashica. When we're in Hong Kong I'll show you how to use my Asahi Pentax.

Okay, here we go, tape number two. Like I said on the first tape, I was just going to talk until the tape ran out. So if you put this one on first by mistake, stop it right here, I'll give you a little time. Right now. Okay. I hope you stopped the tape and played the first one first, and the second one second. Let's see, where was I? Shoot, I can't even think of what I was talking about, doggone it. I have a short memory span. Oh, never mind. I'll go back to my list here.

You want to know what clothes to bring. I mentioned before I thought I had some shoes here but I guess I don't. I guess you were right, I did send them home. I'm too lazy to open up my foot locker and look down in because I use the top of my foot locker as a shelf. I keep my Dopp Kit up there, some Cashmere Bouquet talcum powder. That's the only kind they had. It's got too much of a feminine smell to suit me but anyway, that's what I got. I've got two pictures of you sitting up there, my watch, my flashlight, the Banner, my Hiatachi whatever it is radio. I don't think you got my tape in time saying that I needed batteries. So the next time you send a package to me, include some pen light batteries, maybe about eight of them. Maybe sixteen because the movie camera takes four and the radio takes four. Shoot, the radio doesn't really pick up that much. We only have two stations, really, that I can listen to, two American stations. One on the AM and one on FM. I can't get a thing on FM, of course inside this bunker it's kind of hard to get anything anyway. Maybe I'll run an aerial outside and run it in and see if it'll pick up anything then. The AM is affected by these fluorescent lights and it comes in kind of weak, even when I have fresh batteries and it's turned on full volume. Maybe I'll just have to rely on the music that you send me from home, which wouldn't be too much of a problem.

Oh, as I was saying, the clothes. I would like to have my new loafers, my new pair of pants with my new belt, and my new tie, my new sport coat, my new shirt, and new socks to go with that outfit. That would be my dress up outfit if we go out to eat or anything. You know, go out on the town in Hong Kong. So I would like all those things. Besides that, I know I have a set of stay-pressed slacks here and a short sleeved sport shirt here. So I'll bring those myself. Also I'll need about two sets of white underwear, because all I think I've got is green. Well maybe, no, I do think I have one set of white. You can go ahead and bring or send, whatever you're going to do, two sets of white underwear for me and I'll bring one set from here. That sport shirt that I've got over here is the one that I got from your folks for Christmas. Do not send the overcoat or bring the overcoat, because that's just too much to fool around with. It's too big and unwieldy and besides I'm quite sure I won't even need it. Usually if it rains, it's just a shower and then it clears up. So we can duck from building to building and awning to awning if we have to. Don't

worry about that. So what if we get a little damp. Yeah, I already mentioned the socks to match the new outfit. I think that's about all. Oh, get any tie bar that matches. It doesn't make that much difference. I don't know, do you plan to send the clothes to me or bring them with you or what? If you send them to me, make sure you send them well enough ahead of time so they get here on time.

As far as the dates, I've already requested, I think I told you this, I requested dates from the 20th through the 27th, let's see wait a minute. From the 20th, through the 26th, which is seven days. I believe there is a way I can get standby orders so I can get on a standby R&R flight going in both directions. I heard some guys talking that if you happen to miss your flight or if it's full or something on the way back, shoot, about the only thing you can do is just stay there an extra day and wait until there is room on a flight. So we'll see. We'll see what happens. I'm going to look into this further next time I get down to the B-Team and get a chance to talk to the personnel officer, find out what's up. I'll let you know what I find out.

I'm quite sure we won't know anything about when I get my leave dates, or when they're confirmed or get my orders for leave or anything like that probably until about the middle of July, because they don't let you know usually one month ahead of time, which is number ten. I wish they'd give us more warning, then we could make better plans and things like that.

You keep carrying on about reservations and hotels and everything like that. I haven't gotten my butt in gear over here and I haven't written any R&R centers, or offices, or hotels, or anything like that. Heck, when you're doing it, why should I do it? Hee,hee. Anyway, I think you said you were going to try to write to the Hong Kong Hilton and find out exactly what their prices are, you know, for us, and whether or not we can make reservations and things like that. I think I would enjoy staying in a hotel with a pool more than I would one without a pool. Although, if it doesn't have a pool, excuse me (cleared throat), it won't be that big of a loss. Don't forget to bring my bathing suit and the other apparatus I need.

As far as I can tell, the Hong Kong Hilton's about the only good all-around hotel that includes a pool, but like you say, it's not located near all the main interest spots. Right on Hong Kong Island there is the China Fleet Club, and there is that tramway to the top of the mountain I guess. I think that's where it is. I imagine there is, I think the Garden of the Nine Dragons or something, I think that's over there. Kowloon, no, that means Nine Dragons, I don't know, some fancy garden. I think that's on the Hong Kong side but I'm not sure. Shoot, I don't know. I think I would rather stay on the Kowloon side because that's where all the little shops and stuff are. But then I keep thinking well shoot, we're going to do most of our buying from the China Fleet Club anyway, if we do buy stuff. Then I think again what you say about the flight back. You know, if I have to take a 6 am flight or something and can't get a ferry. So shoot, I don't know. I hate to switch hotels on the last night because once you get settled in a place it's kind of nice to

stay there. So I think, the thing we better do is see if we can't make a reservation on the Kowloon side. I think that'd be the best thing to do. Just take a ferry across to the Hong Kong side to see the sights over there, go to the China Fleet Club, go to the Tramway. I'd like to go up there in the late afternoon while it's still bright enough to take a lot of shots and stay up there until it's pitch black when all the lights come on and then take a couple of night shots because it would really turn out beautiful. Especially on color slide film with my camera.

So if you can, I think it would be wise to make reservations at The Park, or whatever hotel is nearest all the activity on the Kowloon side, that way we don't have to take taxis all over the place and buses and rickshaws. The fewer people that we come in contact with that could cheat us the better, because I hate to spend all my time checking to make sure we haven't been cheated or given wrong directions or wrong change. Shoot that takes a lot of fun out of enjoyment of the place. I put up with that everyday over here and I'm not about to do that over in Hong Kong. So let's try to get away from that kind of stuff. I can't emphasize enough for you to be careful with your money and your purse and your valuables. We just cannot leave anything unattended for one second or it will be gone. If you've got a camera and it's exposed, make sure you wear it on a strap around your neck or over your shoulder on one side of your head and then the camera on the other side of your body, but just some way where somebody just passing through can't pick it up and walk off with it.

Because boy, the minute your back is turned, it's gone. I know that by experience over here. In fact, just this week, we got in five rolls of wire, that half inch square screen you use for rabbit cages and stuff, and at the time I thought, well, I think they'll be safe enough if I set them right next to the teamhouse door. And I mean, right next to it. So I stacked up all five rolls and they weren't there more than half a day and bam, a roll was missing. Boy, that made me so mad, that I just dropped what I was doing, hopped in the truck with an interpreter and I scoured the camp until I found it. That stupid Vietnamese Company had it; they swiped a roll. I don't know how they did it because there were interpreters around the teamhouse, and of course people coming and going all the time. There are civilians out there working, mixing cement and all that junk, but they must wait around right outside the gate until nobody's around. They quickly zip in, grab the roll, and zip out before anybody will see them.

Shoot, there's these stupid CIDG standing around all day every day and you can't just stand around and watch them to make sure they don't steal stuff from you. They look so innocent just standing around because those dumb people, they go out in the middle of the inner berm here and stoop over and sit on their haunches for an hour at a time and do nothing except watch ants or something. I don't know what they do, but those crazy people can just sit on their haunches and do nothing for hours at a time. And we got a mortar pit run by a Vietnamese sitting right outside our little screened in, fenced in area. It's nothing to see three or four of those Vietnamese

sitting up on his little wall around his mortar, sitting on their haunches, chewing the rag, smoking cigarettes and just kind of watching what's going on. Of course you don't pay any attention to them because you see them sitting there every day all day doing nothing anyway. So, I don't know, you just can't watch them all. So I learned the hard way. Now if there is anything at all that I feel is even semi-valuable, I either bring it into my room if I can or take it over and lock it up in the supply room. It's really a pain to unlock it, take the chain off the door, throw the stuff in, chain the door back up, and lock it back up. It takes time, especially right when you're in the middle of doing stuff.

I found out today that I've been committing one grave error. And that is, daily, I have to issue rice and every third day I have to issue combat rations to the Vietnamese. Every day or every other day there are either people going on leave or people coming back from leave and I have to take their weapons or give them their weapons or sign their leave papers or something. Up until now, whenever anybody bothered me for that kind of stuff, I'd calmly stop what I was doing, go fill their requisition and get back to my job. But I would waste so much time because these stupid idiots would come over and ask for rice. I'd say, "Okay, let's go get rice." I'd go over and open up the rice shed and stand there and have to wait ten minutes while they scrounge up enough people to carry the 100 pound bags of rice out of the rice shack, out the front door. Of course, any CIDG with any rank has got three or four stooges working for him who do all the work. Of course the LLDB have higher ranking CIDG for their stooges, and their stooges have stooges and of course, cripes, you get a whole pack train of people coming over just to pick up a bag of rice. I'd have to stand around and waste time waiting for them to get over here and get people to get the rice.

So I thought, screw them. If they want rice, they'll wait around until I'm good and ready to give it to them. I tried it out this afternoon. I was busy doing something and this crony walks up and wants his rice. I just looked at him, kept right on what I was doing. He kind of stood around waiting, you know. The reason why I didn't give him rice right then was because I looked around and there weren't anybody else around waiting to get rice. If a guy comes up and wants his rice and he's got five or six people standing there to get the daily ration, then I know they're ready to get their rice. I can walk right over, they can walk right in, get their rice, walk right out and I can shut the door and leave. But when just one guy comes over with none of his stooges to carry the rice, then I know I've got to wait around while he scrounges up some people.

So today, this guy comes walking over to get the daily ration of rice and I noticed he didn't have any of his cronies with him. So I just continued what I was doing, made him wait. Pretty soon about ten minutes later he comes up and tells me he wants rice again. I said, "Yeah, I know you want rice, but I'm busy. Can't you see I'm busy?" He shakes his head and walks over and sits in the shade for a little while. Pretty soon he comes up a third time. This time he's got

about ten people with him. So then I know he's ready to get rice. Sure enough, it works. I'm going to start doing this from now on, because it cuts the amount of time that I spend with them in half, and it gives me more time to get my work done.

The tape is just about ready to run out it looks like. Hey, we got a new three-quarter ton truck today. It's got, I don't know, 12,000 miles on it. But it's new to us. It's been repainted, rebuilt, new seats, the whole schmeer. It looks almost like a brand new truck. Of course, it had windshields on it and seats in the bed of the truck and tailgate and doors and all that junk, so we quickly stripped all that stuff on it. Now it's just a good bare functional truck. We can hop in and out of it, no doors. Because shoot, if you've got doors on the dumb thing, it's kind of hard to get in and out of the truck in a hurry if there are incoming rounds or something. Now we can just dive out and let the truck roll to a stop by itself. Okay. We were real happy to see that truck come in. And of course we got the new truck, and I was in the old truck. We had to see how good it was, so we took it out on the runway and had a flat out race down to the end of the runway. Since it's been about a 2900 foot runway, so about half a mile, that's a pretty good stretch. So we got them going to about 45, 50 miles an hour down the runway, just to see how good the new truck was. It's pretty good; it kept up with our old one. Our old one is about the best running three quarter truck that I've ever seen. With the pounding that that thing takes, boy, you wonder how a truck could hold up. I think the three-quarter is by far the best truck the Army ever made, even better than the cotton pickin' jeep because that three quarter is really tough. It's got a real heavy duty six cylinder flat head engine, of course four wheel drive, and it's got high ground clearance. It really takes a lot of battering. I'll take some movies sometime of the stuff that we do in the truck. Woo-wee. You wouldn't believe what that poor thing has to put up with daily.

Well anyway, now that we've got this brand new truck, we've converted it, of course stripped it down like I told you. Mounted a radio in the glove compartment with a speaker and a handset. It's all set to go. That new truck we're going to keep strictly for Americans. I don't ever want to see a stupid Vietnamese driving it, Cambodian, LLDB, anybody. Strictly for Americans, because whenever a plane comes in we've got to have a truck with a radio to go out and meet the plane. With only one three quarter up until today, half the planes coming in wouldn't have anybody out there to meet them because the stupid CIDG would steal our truck and go running off playing tag with the kids and hauling dirt and stealing our drums of diesel fuel from us.

Man, I tried to initiate a program of keeping the truck locked up, with three of us having keys and the chain around the steering wheel bolted to the truck. But all it takes is one person to leave the truck unguarded and unlocked. A CIDG will grab it, take it out and throw the chain away, take the lock off of it and throw that away and then when he's finished, he'll bring the truck back. We haven't got enough locks to keep putting new locks on the dumb thing. Of course the

three of us with keys know enough to lock it when we're finished, but if we lend the truck to an interpreter, which we have to do occasionally, or the mechanic needs it to go out and pick up diesel fuel for the generators, he'll come back and turn his back on it just one second and boom, the truck will be gone, and there goes the lock and chain. Oh, you just can't imagine the doggone problems with these stupid, idiotic, dumb, crazy people that I have to work with. Stupid blockheads. They're so thick it's pathetic. Phooey with them.

Change to a new subject. The girl I told you about that took us around Tay Ninh is the cousin of the woman that is our cook. Our cook's name is Co La, this girl that showed us around used to work at Trang Sup which is another A-Camp. She quit there because she didn't like it. Her name is Co Soung so we call her Soung, or Sue. She came up here today on the work chopper, so we're going to give her a job as, I don't know, just a house girl, or bar girl. Mostly to keep the bar stocked with cold pop and booze, make sure there's ice in the bar and you know, keep the club straightened up and everything. We'll pay her about 6,000p a month which is, oh let's see, that's about \$55 or so.

She's quite nice looking. Quite well hung for a Vietnamese woman, girl. She's only, shoot, 19, 20, something like that. It's nice to have a fairly good looking girl to look at around here anyway. The other guys are of course walking around with their tongues hanging out after her already. We've laid down rules that if people start giving her a hard time and playing around with her and trying to take her to bed, then phooey, we'll fire her. Forget it. But then again, the team kind of chuckled and says, well, if she makes friends with the team well enough that she wants to, oh, how should I say it, share the bed with her, then nobody's going to complain too much. I imagine she's the type that would do something like that once she got around to knowing people. There are definitely people on this team who'd take her to bed if they had the chance, married or not, divorced, separated, who cares, kids. They don't care. It's a pretty young thing and they haven't had sex for a long time and they feel they are getting the rotten end of the shaft being stuck out here on A-Team so they feel they have to make the most of it. I'm not one to raise a big stink about it. I'm not going to join them, but I'm not going to step in and say, "No, you definitely will not do this and do that." If they can get along with her, and her with everybody on the team, and everybody gets along fine, they don't start fighting over her, she doesn't start getting into trouble with other women, and other men, and stuff. As long as things run smoothly, then okay. No big deal.

Now, to a different subject. You keep spelling beach, as in a sandy beach. That was Wes. He said the LLDB are having some kind of stupid party and they want me to come over. It looks bad if I don't go over because I'm the team chief right now while the captain's gone. You know how these stupid people are. You always got to have a representative from the team, you know, an officer come over and drink the stupid booze with them and chew the rag and laugh at

their corny jokes. Of course all the time you're working through an interpreter. It's all a big put on and I'm just not the type that'll go over there and do it.

Our Top, Sergeant Moss, he gets along pretty good with the CIDG. He likes to drink beer. He goes all the time and he keeps telling me, "Doggone it, Trung-uy, you should go to these parties. We lose face every time you don't show up" and that kind of stuff. Doggone it, those things are such a worthless waste of time and effort. They know I don't like beer, so what's the sense of me going over there and sitting down with a beer in my hand and trying to force it down and make like I'm having a grand old time when actually I can't stand the sight of them, well, I won't go that far, but I can't stand their stupid parties. It makes me sick to my stomach going to them. Maybe I'm just not cut out to be an A-Team XO. I ought to get a desk job someplace and hibernate.

Anyway, you keep spelling "beach" as "beech," Bravo-Echo-Echo-Charley-Hotel, instead of beach: Bravo-Echo-Alpha-Charley-Hotel. Honey, you ought to know better than that. Beach is b-e-a-c-h.

Oh yes, you said that we've had our dog for a year, but it doesn't seem like it. I can remember when we went out dog hunting and saw that little mutt in that cage off the ground. I thought, "Gee, what a friendly pooch." It came running right up to me and licked my hand, yapping at us. I thought it was kind of a cute little thing with a black face, jumping around in her cage. Had yellow teeth at that time. It comes back so clearly that it just seems hard to imagine that it was over a year ago. But it was.

Let's see, June, April May June. This time last year I was still in the, what is it, Special Forces Officer's Course, SFOC course. I think about this time I was getting ready to go out in the field for that two-week problem, ten-day problem, whatever it was. So it all comes back clearly. Shoot, as I think back on all the stuff that we've done it seems to have gone by quite rapidly, but when I come to think about from now until the time I can come home it still seems like quite a long time, which it is. But I just don't carry on about that stuff too much. You weren't carrying on, I know you weren't.

I was thinking to myself while I was listening to the music that you sent, how fantastic our music is going to sound on our new system. There's an officer at the B-Team that's got a Teac tape deck just like ours. He's got a Sansui 2000 instead of a 5000 and he's got the AR4X speakers which are the kind we're going to get, and he's got a Garrard turntable just like mine. He put some music on and man, it was simply outstanding. I put those stereo headphones on, gee whiz you just can't imagine what those things sound like. It's like, it's like music you've never heard; it's so clear and precise. The stereo effect is so fantastic, and the base, and the treble, and all the sounds are so crystal clear and sharp. It's really beautiful. Boy, just wait until you hear

our system once it's set up. It'll really be fantastic.

Did I tell you that the DD 214 form is my discharge? So there's no possible way I can include that with my application to Michigan State. So what I did, as you probably know by now, I retyped that letter that you got to send in with my application for readmission. I had to reword it a little bit and this time I wasn't quite as accurate when I was typing. I left out a word, believe it or not. Otherwise my typing was very accurate again, if I do say so. So, include the new letter with the application for readmission and put it in an envelope and send it to Michigan State, Director of Admissions, all that stuff, ASAP, and get that out of our hair.

I was kind of happy to hear you left or were fired from Point West. Like you said, it was really cheap of them to call you on the phone and say don't bother to come back rather than telling it to your face. Boy, they must have some scroungy outfit there. It's hard to believe all that crap goes on behind everybody's back, but I imagine there's a lot more of that that goes on all over the place that we don't know about than just the little bit that you came in contact with. As we know, the Army is full of that kind of stuff, a lot of back-blowing and all that kind of junk. Anyway, so much for that. At least you're having a good time going to the beach and relaxing and have a lot of free time. Shoot, between now and the time you leave for your trip around the world you can't really line up a job. I would say, what the heck. Just go ahead and loaf. I'm earning all the bread anyway, and I'm sending home a pretty good-sized check every month. So I wouldn't worry about it too much. If you spend enough time out in the sun you might even be able to catch up with my tan. I know your legs will be tanner than mine. Mine are almost lily white, but from my waist up, front and back, I'm real nice and brown, nice and tan. So see if you can catch up. In fact, just see how dark you can get before you meet me in Hong Kong.

That last Green Beret (magazine) I sent you with Ed Scully's picture in it, it also had Skip George's picture in it. [Both were fellow officers at Fort Bragg.] I didn't notice until I was reading the magazine more thoroughly later that his name and picture was in it. It's not a very good picture. It's mostly from the back of his head but his name is mentioned a couple times. That reminds me, I've got to send a note to him to thank him for that crossbow he sent.

Gee, the last couple tapes have been a little bit fuzzy and there have been hums and clicks and the volume, I don't know. I've got mine cranked all the way up to nine or so, even ten sometimes and yours doesn't come in too clearly. I think it possibly is some of the tapes that you're using, that we're using. Maybe they aren't quite as good quality-wise as some of the others we have. Anyway, just see what you can do. Maybe that little felt pad that pushes the tape against the recording head isn't doing its job like it should be. You know, like when we first got it we had a little trouble recording with it because that little felt pad wouldn't push in on the tape.

Chuck's sticker did make it okay on his letter, I think I told you that. Don't have him send a Narvel game because I wouldn't have any time to play Narvels out here. It'd be fun to play but I don't think I could find anybody as enthusiastic about it as Chuck is. That would take half the fun out of it if I didn't have anybody to enjoy the game to play it with me. Besides, all these guys around here do is drink and listen to music on their tape recorders, so phooey. There's just nobody around here with interests the same as mine.

I was reconsidering, I think you might as well go ahead and forget about the bank account. I did manage to get the money orders that I needed. It just takes a little longer to get them, that's all. But shoot, no big deal. That's what I've got lots of over here, is time. I mean lots of time left here in country so if I don't get it one month I can easily wait until next month. I think I told you already I have to hand carry those crossbows back to the United States.

The letter I got from Larry, he didn't have too much to say. He's up near Hue, fairly close to the Special Forces Camp, so he said if I ever got up there close to give him a call and he'd come over and see me. He's going to try to go to Australia for his seven days leave sometime around the end of July. He wants to know where I'm located so he can come up to see me, but nobody comes up to an A-Camp just to visit. Especially not where we're sitting, so close to the border. So I probably won't see him at all while he's over here. I owe him a letter.

The tape is about ready to run out too, so hon, thanks for the nice pictures of you in your bikini.

17 June 1969

Tuesday

It's about that time to whip another tape on you. Tonight is Tuesday night, the 17th, 6:30 in the evening. I just finished taking my shower after doing some paperwork, after eating, after working hard all day. I'm going to relax this evening, make a tape to you, watch Star Trek at nine o'clock, go to bed at ten, and start another day tomorrow. The tape that you repaired, the one with a little broken with plastic centerpiece right at the hub of the spool, well it's broken again. You used the wrong kind of glue, needless to say. I think you said you used Elmer's Glue-All? Well, that's the wrong kind of glue, obviously. Try to get some plastic glue and fix it up this time.

Things have been pretty quiet, pretty smooth around here. We've been just doing a lot of household chores like working on the teamhouse. We're putting a slight peak on the club so that the water will drain off instead of down through. Captain just stopped in. He said to say hello. He said he knows exactly how you feel, because his wife told him when he was on R&R exactly what it was like being home alone, not having a hubby around. So in two months you can tell me

all about it.

Between the new bar girl we have and the new cook, the morale of the team has picked up considerably. It's kind of funny, we know about this bar girl's reputation. She's got some friends at the B-Team who filled in some of the guys off the team when they were in last, how she was a good lay, if you will. So far up here she hasn't advertised herself at all. I just get a kick out of watching everybody. They can't keep their eyes off of her, they stare at her up and down, up and down. You just watch their little eyeballs move. I think everybody is waiting for some guy to make the first move and see if he can invite her into his room some night. Once the ice is broken, everybody will take a crack at her. So far no one's made a move and I think everybody's waiting for the other guy to make a move. I just sit back and watch everybody else go through these shenanigans and get a little kick out of it.

I've taken two rolls of movies already. The first one is scenes of the camp. We went out to meet a TONG aircraft which is a Caribou, C-7A. I took a picture of him circling, landing, unloading his cargo, taking off, and some pictures of the runway and the road driving into camp through the front gate, a right turn around the inner road of the camp, then a left turn across the bridge, and right up to the gate of the teamhouse. I took a picture from the top of the teamhouse at some of the bunkers just to finish up the roll. The second roll, let's see. There was a 123 that landed, took a picture of that. Took a picture of it taking off and about half the roll is the new truck that we got in. We got a new three-quarter ton truck. Had a windshield, doors, tailgate, and racks, and all that kind of junk on it. So we stripped all that off and mounted a radio in it.

Then to break it in, last Sunday we took it out and ran it through the mud puddles like I told you about before. I got some real dandy movies of Wes Holck tearing around through some small puddles with it and then he took some pictures of me plowing into the deep puddles. They were about maybe a foot and a half, two feet deep at the deepest point. Of course you get up plenty of speed when you hit the first puddle, but by the time you wade out the back end of the second puddle you're going pretty slow. Still, you're throwing up quite a spray. So we got some real dandy pictures of each other going through the mud puddles. It's real muddy water but we had our old clothes on and it was a real nice hot day. We wanted to cool off after working around the turn around point. So we took turns tearing through the puddles. Boy, it throws up a tremendous spray. I think even the pictures on the movie will not do it justice. Although, I don't know, movies are pretty accurate. It seems that sometime, at least when you're driving the truck, you hit that water so hard that there's nothing except water all the way around you, just a solid sheet of water. But it sure is a lot of fun.

Let me shut this off to make sure it's recording okay. Okay, I'm back again. I had to change the six batteries in the recorder because when I played it back I noticed that my voice is real high and squeaky and fast, meaning that the batteries were low on record, but on play back

they were still okay. I don't know why.

I played that hour long tape of music about a dozen times since I've gotten it and I've only had it since, let's see, last Friday? Yes, last Friday, so that's Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, five days. I know I've played it at least a dozen times over and over and over again. I keep hitting the automatic reverse button when it gets to the end, it just plays back and then hit the play button again. It just keeps going on and on while I'm sitting here in my room. I play it while I type and while I do my paperwork, requisitions and all that garbage. At night, like this evening if I hadn't been making a tape to you I would have the music on while I clean up my room, change my clothes, kill the flies in my room before I go to sleep.

Boy these flies around here, they sure get all over the place. They're bothersome. Like when you're outside working, a fly will land on your nose and you swat it away and it will come right back and land in your eye or in your ear, or on your eyebrow or on your cheek or your chin. They just keep coming right back, and keep coming back, keep coming back. Of course they're so fast you can't hit them. Boy they get aggravating. Man! Bug spray doesn't do any good because you sweat that off in a matter of two minutes. So the only thing to do is just keep working hard, try to forget about them.

A couple guys on the team this past week had amoebic dysentery. I think the reason why is because of the fly problem. Mainly it's in the mess hall. We're just now getting around to putting up new screen around the mess hall because we didn't have any to replace the screens that were perforated by all the shrapnel when our mess hall was hit. The flies in that place were terrific. They would land on everything. That's why I always had to hold one hand over my drinking cup to keep the flies off of it. Between mouthfuls I had to wave the flies off my food or away from my food. Now we finally got the screen wire. When I was in Tay Ninh I had to barter for it, scrounge for it. I was out scrounging for food and I saw an engineer lieutenant standing in front of the PX, so just on a spur of the moment chance I stopped the jeep and got out and walked over said, "Hi, I'm from an A-Camp and we're hurting for screen wire." I asked him if he could give me about five rolls or if he wanted to trade for five rolls. He said, "Well, he'll have to check." So we went over and checked and yeah, he had five rolls. He asked me what I had to trade and I said, "Well, I've got some tiger fatigues, "grease gun", I rattled off a bunch of other crap, ammunition." He said, "Well, I could use some tiger fatigues." I thought great, I can get all the tiger fatigues I need. All the CIDG wear tiger fatigues out on operations and we've got a supply room full of those things. He said, "Well, you got any VC souvenirs?" Our mama-san here, quite awhile back made a couple of VC flags so that we'd have for just cases like that day when I want to barter for something. We had one left. I said, "Well yeah, we have a VC flag." He said, "great!", and he started jumping up and down. I thought boy, did I get a sucker. I got my five rolls of wire and I ended up giving him that homemade VC flag and two sets of tiger

fatigues, which is more than worth it for us. So now that we've got the screen we've got the carpenters busy putting that stuff up. Got to have it finished by tomorrow.

I've got a can of insecticide in my room here that I use to spray, usually in the evening after I take my shower. (hic-cough) Excuse me. I come in and change my clothes and spray the room real good in front of the fan and then grab a cigar and walk out and spend some time in the club or some other place. Give that spray enough time to kill all the flies and then by the time it's bedtime I can come back in, knock the dead flies off my bed and the smell will be gone by that time too. Then I can sleep comfortably.

Last night I took a shower and went to bed at 8 o'clock because I had watch from 12 to 2 and I wanted to get a little sleep before I went on watch. But when 12 o'clock came around nobody woke me up and I didn't know about it until I woke up at 4 am. So I thought I'd check, you know, to see, because every now and then this happens and somebody will complain and say, "Well, shoot, I came in and woke you up but you didn't get up," when actually the guy who just came in and said, "Sir, you're on radio watch," turned around and walked back out. Well, there was somebody on radio watch, so I asked him "Who was on before you?" He told me and it was the guy who was supposed to be on. So apparently, some of the team members, well, for sure because I found out today, some of the team members stayed up until 2 am last night. They were playing poker or something so instead of waking me up they just listened for the radio while they were playing poker and just let me sleep. That was real thoughtful of them. Boy, I had a good night's sleep from 8 o'clock right to 7 am the following morning. That's the first time in ages, as far as I can remember back that I've ever slept so solidly for eleven straight hours. Usually when I get around eight, nine, or ten hours I wake up every ten or fifteen minutes and I get restless. I've had enough sleep so I just want to quit. In fact, you know that. A lot of times you can stay in bed and sleep a lot longer than I can. Last night I sure slept all eleven hours. It was solid sleep too. I didn't even dream. So you know it was good, solid sleep.

So today I got up early, ate an early breakfast, shaved in a hurry. In fact I got up at 7 and I shaved and dressed and ate all before 7:30 and started working hard and put in a real good day's work, 7:30 up until 5:30. It felt good and I got a lot of the other team members inspired. By the fact that I was working so hard, they all pitched in and we got a lot done today. So it was quite a nice accomplishment for a change to see everybody else out working.

That ahh, let's see, what's the name of that, Building Guide magazine that you sent. You shouldn't have bent it all up when you stuck it in the box because the thing's all wrinkled, cracked, and broken and everything but it's still real good enjoyable reading. In fact I think I've been reading that more than I have my new Dune Buggy, Car and Driver, or Cycle World magazine. Some of those homes in there are really beautiful; especially that H-shaped Spanish type job with the pool on one side and the little garden patio on the other, and the crossbar of the

H was a big living room. Boy, the thing had six bedrooms; two of them were guest bedrooms, master bedroom, and three other bedrooms. Boy, that's some house. It didn't have a basement though. I think I could get by on a house without a basement if it were set up like that house where we had all those extra rooms. Besides having the six bedrooms, it had a couple of studies or a study and a library. I think in our house we ought to have a family room and also I would really like to have a room like a study or a library, or a combination of both.

I had to shut it off there because the captain came in and told me I was invited to a short get together party over at the LLDB Club. I said no, he said yes, so I've got to go over for ten or fifteen minutes anyway. I'll see if I can drink pop instead of beer. I can't stomach that beer, especially when it's warm. Anyway, as I was saying, I was sure pouring through that book carefully looking at all the different things. The things that you marked nice, and so-so, and no, seemed to agree with me almost 100 percent perfectly. One point where I don't agree with you, but it's your domain so I really don't have much say about it, and that's in the kitchen. You don't like any of those island things in the middle. I think they're kind of neat and I thought they'd be kind of practical too, but apparently you don't think so. Since you're the kitchen honcho you ought to know better than me whether or not something like that would be nice to have or not. So, if you don't want one, fine. We won't put one in. But I do like the idea of those counters. Can't think of anybody's house off hand who's got one, but a little counter sticking off the kitchen where you can slide a quick meal across it or something, a couple of stools on the other side, maybe put it in combination with the stove or something. Or a counter with a stove on it with a little heat collector above it. If we ever have a house built, it's definitely got to have one or two nice big fireplaces and our own bathroom off the master bedroom so we don't have to fight kids and stuff in the morning getting ready for school and work and all that junk. If I can, I want a nice big basement with, of course, a workroom and a playroom, maybe a washroom. Most of those houses have washroom facilities on the first floor so that if you want to take your wash outside you don't have to be humping them up and downstairs, which I think is a pretty good idea.

Most of them have two car garages which is a must. If we get enough land, I think what I'd do is build a separate shed and put our two family cars in the two car garage but have a separate shed for anything like motorcycles, motorbikes, go carts, snowmobiles, Model A Fords, and any type of big workroom equipment like if I have a wood lathe or a big table saw or drill press or something like that. Put that in that separate shed along with the garden tools and our swimming pool tools, dressing room, that kind of stuff. Man, to do all that we've got to have money. To have money, I've got to have a degree. To get a degree I've got to go back to school. To go back to school I've got to have an early out. So one thing leads to another, but I will definitely work hard at getting that early out.

I'm going to stop the tape again and play it back once to see if it's recording okay. Yes, it's recording fine. In fact I'm just talking at a not even a normal tone into the microphone. I'm talking almost softly. When I played it back I turned the volume down to one on this machine and still it was a little louder than comfortably loud. So when you play it on your machine you shouldn't have any trouble at all hearing me. Those new batteries really make a difference.

Let's see. I keep thinking about the stuff that I've ordered for you and for us and wondering when it's going to start arriving. Of course the stuff that I just sent for last Sunday, it'll take a couple weeks before you get it. One big thing that I ordered out of the PACEX catalog for you will take probably 30 to 60 days. I'm really tempted to tell you what it is because it's so neat, but I don't think I will. I'll just surprise you. I've got a big sturdy cardboard box here that I'm going wrap up your dainty little item that I bought. The one that's got to be wrapped carefully and sent carefully so it isn't broken on the way. So I'll get that wrapped and fixed up, ready to go by the end of the month so when I go in I can take it and send it. I may try sending this indigenous poncho liner. Maybe a poncho, I don't know. I hate to get caught. Those rolls of movie film that I've taken so far are prepaid, so when I send them in, in the prepaid envelope, instead of putting my return address I put your address on it. So you should get those in, well, let's see, it takes about a week to get to where it's going which in this case is Hawaii. Well, it won't take a week, it'll take about four days, three days. It'll probably take them a week to get it developed and sent out again, so probably figure two weeks from, let's see, when did I mail them? Oh, they're still in the mailbag; they'll go out this Wednesday. So two weeks from tomorrow you'll probably get them. Probably a week from whenever you get this tape. You'll probably get this tape on Tuesday or so. It goes out here tomorrow which is Wednesday June 18 and you'll probably get it the following Tuesday. No use complaining to each other that our tapes and letters and stuff come in big globs and clumps and sometimes they don't come and sometimes you get a big pile of them. Every time the mail goes out here I usually have at least one tape, sometimes two, sometimes two tapes and a letter, sometimes two tapes, a letter, package or something. Every time the mail does go out, there is something in it and I'm sure it's in between here and there that it gets combined with another day's mail or it sits out a day or two and that's probably why you don't get evenly spaced letters from me.

Oh boy, I don't know what to tell you about. I haven't really done a whole lot around here to tell you anything different. Oh yes, on the tail end of that tape where we were tearing around in the truck through the mud puddles and stuff, later on that afternoon, after I had gotten cleaned up, washed that muddy water and stuff off of me, changed clothes, I went back outside to work. This was about 4 o'clock on Sunday afternoon. I was doing some more work, I was helping one of the carpenters cover up his fresh cement on the walls of our teamhouse with plastic because it was going to rain. While we were doing that it started raining. I got soaking wet. On impulse I

came in and got my movie camera and had Wes Holck shoot a little bit of me. I think that was on a new reel though. Yeah, I'm quite sure it's at the beginning of a new reel, probably the reel that's still in the movie camera now. He only shot five feet. I was doing a lot of dancing around, you know, corny standing around doing nothing type stuff in front of the camera but apparently he didn't have the trigger pulled the whole time. Artillery's got a little monkey so I think I'll go over and shoot some movies of the monkey. I'll take a picture of our cook and our bar girl so you can see what they look like, and of course mama-san.

That crazy mama-san, we have a lot of fun with her, or I do. I don't know how it got started, but every time we see each other during the day, if she sees me first she'll pick up a little clump of dirt and throw it at me. Of course, as soon as they start landing around me I start picking up dirt and throwing it back at her. Any time of the day if I'm anywhere around the teamhouse, I've got to be careful because she'd be lurking around the corner just waiting for me to come walking within range and let fly with a couple of dirt clods and then run for it. We had a good battle this afternoon. I was up on top of the teamhouse doing some work. She was poking her head out the back door of the mess hall. Every time I looked down to get back to work she'd throw a couple of dirt clods at me, jump back in the mess hall. So I had a whole pile of them sitting there and one time she jumped out and pelted her good. I caught her once right in the head. A little dirt ball bounced off her head. We have a lot of fun though.

I've been getting a lot of fruit lately. I told you we got two cases of oranges and two cases of apples. Or maybe I didn't tell you. I don't know, did I tell you about the food we scrounged? I think I meant to but forgot. I was in a jeep with Holck and Sergeant Lambert and Lambert's a big guy. He's about 260. Holck probably weighs about 170 or so. I was driving. We started scrounging food. Well, first we started at the PX. He bought ten boxes of things like pretzels, potato chips, corn chips, curly cues, deviled ham and all that junk. They come in boxes, all different sizes and shapes, but usually with about 24 or 36 cans per box, and we had ten boxes in the jeep. It started to get a little bit full in there. We were on our way back and we drove by the food distribution point at Tay Ninh West. I said, "Hey, we might as well stop here to see if we can get some chow." So I pulled in and just right then they happened to be unloading a truck of potatoes, so we got two crates of fresh potatoes. I think I did tell you all this. Anyway, after that we kept on begging. We got two cases of oranges, two cases of apples besides the two crates of potatoes.

Boy, we were having a hard time finding room in just a plain little old jeep for all that food. Then we got two boxes of those little tiny ketchup things that you see in restaurants. We've got about a dozen loaves of bread in two great big wax bags. We got a case of lettuce, case of eggs. I don't know if we got any more that time or not, but boy, that poor jeep. It was so crowded, all three of us were sitting up front along with a case of eggs and a case of lettuce. That

was all in the front seat. Everything else was in the back seat. It was chocked full too. We sure were a sight for sore eyes when we pulled into the B-Team. Everybody had to stop and look, we had such a jeep load of chow.

On the following day, it was Friday, I came back here to Tay Ninh, or Thien Ngon and Holck stayed there at the B-Team. He went out again Friday and Saturday. He got a whole bunch more stuff. He got a case of bacon, a case of some kind of ham loaf or something, another case of eggs, four cases of milk, a case of paper napkins. When I speak of cases, these are boxes maybe two feet, well, not two feet, maybe a foot and a half square, cubed, rather. A foot and a half on the side. Pretty good sized boxes. Let's see, he got some more hot dogs. He got a case of steaks. That was a smaller box, about thirty steaks in it. Tough old meat but the cook did a pretty good job. She made Swiss steak out of it, tenderized it real good. Pretty tasty.

He got some cases of apple juice and grapefruit juice. Boy, that apple juice is good. I drink that three meals a day. Sure is some good stuff. I drink the milk too. For a usual meal I drink maybe six or eight cups of liquid, half milk, half apple juice or half milk, half Kool-Aid, sometimes cold tea, or just plain water. Boy that stuff sure is good. I'm thirsty constantly from the time I get up to the time I go to bed. I'm always drinking something. We keep a great big ice chest in the club and after they fill it up in the morning, you wait about an hour or so and it starts collecting some cold water at the bottom where the little spigot is. We have paper cups in there. You just go in and get a couple paper cups full of that freezing cold water. It sure tastes good, really good.

I took my .45 out to the north end of the runway today and started shooting cans and puddles and stuff just to keep in practice. I don't hold it in one hand and shoot it, I hold it in both hands. I hold it right out in front of me and pull the trigger. It's pretty accurate that way. If you hold it in one hand you have a real hard time steadying the stupid thing.

I was informed today that there is another heliborne coming up and that I will be in charge of this one. I'll be going out with four Americans, two or three LLDB, and probably close to 200 CIDG. I'm not sure where we're going yet, but helibornes are nasty affairs. The last one we had, we had three or four people killed, half a dozen wounded. Sergeant Brown got three small pieces of shrapnel in his back. He'll get a purple heart for that. But they are some nasty operations, you're almost positively sure of running into some VC along the way, or being ambushed, or shot at, or something. So I'm not really looking forward to that.

Today's the 17th, so let's see. About ten more days it will be pay day again, already. Time seems to be clipping right along. That's pretty good though. I've got a Julian date calendar which numbers the day from January 1st through December 31st from one through three hundred and sixty-five. Right now, let's see, the 17th of June is day number 168. If I can get out of here on

the 20th of December, that is day number 354. So you take the difference between 168 and 354 and that's how many days I have left. I've got days 232 through 238 marked out. That's August 20 through 26, which is R&R. And then if we meet again at the end of October sometime, which will be about two months. Then two months from that I'll be coming home, I hope. I think the way we have it now with leaves scheduled from August 20 through 26 and R&R I'll take some time in October, the end of October, I think we'll just leave it just like that and leave things as they are planned with you continuing on around the world in August. Then in October just flying over to Hawaii. I know it will be expensive but shoot, I wouldn't miss the chance of seeing you again for anything in the world. That's of primary importance and if it takes a little bit of money to do it, then we'll just spend a little money to do it, that's all there is to it. Otherwise, what else do we do with our money? Spend it on school and stuff like that, yeah. We've got to put aside some money for school too.

Let's see, we'll be getting probably \$130 or \$140 a month for school but figure rent alone will probably cost us that, well, maybe not that much, but pretty close to that much I imagine, especially down around Lansing area someplace. So everything else like food and tuition and books, and gas, insurance, payments, and all that junk, that will have to come out of what you make while I'm going to school and what I make with part time work while I'm going to school if I have time, if I can. So you figure when we, when I get out of the Army and we get back down to Lansing and I start going to school, we're not going to have a lot of money to do some nice things like we have been doing while we're in the army here. About the only thing we'll be able to do for entertainment is to go sight seeing and camp out, because that's inexpensive and a lot of fun. We're not going to have a lot of money to spend on a lot of movie film and going to see movies and spending nights in motels in far away cities and stuff like that, going to parties. We're just not going to have all the money for that high society type living. We'll just have to live like a couple of paupers while I'm going to school. So what, it will be fun. I'll enjoy it anyway, anyhow.

There's not a whole lot of tape left but I think I'll shut it off anyway and think of some more stuff to say later. I've got to go spend a few minutes over at the LLDB club saying hi to them you know, and chewing the rag with them. We do it all day everyday anyway so. I don't know. I guess they're trying. I guess it's an honest effort on their part to be friendly with us you know, and show us that they are our friends and that we're trying to work together and all that kind of good stuff. The least we can do is put out a little effort on our part and go to their stupid parties and drink some of their warm beer and crap. I'll shut it off and let you know how it goes later. I'll see you.

Ooh-wee. It's quarter to nine and I just got back from their stupid party. Would you believe they serve fried blood? Just big, pure, chunks of blood. I guess it's fried. It's either fried

or coagulated, one of the two. They put that in with all their chicken scraps and bones and gizzards and flies and bugs and everything else and we're supposed to eat that crap. They gave me one can of beer. I drank about a quarter of it. Everybody was kidding me and chiding me that I didn't drink beer, but so what, I just don't go for that crap. I just can't stomach beer. I don't know why. I'm not ashamed of it. I'll tell them, I just don't like beer and I won't drink it. They all laugh at me and point at me and everything like that, but that's okay. It doesn't bug me. Slowly they're beginning to realize that all their stupid parties they have, if they don't have soda there for me to drink, I just don't drink anything, that's all. I had a big cigar, so that kept my hands busy. It gave me something to do for the hour that I was over there, hour and a half, whatever it was. Shoot, almost two hours.

Anyway, I'm going to shut it off again and go watch Star Trek, take a couple of Excedrin because I've got an Excedrin headache, and I think I'll munch on some mints and some candy and have a Coke to wash the taste out of my mouth. I'll probably finish this up tomorrow.

So, goodnight.

18 June 1969

Wednesday

Good morning, it's 20 after 8, Wednesday morning. I have to finish this up before the work chopper shows up. It's going to be another one of those days, I can see it. I got up about 7:30 this morning. On my way to the mess hall there were about 4 or 5 CIDG standing out there waiting to pounce on me to sign passes, turn in weapons, issue rice, issue cement, want to borrow the truck. They all hit me for it because I'm the only one who cares around here, who does what, who gets what. The other team members were more than happy to give me their control over anything that the team has that the CIDG wants. They were glad to push off all the responsibility on somebody else. But I don't mind. I know that when I do it, it will be done right. However, when other people do it, I always have to go around and check up on them to make sure it's done correctly.

You know that stupid drinking party last night, these Vietnamese cannot just get together with the Americans and drink just for the fun of it. They always have to try to outdo us, not in the amount being consumed, but the way it's consumed. They always have to have a race to see who can drink a can of beer the fastest. Every single party I've been to, that's their favorite pastime. They try to get the Americans drunk by making them drink three cans to every one can that the Vietnamese drink before they start doing it. Every single time anybody on the team who drinks can beat their Vietnamese counterpart drinking a can of beer and of course that upsets them and makes them lose face and all that. I guess that's why they keep on trying and trying and

trying.

Anyhoo, no sweat. Time to wrap it up, so I'll see you.

Thursday, 19 June 1969

Yeah, I'm being invaded by bugs tonight. Sergeant Ingram, the commo man, took the air conditioner out of the hole in this commo room and left a fluorescent light bulb burning. As a result we've got a million, jillion bugs in the teamhouse tonight. Naturally they congregate around all the lights. I left the light on in my room while they were showing the movie and a lot of them ended up in here. So, I'm swatting bugs while I'm recording this tape to you.

What I was going to do this week is build myself a frog cage out of that half inch screen wire that we have and put a half a dozen frogs in it and leave it here in my room. That way, it will help cut down on the fly and bug problem in my room here, I think. I'm brushing off my bed again. I was kind of hoping that those frogs would do a job on the bugs and the flies and everything that congregate in my room during the daytime, but as yet I haven't had time to build myself a cage. So the screen-wire's still sitting here and a couple of boards are still sitting here. I just haven't gotten around to nailing them all together and building a little cage and putting a pool in it for the frogs. There are all kinds of frogs in here. They live in the mud puddles, in the roads, on the runway, and the turn around point. Every time we drive through a mud puddle you see all kinds of frogs taking off.

We saw some pretty good movies recently. We saw "Sand Pebbles," about last week or this week Monday or so. It was six reels long. It took us about four hours to show it. We started about four in the afternoon, took a break around 5:30, 6 o'clock for the meal. Everybody took showers after they ate and then we showed the rest of it from about 8 to 10 that night. That was pretty good, again, second time. I don't know if you've ever heard of the movie, "Far From the Maddening Crowd." It's supposed to be a real red hot movie, you know. Critics gave it all kinds of ravings and everything, but as far as I was concerned it didn't turn me on. It had a plot something like "Gone With the Wind." I think I told you about that in a letter that I wrote you last night, or this morning. Yeah, probably did.

I was on radio watch this morning from 4 am to 7 am. Tonight I found out I'm on again only this time from 2 am to 4 am. It's not too often that you get it two nights in a row unless we have two people out in the field and two or three members on R&R, and two or three guys in Tay Ninh or Bien Hoa, and you're stuck with maybe four or five guys on the team. But shoot, we have seven guys present right now, so there's one guy out of the, well it takes four men per night for radio watch so on the second night, one man has to have it twice. And since I was at the top of the list, I got it twice, even though the radio man's my friend and I'm an officer, it still doesn't

rate. He just starts from the top and works down. So next time, like tomorrow night, it'll be the guy below me who has it twice, and then the night after that it'll be a guy below him. That's just the way it works.

So I'll get up at 2 o'clock this morning. I don't know what I'll do. I'm usually pretty groggy about that time in the morning. Maybe I'll see if I can get a letter off to Chuck or read, if I can stay awake. Trouble is when I start reading I can't keep my mind on what I'm reading. I don't remember what I've read so when I continue the book in the morning I have to go back and reread everything that I read the night before. What I think I'll do is look at one of my magazines or write a letter to somebody. I'll probably write a letter. I get engrossed in what I'm writing and I can stay awake and time goes rather quickly or maybe I'll try to catch mice running through the teamhouse, I mean rats, not mice.

Those slides that you sent are really nice, especially that one taken in my yard. I don't know who took the picture, I mean my family's yard. I don't know who took the picture, but it's the dog laying in the grass and you sitting on your feet behind the dog with one arm around her neck or sitting on her stomach. That's a real sharp picture. When I send the slides back home to you I'd like to have you blow that up to a 5 x 7 and send it back to me. I think that's a real sharp picture. The one of you in your new blue dress. You look kind of funny in that picture, as if you had been crying or something or you're upset. I don't know, maybe it's just the way the light bounces off your face or the shadows or something, I don't know. But otherwise the pictures are real good, real sharp. Were they taken with your Instamatic? They must have been. I didn't count them, I think there were twenty pictures, something like that. The pictures of our chair look real nice, it looks kind of big, nice and roomy.

Oops, I just flipped on the monitor switch here. It acts as kind of a PA system. I've got the microphone too close to the speaker so I was getting feedback. Besides, I've got the volume turned up to 8 again. Let me check it now and make sure it's running okay. Yeah, it's running real fine in fact, real loud.

I don't know when I'll send the slides back home to you. I have to look through them a couple more times and send you the other two sets that you sent me plus the set that I have here with the first roll taken from my camera that I'll send home to you. I got some real beautiful aerial shots of the camp and a few shots of the teamhouse, or I mean the mess hall, after it was blown up and one shot of "my spot". You can still see the tail of the 82mm mortar sticking out of the cement. If you look in the lower left hand corner of the slide you can just barely see the writing, "my spot, Lieutenant Dave Fetters, 18 April '69" or whatever the date was. The way I did the lettering, I used a nail point and made it all with dots in wet cement. Most of it's blown away but you can, if you look at it closely enough, you can see where it was written. It's not too hard to see.

Let's see. I wrote you a letter last night, I mean this morning, and I mentioned more things than I wanted to. I was stealing some subjects from my list here to tell you on the tape to fill up the letter. I'll repeat some of them anyway.

We got a new Playboy. I was going to read you the jokes but I don't know where it is right now. Okay. Here they are. These aren't the greatest but I'll read them anyway.

First joke. "I always worry when you leave on a business trip,' sobbed the salesman's lovely young wife. 'Don't worry about me, honey,' he answered soothingly. 'I'll be back before you know it.' 'I know', she said. 'That's what worries me.'"

"During her annual check up, the well-constructed miss was asked to disrobe and climb on to the examination table. 'Doctor,' she replied shyly, 'I just can't undress right in front of you.' 'Alright,' said the physician, 'I'll flick off the lights. You undress and tell me when you're through.' In a few moments her voice rang out in the darkness. 'Doctor, I've undressed. What should I do with my clothes?' 'Your clothes?' answered the doctor, 'put them over here on top of mine.'"

"Our unabashed dictionary defines 'sex survey' as a public opinion poll."

"Then there was the neophyte nudist, who despite his efforts to appear inconspicuous, stuck out like a sore thumb."

Let's see. Oh, this one's kind of a long one. It's not the greatest, but I'll go ahead and read it anyway. "A precocious teenager returned late from school one afternoon and confessed to his mother that he made love to his girlfriend on the way home. 'I'm disappointed in you,' his mother scolded, 'but for telling the truth you may go to the corner for a milkshake.' The next day the boy came home late again and this time he confessed to making love to one of the neighbor's wives. 'Well at least you're still honest,' he was told, and again he was awarded with a milkshake. On the third day, the boy strode into the house and proudly announced to both of his parents that he had stayed after school to make love to his teacher and his mother began to scold him. The father picked up the frying pan. 'Don't hit him,' she pleaded. 'At least he told the truth.' 'Hit him? Hell,' his father exclaimed, 'I'm going to cook him a steak. How long do you expect him to keep this up on those lousy milkshakes.'"

"Twas the night before the nuptials and the bride-to-be's father was unmercifully teasing his future son in law. 'Are you going to be a man and do it tonight? Or are you going to be a mouse and wait until tomorrow night?' he smirked. Before he could stop himself, the nervous young man blurted out, 'I guess I'm a rat, sir. I did it last night.'"

"Young lady,' the football coach asked, 'What are you doing with that varsity letter on your sweater? Don't you know that it's against campus rules to wear a letter unless you've made

the team?' 'Yes sir,' she said."

"Our unabashed dictionary defines 'orgasm' as the gland finale."

"A fat man was seated on his front steps drinking a can of beer when a busy body spinster from down the street began to berate him for his appearance. 'What a disgusting sight,' she said. 'If that belly was on a woman, I'd swear she was pregnant.' To which the man simply smiled and replied, 'Ma'am, it was and she is.'"

This one I think I told you a long time ago. "'Grrr,' said the wolf leaping at Little Red Riding Hood, 'I'm going to eat you.' 'For God's sake,' Red replied, 'Doesn't anybody screw anymore?'"

"The draftboard examiners eyed the swishy young man with suspicion. They had orders to watch out for potential draft evaders feigning homosexuality. After subjecting the chap to an extensive physical and psychological examination, one of the board members declared, 'Well fella, it looks to me like you're going to make a good little soldier.' 'Fabulous,' replied the young man. 'When can I meet him?'"

And so end the jokes from the June issue of Playboy.

I went into a little gospel on your cholera shot. As you said on your tape, I'd probably try to talk you into it. Well, I think you should get it. I'm not going to say any more than that other than the fact that I got one just last Sunday and I got a typhoid shot on top of it. I got them both at once. I got them about noon Sunday and by 2 o'clock my arm started aching and by Sunday night it was quite sore and tender. Obviously I couldn't sleep on that side but it wasn't so sore that it bothered me all day unless I decided to wiggle my arm, you know, stick it way up above my head or anything like that. It wasn't a real sharp pain or anything. It was more of a dull ache, but it was kind of bothersome. It wasn't that bad, I didn't think. Let's see, that makes the one, two, three, four, fifth one I've had since I've been in the service. You get one every six months in the service.

I think I told you this already but I'll tell you again. Forget the checking account because I'm going to be getting some kind of a little charge plate with my name and rank and service number and what unit I belong to and all that garbage, so it makes it real easy for getting money orders now.

You can tell Chuck that just this evening I scarfed up a brand new pair of size 10 jungle boots for him. However, I don't know how I'm going to get them home to him. If I wrap them up and send them home in a package I'm sure they'll x-ray the package and the steel plates in the soles will show through more than likely, and they'll confiscate it. I hate to carry around an extra pair of boots from now until December. I'm not sure what I'm allowed to bring home with me.

You're supposed to turn in some of your jungle fatigues and all that junk when you leave Vietnam, I think three sets. So I don't know. Just before I come home I'll send you a set or two of my jungle fatigues, the ones that are in the best shape with all of the patches and everything sewn on, so that we can just hang them up in a closet and keep them for posterity. These boots, I don't know. I don't know whether to just wrap them up and try to send them and get them through or what. If I could be sure that all they would do is just confiscate the boots and leave it at that, I'd go ahead and do it, because there's always a good chance they'll slip through but you know, they might send a letter of reprimand down or something like that. I wouldn't want to be chewed out by my CO at the B-Team for trying to send Government Issue stuff home through the mail. So I'll think it over and ask around, see what can happen.

Those camouflaged fatigues, I can send home a set for Chuck that's that cheaper stuff, the dark green and black kind. I think you already got a set of those. Same thing as that hat, you know my "go to hell" hat. I can send home a set of jungle fatigues of the same type material if Chuck wants some of those. They're real easy to get. I got them right over in the supply room in fact. The better kind are the flower power type fatigues with the light and dark shades of green and the light and dark shades of brown made out of a thicker material, American made type stuff. They last a lot longer and are more comfortable to wear. I hear they make field jackets with the same stuff on them so maybe I'll get a field jacket too if I can find somebody who's got some and is willing to trade something for them because I can always get something to trade. So you might just mention that I have the boots here and I'm still working on jungle fatigues, so tell him not to sweat it.

As far as those sapphires go, being stationed where I am it's a little bit difficult to come across some stapphires. Did I say stapphires? I meant to say sapphires, star sapphires. So I don't know what I'm going to do about those either. I haven't got \$200 ready cash just to spend on sapphires.