

1969

Dave Fetters' Audio Transcription - 1969 - Tape 09

David Fetters

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Dave Fetters' Audio Letters - 1969

Tape #9

I was talking about those sapphires. Besides, if I did get \$200 worth of sapphires I don't know how I would send them home. You're allowed to send jewelry and stuff like that through the mail and if it's a value of \$50 or less you can get it into the country duty free. To get a sapphire like that guy wants, or like Chuck says that guy wants, would probably run about \$75 dollars for a pretty good-sized perfect star sapphire. So we'd have to pay duty on that stuff, but I'm still checking around.

I don't want people to send me great big gobs of money over here either because I still haven't done anything with that \$30 that your folks sent me. I took them with me down to Tay Ninh but I'll be darned if I didn't forget to cash them and nobody's got any Seiko watches right around Tay Ninh. If I go to A-Company I can probably get some. I think the thing I'll do is just hang on to that \$30 until I go to Hong Kong. Shoot, I'm sure there we can find millions of Seiko watches, so we can buy as many as people want and send them home. If, say, your Dad wants a couple and Chuck wants a couple and my Dad wants a couple, and you know Bert wants one or anybody like that. Collect all the money from them and put that toward your traveler's checks that you bring over so we don't have to spend all our money on things that other people want so they can pay us back when you get home. That's no good. So collect their money first and then we'll buy what we can with their money and maybe make a buck or two on the way. Being stationed where I am it's a little bit difficult to get to the PX anytime I want to and check for watches and stuff like that. So, that's the way it goes.

Now to talk about some things back home. Do you still have a sticker on the car or something that can get you into Mac without any kind of a check or restrictions on parking or anything like that? I'm kind of surprised they just let you drive in and park where you want, although maybe you don't. Maybe you park by Jesiek's [Boat Yard]. I don't know. You never did say. If they're starting to build all those stupid condominiums or whatever those things are called, near the parking lot up there in the dunes, I'm sure that they'll block off a lot of that parking lot. Boy, that's a rotten deal. They sure are going to ruin some nice sand dunes. I'd hate to own a cottage along the channel there, right behind where all those stupid things are going up, unless they're going to tear all those down. I don't know. But, shoot, those dunes are going to look so cluttered with all those big buildings and everything on them. That's really ridiculous. Let's see, I forget how many units, a few hundred units, let me see. I don't have that article handy right now. I don't know what I did with it, but with that many more people moving in, just think how crowded that whole area from Jesiek's on is going to be with all those additional boats and

cars and all the parking lots and people on the beaches, running out to the end and everything, the break water where we like to go. That's just going to ruin everything. So as soon as we get some time, let's take a trip up north, northern stretch of the western coast of Michigan and look over some of the other nice little ponds along the way, see if we can't find a nice spot.

What was the name of that town where we stopped and had lunch, I believe? We saw the *Matina* [sail boat] from Holland docked at one of their docks. It was a real nice, placid, quiet little inland lake type deal with a channel running out to Lake Michigan. It was a real quaint little town. I forget the name of it. Let's see, I don't believe it was Manistee. It might have been. I think Manistee is where "Glen of Michigan" is, isn't it? I don't know, I get all of those little towns fudged up. That's why I want you to send me a map of Michigan so I can get my bearings straight again.

That crazy little car of Fitch's still runs, huh? I'm surprised. Usually those little penny poop jobs don't hold out. Of course, he only got it last January. It's only been through a half a winter. Wait until this coming winter. I bet he has all kinds of problems with it. Never did trust those stupid little things. Now a Volkswagen is something else. I'd buy one of those in a minute.

Let's see. Oh, we got hit today. We took about 15 rounds of mortar. None of them landed inside the camp. Most of them were just outside the outer berm. It was a funny time of day to be hit, too, about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I was sitting here in the room working on that package that I'm wrapping up to send to you. I heard this thump, thump, thump. At first I didn't pay any attention to it because I had my music tape on and I was engrossed in what I was doing. Everybody else was taking poc time. They were kind of dozing on their bunks and stuff. But as soon as old mama-san and Co Ba, and our cook came flying in from the mess hall and a couple civilian workers that were standing around outside, they all dive into the teamhouse here because it's the thickest and the best built bunker around. Then I knew something was going on so I grabbed my flack jacket and weaseled out the front hallway to the doorway there and listened and made a check to see what was going on. After about 12 rounds it quit. Artillery cranked up and fired about 30 or 40 rounds up to the north, all four of our mortars here in camp opened up, shot in a bunch of different directions where we think they're shooting from. That was the end of that. Other than that it was kind of a quiet day.

We've been dumping gasoline and diesel fuel mixture into the moat on top of the water to kill the mosquitoes, and the mosquito eggs that have been breeding there. It's kind of a green scum on top of the water. So we dumped all that junk in. It usually covers about a 100-foot stretch at a time. Then we throw a white phosphorous grenade or a smoke grenade into it, watch it explode into flame and then burn, a great big black cloud of smoke. If we do it tomorrow I'll take the movie camera out and take a picture of it. It's quite a sight to see. I didn't do it today because I was too busy helping out, too busy getting dirty and everything. My hands were all

mucky and grubby, so I didn't bother.

Today a Chinook helicopter flew a PX CONEX out here, mostly for artillery guys. They're the ones that requested it, but us Special Forces guys wandered over. They didn't really have anything. They had a couple of magazines, some shower shoes, a bunch of stuff like canned meats and candy, cigarettes, and that's about it. They didn't have anything worthwhile. No shaving cream, or blades, or combs, or brushes, or mirrors, or film. Nothing that does anybody any good. Just stupid cigarettes and some candy and that's it. I don't know why they even bothered to fly it out because it didn't have anything worthwhile in it. It was kind of a wasted trip. But they did.

After this operation that's out comes back in, let's see, they'll be in tomorrow I believe. There will be a day's break which will be, let's see, what's tomorrow? Is tomorrow Friday? Let's see. Yeah, I think tomorrow's Friday. They'll be in Friday, there'll be a day's break, Saturday, and then I'll go out Sunday evening for my operation and come back in Tuesday. So I'll get mail just before I go out and the morning after I come in, so that'll be nice. That's the best time to go out, Sunday afternoon and come back in Tuesday afternoon.

I fixed the string on the crossbow, the one that was coming apart and put it together. I've got it hanging up here in my room. I've got to put a couple more nails up for my M-16. I've got my rat rifle hanging up on top. That's the carbine with the flashlight, then I'll put the M-16 below that. Then the small crossbow below that. The other crossbow I just have sitting up on top of my dresser, just sitting there. I'm not going to put that together because the bow is drawn real taut when I put the string on it. With the crack in the bow it looks misshapen. I couldn't shoot it or anything anyway, so I why even put it together.

Ingram gave me a couple of tapes that he had sitting in his room for about 6 months that he didn't do anything with. I think he got them in those free packages from the USO organizations and church organizations and stuff. He never used them so he gave them to me. They don't have any type of boxes or anything so maybe I'll just use them to tape stuff like some Vietnamese music or some Vietnamese talk or maybe I'll hide the tape recorder on the bar some night when everybody's cranked up and talking about women and sex and things like that. Just get a half-hour's bullshit from the bar and send it home to you. I'll probably have to cut up a cardboard box or something to make a little container for it.

That thing that I've got wrapped up here this afternoon I had to cut down a extra heavy thick box and wrap it very carefully because it's quite fragile and I don't want it to break on the way home. I've got braces inside the box and it's real sturdy cardboard. What I'm going to have to do after I wrap it up is mark "top" for you. I think I put the label, the address and stamps and everything on top. So when I send you a letter of instructions telling you how to open it you'll

know which side to open. You'll have to open the top and cut all the paper off carefully first and then you'll see that the top is taped on and you'll have to cut the top off carefully. Then when you get the top off, you'll have to very carefully peel out all the shreds of paper that I put inside to see what it is. I think after you get the top completely cut off, you can turn the box upside down and the paper will fall out but not the item because it's got a brace over the top of it to keep it in. Then you can see immediately what it is.

It's kind of big. It's about a foot and a half square and about ten inches high. That's the size of the box. It's quite light but the cardboard box has got all the weight. The item itself is quite light and fragile but I'm sure you'll find it very interesting. You'll have a lot of fun with it. I've also included a set of just ordinary chopsticks. They aren't carved or painted or anything like that. They're just the usual everyday type chopsticks that people use. So you'll have to learn how to use them so when we eat in Hong Kong you can use chopsticks, (burped) pardon me, instead of knives, forks, and spoons. Right now I've got the box all put together. I had to cut it down and build special little inserts and make special cuts and reinforcements and things like that to keep it from moving around inside the box. You'll see it's quite well packed. What I have to do now is wrap it in brown paper and put that real sticky paper tape on it and put string on it and address it.

22 June 1969

Sunday

I've been tensed up the last two days because of this operation that's coming up. On the tape that you just received I told you that I was leaving Saturday. Well tonight is Sunday night and it's 6 pm. Saturday afternoon, about two hours before we were scheduled to go, the man I was scheduled to go with got sick. The only two people on the team who aren't sick at this time are the captain and myself. Everybody else has got upset stomachs and diarrhea. I don't know why I haven't got it. I guess it's because I try to take good care of myself. I take a lot more precautions than anybody else on this team does, including the bac-si. I try to wash my hands before every meal and after I go to the bathroom every time I wash my hands. Of course I take showers every night. When I eat my meals I always wipe off my mug and my silverware before I start eating with them. I keep the flies off my food. I try to get plenty of rest, or as much rest as I can under the circumstances, and try to eat a well rounded diet. When I see that I'm not getting certain kind of food, like maybe eggs, I'll go in and hard boil myself a couple of eggs for the next meal. I eat a lot of fruit whenever we get it in.

But anyway, getting back to these operations, the area we were scheduled to go in is to the northeast. It's almost due north of camp. The road runs about 350 degrees, not quite true

north. We will be going almost exactly true north. If you want to get the map out I'll show you. I'm pulling mine out right now. Okay, we are going up to the clearing at 08,84. Right there is where the last two operations into that area have been ambushed. From there we're going up to 075,855, check out that area because we have Intel reports that the VC put an ambush on the road right there every morning from 6 am to 12 noon and they leave. Then we're going to swing over to the big clearing called Bau O. It's at, it's in the grid square 09,86. Then we're going to sweep that and then come back down south toward camp. Now, that entire area up there, where you see all those trails and clearings and things, the last three out of three operations that we sent up there have made contact resulting in three or four of our people killed, and anywhere from six to ten wounded.

I am scheduled to take the next one up there. That's why I'm getting a little nervous. I'm not really nervous, I'm apprehensive. I'm not scared, not just scared, but I do have a sense of fear because of the people we're going out with. Luckily I'm taking all Cambodes, and people from the best companies that we have. So, if we do make contact, at least I can be sure that these people will listen to their leaders and do what they're told whereas if we had half Vietnamese and half Cambodes, the Cambodes would fight but the Vietnamese would turn and run and then of course it would be only natural for the Cambodes to turn and run too seeing that 50 percent of their force took off and ran. So at least I've got that advantage of going out with 100 percent Cambodes. I'm also going out with the LLDB bac-si, so in case anybody does get hurt badly at least he's had some medical training and will be able to attend the wounds and patch them up as much as he can.

Another drawback with taking all Cambodes on is the Vietnamese LLDB bac-si is supposed to be in complete control, complete charge of the operation. Due to the fact that they are all Cambodes, they will listen to their company commanders first, and the company commanders decide about whether or not they feel like listening to the LLDB because half the time the LLDB would just as soon turn and run himself. Therefore he won't give orders for the Cambodes to go on line or to take cover and shoot back or set up a defensive perimeter, you know, whatever the situation dictates. They tend not to listen to the LLDB. The Cambodian leaders like to look directly to the US advisors for guidance. Most of the time they know what to do instinctively, right on the spot. If we're hit, what they usually do is put their companies on line and charge into the ambush, which is what you're supposed to do if it's a near ambush. If it's a far ambush then the leading element lays down a base of fire and the rear element maneuvers around to get at the ambushers from either side or from the rear. The Cambodes know what to do and they'll do it. So that's some consolation.

Anyway, after yesterday it was cancelled because everybody was sick. So bac-si did his best giving everybody pills and all kinds of stuff to eat. Today, people started to pick up. We

sent one man out on the work chopper because he was still pretty bad, pretty bad shape. Holck, who was supposed to go out with me, is in good shape today so we were both ready and waiting. We're supposed to leave tonight at 5:30, which was 25 minutes ago. At 25 after 5, I walked out with all my gear on and everything. Everybody was standing out in formation and all of a sudden I hear a big cheer. So I knew something was up so I put my gear down. Pretty soon the captain comes walking back over and says, "Nope, won't be going out until later on in the week." So, again, I was somewhat relieved. I hate this postponing this operation. I'd like to just go out and get it over with.

But the reason why they're postponing it this time is because we had another Chieu Hoi come in today, another VC, well, he wasn't VC, he was NVA, hardcore North Vietnamese Army soldier, give himself up today. He came down right out of the North East, right exactly where we're going, out of a recon platoon. He's giving us all kinds of good intelligence on that area. In fact, not an hour after he came in, we had enough intelligence to send an Air Force FAC up north there to a little village you'll see called Phum Soa. It's at 093,914. You'll see a couple little houses there and a road, just south of the big clearing. He told us there was an NVA regiment camped up there plus a thirty foot watchtower and a bunch of VC troops stationed in the area. So we sent a FAC up there. Sure enough, here all these dudes were running around. So we put artillery on them and an air strike. We destroyed the watchtower and got 15 to 20 VC/NVA kills. Right now they're still putting in jet fighters on the area so we're still waiting to hear what else we got. Just a minute.

That was Top. He had a couple messages to give me concerning Civic Action / PSYOPS, sports competition that I have to get underway here in camp. Pick three best volleyball teams, or volley players, and the two best ping-pong players, CIDG type, from camp. So no sweat there.

Let's see, what was I talking about? The operation was cancelled this afternoon because of the fact that we were getting intel from this Chieu Hoi that gave himself up this afternoon. Sergeant major, I mean, the team sergeant and myself and Holck sat in on the debriefing that was administered by the LLDB sergeant major, who at times is a pretty decent VNSF type, but today he was definitely screwed up. He started interrogating the NVA and he was asking the pertinent questions in the order that we're supposed to. But then he started feeding this guy beer, you know, becoming buddy buddy with him and showing him a good time and letting him know that we'll take real good care of him and kept pumping this guy full of beers. We kept telling him, "Sergeant major you better knock this off or this guy's going to get drunk." Of course we had an interpreter there translating everything that the guy said into English, although we weren't at that time allowed to ask questions, believe it or not, because the LLDB are in charge of the camp. We're just advisors.

So we sat in and listened and listened and listened, trying to extract as much information

as we could concerning the operational area that we were going into today. He told us about the tower and the regiment and everything up there so we ran over and got things underway for that, came back. After about three hours of interrogation this guy was almost completely drunk. The sergeant major said, "Ok Top," talking to our team sergeant, "we'll let you have this guy at 7 pm tonight." Top said, "We don't even want to talk to the guy. He's too drunk." He continued to chew out the sergeant major for making such an ass out of himself in getting this guy drunk. He does absolutely no good to anybody being drunk. I was on top of the roof about 15 minutes ago and I saw him walking around. Two LLDB, one on either side of this guy, arms around each other, around their necks, everybody just plastered out of their mind, whooping it up over there, just having a grand old time.

I don't know, we're all disappointed and dejected because it's such a waste. We have to make use of this guy in the shortest possible amount of time to get accurate information from him, and timely information so that we can react on his intelligence. What we want to do, what we wanted to do was have him completely interrogated at this level by about 5 o'clock this afternoon and get him down to the B-Team because at the B-Team level, they can react on his intelligence by making tape recorded messages for a loud speaker plane to fly over VC infested areas with this guy saying he was a Chieu Hoi, he gave himself up, he was treated real well by camp Thien Ngon, by the Americans, by the VNSF, that he is now in Tay Ninh enjoying good food, new clothes, friendliness by all concerned. A message like that does wonders when flown over a VC infested area. So we wanted to react on this, but now this guy is so drunk he's staggering around the camp with drunk LLDB, whooping it up and hollering. We won't get a chance to talk to him until tomorrow. We probably won't get him out of here until maybe Tuesday or Wednesday because of the fact that helicopters and planes just aren't available to come to this location whenever we get somebody like this.

See, we're on quite a rigid schedule. Every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday we have the work chopper and on Wednesday and Saturday we have the chow chopper. Those are the only scheduled helicopters we have come in to camp. Occasionally one will stop in, that's out of the ordinary, maybe two or three times a month one will stop in not on the schedule that we can make use of. If we request a helicopter for anything other than a medevac, we usually cannot get it because the B-Team does not have organic choppers. So when we request transportation from the B-Team they have to request it from the 1st Cav. or the 25th Division or somebody stationed at Tay Ninh West or some kind of air mobile outfit. Most of the time they can't furnish us with transportation, so this guy's stuck here until we can get him out. Again, all this time is being wasted. By the time we ever get a tape made or leaflets made with his picture on it or anything like that and get it back into the area from which he came, the troops will have moved out by then and it'll be time and effort wasted.

So we're all perturbed, pissed off, if you will. But there's not much we can do about it. Like I said I was relieved tonight when I found out I didn't have to go out. We probably would have been okay tonight, but tomorrow I'm sure we would have run into something. Shoot, when you're going into an area and you know darn well you're going to be shot at or be ambushed, it makes you a little apprehensive. You don't really feel like being all gung-ho and going out there. If I were in command of a full TO&E American type infantry company, I'd go up there in a minute, because you know when you tell the Americans what to do, they'll do it. If I had four platoons with 2nd lieutenant platoon leaders, I'd say, "Okay, I want your platoon to do this and yours to do this and this other platoon to act as the reserve and the weapons platoon to set up your mortars here and cover these two platoons out in front." That's exactly what they'll do. If they make contact, doggone it, they'll kill some VC because they know what to do. They aren't scared like doggone CIDG is. But man, just going out with these people, it's enough to upset anybody.

Actually, Special Forces people shouldn't really be doing this kind of work. We're advisors sure, and we're supposed to train the CIDG, which we do. But after we have done our job, we're supposed to move out. MACV, which is Military Assistance Command Vietnam, is composed of nothing but advisors. That is their job. Their job is to advise trained companies, CIDG, RFPF which is Rural Force, Popular Force, which are just villagers who have rifles in their hooches in case they're attacked by VC, the ARVN Army and the ARVN Airborne, and ARVN Rangers. MACV people have the job of advising these units. Technically speaking, once this Special Forces A-Camp is set up, and the people in it fully trained, the camp should be turned over to MACV advisors, but it isn't. As a result many Special Forces people are becoming disillusioned. We've got the word right now that at Bragg there's such a lack of personnel that they're thinking about combining two of the groups to form one group just to bring it up to strength. That's, there were rumors of that nature at Bragg when I was still there, when we were there, rather, because of the drain on the forces. People would come over here to Vietnam and spend a year and find out how sorry these people are. Instead of going back to Bragg and staying in Forces, they'd go out and go to an American unit where they know that if they do come back over here, they'll at least be with some people who know how to fight, are willing to fight, and do a real fine job.

I, myself, am disappointed, to say the least. I like Special Forces, and if I were making it a career, the Army a career, I would probably stay in Special Forces because I like being airborne and things like that and I like what they do, what they're supposed to do. This stuff over here has really disillusioned me as well as everybody else. These people are just not receptive. They are so poor that it's pathetic and yet they are the most wasteful people I have ever seen in my life. At least back home, when you give poor people something, they treat it as if it were pure gold. If

you give them food they'll make it stretch out and last as long as possible. But these stupid CIDG around here, they don't have anything; and when you give them something they don't take care of it. It's the same with everything we give them whether it's food, clothing, ammunition, transportation, advice, anything.

We give them Claymore mines. What they do, they'll take them out on operation. They take the backs off the mines, scrape all the C-4 out to heat up their chow and carry around a bum Claymore mine that won't even fire if it comes to that point. Then on the way back in from operation they'll just throw it off the trail some place. Then the VC come along and find these things, pack it with their own type explosive, and use them against us. We hand out LAWS and just, let's see yesterday, day before yesterday, I was out walking around camp just looking around outside the outer berm by the helipad. I found two LAWS out there, fully loaded with rockets in them but the end caps had come off or something. I don't know why they throw them away. But they must, when they come in off operation, they must take the LAW and just drop it in the grass, just throw it away. There were a couple of mortar rounds out there. I don't know what the deal is.

Apparently they dismantle the things to scrape all the explosive out, put it back together and just throw it away because these people like to use C-4, that plastic explosive, to heat up their chow. It's tremendous stuff for doing that. It burns terrifically hot and a little tiny piece the size of the front or the top joint on your thumb, a piece that size, will bring a full canteen cup of water to boiling in about thirty seconds. It gives off no odor and no smoke. It doesn't blacken your canteen cup or anything. It's beautiful stuff for cooking food. I can carry around a chunk about two inches square and it's about half an inch thick, three quarters of an inch thick, well, yes, about three quarters of an inch thick, and that is more than enough to last me for two operations. Just that little tiny bit. That's why the CIDG will do anything to get that stuff. They could care less whether or not they have any kind of defensive weapons in case they're hit.

I've issued PIRs, which are the Vietnamese C-ration meal. Two of the CIDG (companies) who were going out on my operation, they're allowed two meals a day for the length of the operation, the duration of the operation, which is three days. So that would mean six meals per man. Okay, I've issued those. I issued them Saturday morning. Now when we get around to going out on the operation, say Tuesday or Wednesday or whenever we're going out, I bet you that I will find that they will want another complete issue of meals, because they will have eaten all their meals sitting around here in camp. They will have eaten all their PIR meals in addition to the .7 kilos per man per day of rice that I issue for everybody in camp. They get this food and instead of keeping it for a time when they might be hungry, they'll just gobble it down just as fast as they can and come back the following day crying because they're hungry. We'll give them brand new boots and socks. Instead of using the socks like they're supposed to, they'll give them

to their women who use them as Kotex and then they're thrown away.

They will dismantle 81 and 4 point deuce (4.2) illuminating rounds, completely dismantle them just to take out the string attached to the parachutes so they can use it for their hammocks. Those rounds cost about \$45 or \$50 a piece. We tell them constantly to store their white phosphorous rounds on end because if they're stored on their side, the white phosphorous settles to one side and when the round goes out of the tube it wobbles and it won't land right where it's supposed to. Regardless of how many times a day we tell them or how many times we go around and check each bunker, we will always find Willy Peter rounds stored on their side. They just don't listen.

We tell them when we get new cans of mogas [motor gasoline], 55 gallon drums of mogas and diesel fuel, we can't let them sit out on the turn around point, but we can't let them, we can't bring them into the inner perimeter either. The only drums of fuel we're allowed in the inner perimeter are those that we're using for the generators or the trucks. The rest of it we have to leave outside. In case they're ever hit by a mortar round it won't set off a big tremendous explosion and fire. But when we leave them out on the turn around point, or in the hole or any place out there, the stupid CIDG shoot holes in them. There goes 55 gallons of gas or diesel fuel just draining out on the ground. Complete waste! Whenever we get a shipment of rice or clothing or PIRs or anything of any type of value whatsoever, it comes in off of the plane. We have to leave a guard on it all the time until it's completely removed from the field otherwise as soon as somebody's back is turned, the CIDG will jump on the pile and steal everything, absolutely everything that they can.

They're masters at hiding the stuff. Of course if you look at their bunkers you can see why. They're full of little cranny holes and cubby holes and things. Like when a load of cement comes in, 40 bags, 100 pound bags. If we weren't out there to watch it, in an hour's time they'd have all 40 bags hidden in camp some place. They'd have the chains that hold the bag to the pallet all gone. They'll steal the pallet. They'll steal the plastic covering the cement. Shoot, even when we get in a pallet of Coke or something, when they dump it off the plane, usually the box or something will break open and there'll be a couple cans scattered around. They are gone in two seconds flat. Little kids and stuff just pounce on them and disappear with it just as fast as they can. You wouldn't believe it. It's just plain unbelievable.

We had eight drums of pentaprime which is a kind of a tarry type substance that's mixed with that laterite, which is a type of [red] soil, dirt. The combination of the two makes quite a hard packed surface for the runway. We have eight drums of pentaprime and a couple dump truck loads of pentaprime, or laterite, at the turn around point for patching the runway. Well recently, checking over the pentaprime, I found out that all eight drums were completely destroyed, full of bullet holes.

We had our quarter ton trailer sitting out on the turn around point one day with a refrigerator strapped to it, waiting to backload it to A-Company. The trailer wasn't out there for more than two hours. The refrigerator was full of bullet holes, the trailer was full of holes, naturally the tires were flat. I had that water trailer out there rigged and ready for back-loading. It's a rig with nylon straps and what's called a doughnut, which connects the four straps and make a loop to hook on the hook on the Chinook. I made a mistake and left that out there overnight. The next morning all the straps were gone. Of course the tires were flat on the water trailer.

When we let the CIDG use a truck, I say, "OK, bring it back in five minutes." They'll take the truck out and unless we go chase it down, we won't see it again from the time we give it to them until dark that night, because one after another every CIDG in camp thinks he's got to use the truck for something. Even if it's to go out to the runway and just race up and down it. Boy, that, all that stuff combined is what we have to put up with daily, and I mean daily. Day in and day out, every single day, Monday through Monday. Twenty-four hours a day we have to put up with that kind of stuff.

Last night I was sitting in the club. It was about 10 o'clock. I was just getting ready for bed, I had taken a shower and everything. I had my white Levi's on and my tennis shoes. I was relaxing, watching a card game for a couple minutes and in walks one of the LLDB stooges. You know, they have all these stooges, runners and stuff to do all the dirty work for them. He comes over and says that some LLDB sergeant wants me, a first lieutenant, to go get my keys, walk outside to the rice and PIR shed, open a box and give him two meals, two PIR meals, just for him to munch on at night. Boy, that was about the last straw. I told the interpreter, "Tell that jerk that the Trung-uy doesn't feel like it tonight." And I told him sarcastically too, but I'm sure the interpreter didn't get that through to the stooge the way I made it sound. These people expect us to wait on them hand and foot.

When I wake up in the morning at 7 o'clock there's usually somebody standing outside my door waiting for me to get up. They either want rice or they want the truck or they want cement or they want sand bags or they want nails or rope or borrow tools or chains or pallets or something. They always come to me because well, sorry to say, I'm in control of all that kind of stuff. It never fails. Almost every morning without fail while I'm eating breakfast, somebody will come to the mess hall window or to the door or come in to the mess hall and say, "Trung-uy, this guy wants this. This guy wants that." or "I want this or I want that." They have no respect at all for anybody's meal time, rest time, shower time.

I was taking a shower a couple days ago and an LLDB stooge walked in with the hose. You see, everyday they're allowed certain times to hook up water which fills up the LLDB water tank from our pump. I was taking a shower and the guy walks in with a hose and he's starting to hook the hose up, right while I was taking a shower. I was all soaped up and lathered and

everything. So I let him hook the hose up. He turned around and walked out and as soon as he walked out I unhooked it again. And in he walks again. I'm sure he couldn't understand English, but the way I carried on I'm sure he understood how I felt about it. So he left, reluctantly. This was about 7 o'clock at night after evening chow and everybody on the team decides to take a shower. This guy walks in and wants all our water. Phew. Oh well. I'm through griping for awhile.

I listened to your newest tape today, the one you wrote when you sent the letter also, the little bank statement and everything in it. I'll sign that little card, excuse me I'm burping, I'll sign that checking account card and send it back to you rather than to the bank. It looks like you did a good job in there. You got the account as a joint account, which is very clever, very good thinking I thought on your part. I was especially pleased to hear that you used your head and decided to use yourself as the primary member for that AAA type stuff. As I was saying, I was especially pleased to hear you used good old American female type common sense and figured out that I wouldn't be using that AAA membership thing for quite awhile. You saved us \$9.

I'm sitting here smiling to myself. I'm trying to tell you, hon, that you're very smart, very clever, and I'm very happy that I married you. You're a perfect wife for me. We get along just fine. It's so neat the way both of us have the same ideas, the same interests, the same likes and dislikes. Shoot, I don't know. You understand what I mean even if I can't say it. We're just made for each other. It's funny how things like that work out. I just wonder what it is about some people, why they live together for a month, half a year, a year, two years and all of a sudden they find out that they're not made for each other, they can't get along, they want a divorce. Boy, I don't know, I just don't understand it. I can't figure it out. It seems to me that when you meet somebody that you think might make a good mate, you'd check it out ahead of time and find out what they like, what they don't like, how they feel about everything, not just some things, everything. They have to be frank and level with each other and say what they mean, what they feel, tell the truth. They can't fib to each other and everything. If you do that, I don't see how people can go wrong, but a lot of them do.

That reminds me, Ron Ingram's sister, I told you about, who works in Las Vegas as a topless Go-Go dancer? Well she married Wayne Newton. I'm sure you've heard about him. He's that singer, quite rich. Well he got a letter today from his sister, signed by his sister, I don't know what her name is, and then also she wrote down at the bottom, "and from your brother in law," and then Wayne Newton signed his name, "Wayne." She sent along a Vegas Visitor—little newspaper thing, a daily thing that comes out telling all the different shows and things that are going on the strip. Her picture was in there. If I can, I'll see if I can get it and send it to you. She's not a bad looking babe. She's got big boobs, of course, which is a primary requisite for being a topless dancer. She's quite good looking. She's called Devil's Angel or something, I

don't know, Satan's Own Mistress or some kooky name. I guess she's quite an attraction. Anyway, she's been married to Wayne Newton now for maybe three months and they're already talking about getting a divorce. She wrote in the letter, "Oh, he's good for about a \$100,000, or so, alimony." So I don't know. It's a crazy world we live in.

Anyway, getting back to the notes that I have written down here. Again I want to say good smarts on that AAA master member deal. I hope you hear something pretty soon, in fact you better. It's past the 18th of June. Hope you hear something from United Services. I keep forgetting there's only a week time lag from the time that I send a tape until the time you get it. But from the time I ask a question and the time I get an answer it's two weeks. So you say, the dog has got only one more week of heat and then I realize that while I'm listening to this tape she's all out of heat and it's past the 18th and I'm sure you've heard something from United Services by now, at least I hope so. Well, you've got the same problems at your end so you know what the problems are.

Ron walked in on me yesterday while I was listening to one of the tapes and he noticed that little ear phone I was using. It's one of those little pudgy things you stick in your ear and rest against your ear drum, real stupid little ugly thing, kind of uncomfortable. It plugs into the tape recorder. So he said, "Hey, I've got just the thing for you." He came back in a couple minutes later with one of those real tiny jacks wired on to a big set of stereo headphones that he had in the commo room. So now I've got these headphones sitting here and I put them on my ears and it blocks out all other sound. It blocks out the sound of the fan here that's going in my room constantly and of doors slamming, dogs barking, people calling in and out and everything like that. They're real great. They're nice and comfortable and I can sit back and listen to your tapes. The volume doesn't have to be up near as loud and it comes in so much clearer. It's really terrific.

You know, I think that they make an adapter for our record player. I'm sure it's got some kind of an external speaker jack. They make an adapter where you can plug in the jack of the earphones that I sent you and then plug the adapter into the tape deck or our little tape recorder. Although it won't be stereo, at least it'll be neat to listen to that way if you want to. So what you might do is stop in at one of the little offbeat radio repair stores downtown. I think both of them between 8th Street and 9th Street on River Avenue are pretty good. One of them is that Motorola place on the west, let's see, I've got to remember which way the streets are running now. Yes, I believe it's on the west side of the road there, the same side as that little bookstore on and Banner Bakery. That's the place where I bought you that little Motorola radio. That place and also E&J across the street. I think one of those places would have a jack like that. What you might do is take the little headphone things out of our tape recorder and take it in with you so he can see the size of the jack that it has to be. Of course the jack on the headphones is a standard size jack, but

you might take the headphones in too and show it to him and see what he thinks, you know, see if he can hook it up. Maybe you don't want to do that, I don't know, but I kind of like to do it here because then I can listen to my tapes more in privacy.

Right now I've got the door shut to my room, locked and shut in fact, shut and locked. But a lot of times during the day I like to come in and just throw a tape on and sit here for a half an hour and listen to a tape, I leave my door open for circulation and things and in case people want to come in and say something to me I can just lift one side of the earphones and listen to your tape with one ear and what he's saying with the other ear. So it works out real fine.

We got mail again today and that makes two mail days that I haven't received an Army Times. Since today's about the 22nd I believe, let me pull out my watch. I still got my tiger fatigues on here, the uniform that I wear out on operations. What I do, I take my watch and attach it with a piece of nylon rope to my belt and stick it in my pocket. That way my arm doesn't, my watch doesn't catch twigs and stuff and sweat and my arm doesn't break out because of my watch being on my arm all night on operation. Yes, it's Sunday the 22nd. Right now it's 25 minutes to 7. What I do instead is strap on a little wrist compass onto my wrist. I've still got that on. In fact I've still got a loaded weapon here on my bed. It's loaded but it's on safe. My dog tags, can openers, food, ammo, water, all that junk.

Oh, anyway, what was I saying? I didn't get the Army Times, the one with your newest article in it. So if you want, cut the article out and send it to me and I'll put it up here on my wall with the other neat stuff I've got. And doggone it, I still haven't gotten my electronic flash unit. One of these days I'm going to get it. Then I'll take some pictures of the room. Ron Ingram took a few pictures of me, like about three or four, with his 230mm zoom lens on his camera. They were close up black and whites, so when he gets those prints back he'll probably give them to me and I'll hustle them home to you. I just had on leisure work clothes, just a pair of pants and my boots, that's all.

I've also got another picture here of, well, it's not my picture. It belongs to the girl that works behind the bar. She was our guide that day we went to the big Cao Dai temple complex and of course this guy was running around with a Polaroid camera taking pictures of us all. Each one of us has a picture. Well she bought two pictures, one of them's in the club and I think I'll swipe it from her. Don't tell her. It's a picture of myself and her, her name is Co Soung, we call her Sue, and Sergeant Lambert, and Spec. 5 Holck, all of us with our uniforms and berets on. We're standing in front of a big rock water fountain, shaped like some kind of a big moose or dragonhead or something. I don't know. I doubt if you can see what it is in the picture. I'll have to look at it again to be sure. It's a little bit dark but you can get a pretty good idea of what each of us looks like. I'm tall and skinny, Lambert's big and heavy, Wes is about 175 pounds and about my height, and that little girl's about 5'2", kind of stocky, big boobs, and kind of a flattened out

face with big teeth. I'll swipe it from her tonight and send it to you. There's also a picture in there of bac si when he was in Bangkok with his girlfriend over there. It's a picture of her sitting on his lap and he's got his hand cupped around one of her big boobs. She's sitting there in a bikini. He's got a couple of big 8 x 10 color shots of himself and her on a beach some place and of course she doesn't have anything on top, she's got a little bikini bottom and great big boobs sticking out on top. They're oversized, really, and they look kind of ugly. I'll see if I can pick that up for you and send it to you just for something to do.

I know you keep pestering me to take pictures of myself with my beret on and my shirt and everything. I keep telling you I never wear it around here. So the next time I wear my shirt and my beret I'll try to have somebody take some pictures of me. I hate to just pose for pictures. If somebody could walk around with a camera and follow me around for an hour and everything that I do with my shirt and beret on you could get some beautiful candid shots. I'd be yelling at somebody or pointing, or hefting 100 pound bags of rice or arguing with some stupid CIDG or something. You'd get some good shots. I think it'd be interesting too, but nobody's got time to do that. Besides, I don't like to wear my shirt around all the time.

I did take the movie camera out yesterday afternoon to the turn around point and Ingram, I showed Ingram how to use it. He was standing on one side of the turn around point and I was on the other side and he's got some good movies of me going over to the, well, I don't know if he caught me going over to the water trailer, but he took pictures of the Chinook coming in over the turn around area and hovering over the water trailer while I'm up on it with the straps getting ready to hook it up and I guess he got me hooking it up and then jumping down. As I was jumping down, he tried to zoom in but he turned the focus knob instead of the zoom knob.

Then right after that I guess a big blast of dust and dirt and stones and gravel and everything hit the camera so he turned it off. At the same time the blast of wind caught my little camera box, and I lost the lens cap over the front of the camera. I had my little prepaid mailing envelope in there too but luckily that wasn't blown away. I did lose my lens cap. That pissed me off but nothing I can do about that. So I'll see if I can get another one in Hong Kong when we're there. But the pictures ought to turn out pretty good. I looked through it. It was set on maximum range, you know, wide angle. It was focused on infinity to start with but then he zoomed it in. He noticed it started getting blurry so that's when he quit shooting because he couldn't figure out what he did wrong. So I looked through the camera and twisted the knob and it didn't get very blurry at all so I think it will turn out all right.

I'm anxious for you to get our first rolls of movie film from over here so you can tell me if the camera's working properly, you know, if it's in focus, if the zoom is working all right and everything is straight. So as soon as you get the first roll of movie film, show it and then quickly let me know how it turned out. Oh, after I hook up the water trailer, that dumb chopper. Well,

it's hard really because there's a guy looking down through the hole in the chopper where the hook is and then talking to the pilot saying "left, right, up, down, forward, back." Here I am standing underneath a terrific blast of wind. I mean terrific, boy oh boy. It's enough to pick up a 150 pound or 200 pound metal pallet, just completely pick it up off the ground and blow it all the way across the turn around point. Anyway, I was under there, hooking the thing up, and the chopper came over and after I got the hook on, of course I have to jump down, you know and get away. Right after I hooked it up, the chopper dropped down another couple feet so that the distance between the chopper and my head was about a foot. Of course I was hunched over to begin with. So the area between the water trailer and the chopper must only have been four feet or so. Boy I jumped down and took off out of there. Anyway, he picked the trailer up and one of the straps got caught underneath the trailer, and as a result, the whole thing was picked up on a cockeyed angle. So the only thing he could do is set it back down. So he set it down and instead of running back over to unhook the strap and rehook it up I just waved him away and told him to go home.

When he comes in Wednesday, oh shoot I'll be on operation Wednesday, but one of these days when it comes time to back-loading something like nets or anything like that and I go underneath the chopper to hook it up again I'll have Ingram with the movie camera again and this time show him exactly how to use it so that he can zoom in on me while I'm hooking it up and you can get an idea of what it's like. It ought to turn out to be pretty good pictures.

Oh, you were asking me about that private thing I was going to mention on the tape, or in a letter or something. You're probably disappointed that you never got it. Right now I can't really think of what it was except that it might have been concerning the girls here and what the guys say about them and how they react, things like that. I'll tell you a little bit about it, starting with the captain.

He fancies himself as the big lover on the team. He's constantly bragging. He's a braggart, no doubt about that. Whenever we get into, (burped) pardon me, a conversation about anything, he's always done better, some time during his life. He's 29, been in the Army for 12 years. He was an EM, made E-6, went to OCS I guess. Now he's a captain. Anyway, he fancies himself the big lover. He's always bragging about the girls he's made love to in Korea, and Japan, and Okinawa. You name it. Then he turned right around and said, "Oh, don't get me wrong. I love my wife more than any man could possibly love his wife, but occasionally I have to dilly-daddle around just to take care of my sex urge." He's always bragging. So, naturally, when our cook first showed up, boy, his tongue hung out and his eyes bulged and everything, because for a Vietnamese, she isn't bad looking, although she's pregnant. She doesn't have a real flattened out face like most of the Vietnamese do. Her eyes aren't little zipper slits. They're pretty good. They aren't rounded like Americans' but they're not real slitted like some of the

Vietnamese.

Anyway, she's pretty decent looking. Of course, right away he's got to start making time with her. He introduced himself and just pestered her all day. He'd go in and stand for an hour in the kitchen just talking to her. A number of times I have surprised him in various locations with his arm around her. Of course he's just being friendly, overly friendly. Just trying to take care of her and reassure her and all that kind of stuff. She speaks real good English. Terrific cook for a Vietnamese cooking American food. She comes up with some real good potato salad and elbow macaroni salad, that kind of stuff. Anyway, he hasn't tried to take her to bed or anything like that, and nobody on the team has either, but they just like to pester her, to bother her, to show off their maleness to her I suppose, I don't know. Of course whenever they know that she's taking a shower, they'll on purpose, but pretending it was an accident, they'll go and walk into the shower room, you know, stupid stuff like that. It's childish, really. These people are so weak willed and sex starved they can't even control themselves. So much for the captain.

Well, no, I'll tell you about Sue also. He was sitting at the bar the other night. I happened to be standing there. I never say much, I never do much, I just stand around and watch everybody else. He was talking to Sue and I was standing there and he said, "Boy oh boy, I'd give \$40, 40 American dollars to have some girl to take to bed tonight." He was looking right at Sue, and of course ol' Sue, she was a little embarrassed. She'd flutter her eyelids and look away and stuff like that. I just showed my exasperation type look and you know rolled my eyes toward the ceiling and just shook my head a little bit as if 'oh, cripes, what's he getting into now.' She didn't react so half a minute later he says, "No, I take that back. I think I'd give \$50." While I stood there for three or four minutes, he worked up to \$100, and he was doggone serious too. If Sue had said, "Okay. I'll go to bed with you tonight for a \$100." He would have grabbed her right then and marched her right off to his room. But she didn't.

D.B.[Brown], he's getting out of hand up here. He's drinking too much. He got drunk last night playing cards. He's been drunk all day today. The team sergeant, who's an E-8, D.B.'s an E-7, told him that unless he straightens out he's going to lose a stripe. Captain told him the same thing. The dumb jerk just keeps right on going. He's the one with the wife who sent him pictures of her in her underwear, see through underwear. He's got three or four kids at home. I guess he's, I don't know if he's separated from her or what, but he doesn't give a shit. He'd just soon go out and run around without her knowing. That's the way it is.

I have yet to check this tape to make sure I'm recording okay so let me shut it off for a second here and check. Okay, everything's fine. Now getting back to D.B. Anyway, we're going to get rid of him. I think sometime real soon, inside the next week or so we're going to ship him out. We've already talked to the colonel about it. The colonel stopped in today in fact, so did the sergeant major. I talked to the colonel, captain talked to the colonel, and Sergeant Moss talked to

the colonel. So I'm sure that we'll get rid of him. He's not a bad man. He knows his work. When he works, he works hard. But he's just to the point now where he's been on an A-site for six months, he's fed up with it, and wants to get off and go someplace else and do office work. He's tired of humping jungles and I can't blame him. 5th Group regulation states at the end of the six months you will be rotated, but we're so short of personnel over here that it seems like nobody will be rotated unless they absolutely refuse to do any work and demand that they be taken off an A-site, which is what he's doing in other words. He's just completely obstinate, hard headed, won't do a thing that he's told, remains constantly drunk or very pleasantly high, I'll put it that way.

Anyway, he's making a spectacle of himself so we're going to get rid of him. But one night at 3 am, I don't know who was on radio watch at the time, but anyway, the cook told me the following morning that that night at 3 am he was still up around drinking. He came and knocked on her door. We put a lock on the inside of her door, on her CONEX, so nobody can get in unless she lets him. He just knocked on her door, woke her up, and propositioned her. He made an ass out of himself. Of course, she's embarrassed to say "Well, just get out of here. Take off. Mind your own business," because you know, she's Vietnamese and she doesn't understand Americans. She's kind of humble, you know, she doesn't want to offend anybody. She's afraid that if she pissed him off she might lose her job or something. So nothing she could do except put up with it and just listen to him yak away. Although she didn't unlock her door. Finally he went and took off to bed. She came to me the following morning and told me that D.B. gave her a hard time and everybody in the club was making too much noise at night so I straightened that out. So far I guess she's doing fine. Nobody's bothered her or anything.

But Sue is another story. She's young. She's nineteen I guess, and well built. She's got big boobs and a nice little butt. You know how men are. Every chance they get, well she flirts a little bit. She's got to be friendly with everybody, that's a bar girl's job. Of course when she flirts, the men flirt back and they pat her on the ass and call her "Hey Suzyboobs," or stupid things like that. She giggles of course and laughs at it, but that's about it. Top was pleasantly high one night and he acted as her bodyguard. He kept all the other leeches off of her but then he himself kind of made her his private property for the evening. Nobody yet has taken her to bed, not that they still aren't trying. Since she's come to work in our bar, the artillery people have been over here. Well, their attendance has jumped about 300 percent. Instead of having three or four guys over here every evening for a little while, they have about fifteen guys over here. Shoot, our club is so packed you can hardly move. They come over and just stand around the bar with their tongues hanging out, drooling all over her. But of course they're drinking our beer and sodas, and putting money in our pots so we can't complain too much, although when they do get out of hand, like when twenty five people from artillery are over here in one evening and there's no

room at the bar for any USSF personnel, then we start laying down the law and say, "Look. You guys are crowding us out. This is our bar. We'd appreciate it if you would let us spend some of our own time at our own bar and be able to get our own drinks and enjoy them without being crowded out." Of course, every now and then you have to lay down the law, which we do.

Her being here presents some problems, too. But nothing we can't overcome. If the problems get to a point where they're becoming too numerous we'll just have to say, "Xin loi, little girl, we have to fire you. Things just aren't working out." That's about where it stands. What I'd like to do some night though is get an hour long tape and set it on slow speed so it would last an hour on each side and hide the tape recorder some place in the bar. Like last night would have been a perfect night during the poker game. Boy, you wouldn't believe the way those guys talk, the way they carry on. It's just natural, every day talk to them, but it's so unnatural to people like us, your family, my family. I'm sure my dad has heard it before in the service but you, and you know how they talk too. You've heard them and you've heard me talk about them, but your family and the rest of my family just would be appalled. They'd be embarrassed just listening to the tape and how these guys talk. Every word is some kind of very descriptive adjective of some kind or another, be it four letter word or a string of four letter words. But it's so common around here, so prevalent, that it doesn't faze me in the least.

I hear it, and although they know that I don't like it they won't quit doing it just for me, unless they're in one of their crazy moods where the fellas say, "Whoops, here comes Lieutenant. Everybody watch your language." I don't go around harping on it. I don't say, "Hey, knock off that kind of talk," all the time. Every time I hear it I don't say stuff like that but they know I don't appreciate talk like that. I don't do it myself. So normally they're pretty decent about it. If I walk into a room where a bunch of them are cussing like crazy, they'll at least cut it in half for me.

They don't seem to have any respect for the girl. She also speaks real good English and I imagine she's used to hearing talk like that but still, that's not the thing to do, especially in front of mixed company, talking like that. So every now and then I have to remind them to watch their language. Other than that, that's about where we stand right now.

So far no girls from Tay Ninh have come up here. I think that was mostly all talk. I mean, everybody would like to see it happen but you just can't find 6 to 8 to 10 prostitutes to come up here for three or four days 'cause it's dangerous, shoot, no doubt about that. Artillery firing and small arms firing all the time, and dud rounds that we have to blow up every other day or so, blow up a few rounds. All these explosions and stuff around here make people nervous, especially when we start taking incoming rounds and stuff. Man, they really get scared. They take off and won't come back. Besides, there aren't any villages around here, nothing. We're one of the most far out camps in Vietnam. Us and Katum, and a few others in the different corps are the same. Most camps are built near villages where we can do some good for the villagers, live

off the local economy, things like that. But shoot, we're stuck way out in the boondocks here. That's all right. It doesn't bother me too much. That's really about all I can tell you about the girls. There's just not that much more to say about them. Not much has been happening.

24 June 1969

Tuesday

Honey, guess what? It's Tuesday afternoon, 20 minutes to 1. I'm going out on operation this afternoon finally. I've already made you an hour tape so listen to that one first if you haven't already. If you haven't, stop this one, listen to the other one and then come back to this one.

Okay, I got my notification of leave approved to Hong Kong, however, they moved it up to the 15th. Because I'm so important to have around here I've got to be back in 7 days time which would make it the 21st, 22nd because right after that I have to start paying and everything like that, and the MOPS, monthly operational summary, that's due at the end of every month. So that's why I have to be back at that time. So, how close is the 15th to your you-know-what [period]? I hope that it doesn't interfere. The 15th is the first day of my leave. I'll spend most of that day travelling. I don't know what time the plane leaves here in Vietnam, but the morning of the 15th is when I'll be leaving Saigon or Tan Son Nhut Air Force base for Hong Kong. I guess it only takes an hour and fifty minutes or something to fly there. Well, I don't know if I leave in the morning or what time of the day, but I will arrive in Hong Kong on the 15th some time, probably late afternoon, evening, somewhere around there. That will give us the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th. Then on the 21st I've got to come back. I hope that isn't too close to your period to mess us up. That's the only way I can do it.

The same thing will happen in October or November whenever we decide to take my R&R in Hawaii. I won't be able to go until the middle of the month because I'm important enough to have around here so that I've got to be back on pay day, and MOPS in time. Shoot, that's only a month and a half away, hon, six weeks about. I don't know what day the 15th falls on. It doesn't really make any difference but shoot, that moves it even closer by five days, almost a week. So think about it, and first let me know right away how that's going to interfere or if that's going to interfere.

Anyhoo, yesterday morning when I was sitting in the commo room with Ingram, we were listening in on a radio conversation from Katum to a C-130 that was coming in full of 105 ammunition. He was five minutes out and he requested air data, you know, weather, winds, whether or not they've been having any incoming or outgoing, artillery, anything like that. That was the last they heard of him. There was a FAC up in the air over Katum and he saw the C-130 get hit by ground fire. They were flying at 3000 feet, and according to the FAC who saw the

whole thing, they did receive orders to bail out because one engine started on fire. Well, I don't know what was, nobody knows exactly what happened. But while the plane was coming down, it was about 3 clicks south of Katum when it got hit, as the plane was coming down, one man did jump out. However, his parachute didn't open and he was killed. There were five other men in the plane. None of them got out 'cause the plane crashed and burned and all five were killed.

That happened yesterday morning. We were sitting in the radio room listening to everything. Man, that was upsetting to listen to, to say the least because you know those poor men inside were struggling, needed to get out, or save the plane or something. The man who did get out, his parachute didn't open. He might of been so upset that he didn't get the parachute on right or something, or when he jumped out he didn't reach up and pull the cord. See, Air Force don't take parachute training like we do. They're just shown how to put one on and what to do when they jump out and how to land, but they never really have any practice at it. So I imagine when it came time to actually jumping out of the plane, the men were fearful that probably when they jumped out that something would go wrong with their parachute or they would forget to pull the pin or anything like that. Any number of things, because the first time out of a plane like that, just to jump out, whether it's on fire or not, can really be upsetting if you don't know what to expect.

Anyway, the splash, the crane, sheesh, the plane crashed and started on fire and all the ammunition inside started blowing up. There was an operation out of Katum that was right nearby so they hurried over. They pulled one man out in time, he was still alive, but they couldn't get back to the plane to check on the rest of the men because of the fact that the ammunition inside was blowing up. If anybody had tried going back they would have been killed, so there's nothing they could do. They were helpless. The man that they pulled out who was still alive, they had a medevac helicopter come in and pick him up but he died on the way in. They had helicopter gun ships come up, jet fighters come up, the FACs, everybody was circling the area. They immediately formed a heliborne operation out of Katum to go into the area where they think the ground fire came from that shot the plane down but so far they haven't gotten anything.

All day yesterday it was real hectic over there. They had constant air cover the rest of the day, almost begging to be shot at so they could go in and wipe out the gun position but apparently the VC got away. So that's two C-130s that have been shot down at Katum in the past, let's see, month. Boy, everybody's sad around here when they heard all the goings on. Especially when we heard the people on the ground over there say, "Well, we've got one man out but he's in real bad shape. We don't think he'll live. The other four men inside are beyond hope." They're still looking for the body of the man who jumped out who's parachute didn't open. It was quite upsetting.

Today we had a, in fact just a half hour ago, we had a 130 land here. He came in from the south and he didn't come in low enough, didn't give himself enough approach the first time in. As a result he wasn't down low enough so when he came over the end of the airfield. He started to touch down but by that time he was already one-third of the way up the airstrip. So as soon as his wheel touched he just bounced back up in the air and kept on going. He came around again the second time, this time came in low enough so that his wheels touched right on the very southern end of the runway. This runway is just barely big enough for a C-130. They have to make maximum use of the entire runway so if they blow it and miss the first quarter or third of the runway they have to come back in and try it again. After he dropped his cargo off, it's a tight squeeze for him to turn around on the runway they back up and go forward and back up and go forward until they're finally turned around. Then he backs up all the way to the north end of the runway to get as much a running start as necessary. Actually, he can get up in the air from, well, about in half of a runway. But just in case, well that's empty. If he had a full load it would take him the entire runway and even then he'd be only 20, 30, 40 or 50 feet off the ground at the end of the runway, which isn't high at all considering the trees around here are enormous. When he's empty like he was leaving here, he got up in the air by the time he was halfway down the runway and by the time he was over the end of the runway he was 100, 200 feet up in the air already.

Yesterday afternoon we were out working around the turn around point because we had three planes come in, one right after another. There was all kinds of stuff out there that we had to take care of. Ingram and Holck and I were out there working. There were some rounds going off south of camp, maybe two clicks, two or three clicks. Nobody in our camp was shooting out anything. It was artillery rounds of some kind. So we didn't pay too much attention to it until all of us kind of, almost at the same time we all kind of quit working and started sniffing the air and rubbing our necks and blinking. We glanced down south, the wind was out of the south, we glanced down to the south end of the runway and we could see this mist coming in over the southern end of the runway at the clearing there, the entire width of the big clearing that the camp was sitting in. Right away we all three said it almost simultaneously, "Gas."

As soon as we found out it was gas we just dropped what we were doing and jumped into the truck and came racing into camp. Although it was gas, we didn't have to use our gas masks because it wasn't concentrated enough. I think the wind dispersed most of it. We're not sure whether or not it was American artillery putting the gas in or whether it was VC using gas on us. It's called CS gas and it affects your eyes. It burns your eyes so badly that you can't see. It just makes them water, and they sting. Any exposed skin that is tender, like your neck and cheeks and stuff where you shaved or your armpits and crotch, anything like that becomes burning. It's kind of a burning sensation. It just tingles. Of course you can't breathe the crap without choking on it. But it didn't affect us too badly.

We came in the teamhouse and we were cleared of it. We went back out on the teamhouse roof and watched that stuff blow in. It wasn't bad enough to hurt us or anything. We called around to different camps and different RD [Rapid Deployment] units nearby and nobody was shooting anything so there possibly were some VC out there setting off some gas grenades or something just to harass us, but it didn't bother anybody. Fifteen or twenty minutes later we were back out on the turn around point working again, although we did have our gas masks in the truck. So that was the excitement that happened yesterday.

I'll be going out on operation this afternoon about five o'clock, and be coming back in, oh, I don't know when, maybe Wednesday night, maybe Thursday morning. It depends on where we go, on how far away we go, whether or not we run into any VC or not.

Oh, I forgot to tell you, shoot, one of the most important things about yesterday. You know that Chieu Hoi I told you about? He was a NVA regular soldier, gave himself up. Well yesterday afternoon we did what's called a VR. It's, what do they call it? It's something reconnaissance, variable? No, that doesn't sound right. Visual. Visual Reconnaissance, VR. They came up here with a regular Huey helicopter with of course a door gunner on each side with a machine gun and also a Cobra, a Huey Cobra gun ship, which is a helicopter with rocket pods and grenades and machine guns and everything on it. Sergeant Moss and I, and the Chieu Hoi, an interpreter and one LLDB went up in the helicopter and we flew up north right along the Cambodian border. We were almost on top of it in fact. Look out of one side of the plane and you could see all of Cambodia. Look out the other side you could see Vietnam. Boy was that spooky too because that Chieu Hoi would fly over parts of the jungle and he'd say, "Yeah, yeah," and he'd point down there. That's where his troops are, troops that he deserted from.

I was sitting in one door, right next to the gunner, right on the edge of the helicopter looking out the edge trying to spot VC on the ground or anything, bunkers, anything like that. We weren't shot at and we didn't see anything as far as people, but the door gunners were blazing away. That's really something to see, all those tracers leaving the helicopter going into the jungle down below us. We were flying at 2000 feet, just under a layer of clouds. The gun ship would come in behind us and strafe the area, shoot rockets into the area. We kept scouting around. We were up there for about 50 minutes until everybody shot up all the ammo they had. I had Ingram's 35 millimeter camera with a 230 millimeter telephoto lens, put black and white film in it, and I shot 20 pictures from the air. Most of them were the Huey gun ship that was flying right near us. With that big telephoto lens I could zoom it right in.

We flew over a cleared out area in the jungle where there was a burned helicopter in the middle of the clearing but I couldn't get a picture of that. I also flew over a burned tank hull, enemy tank that was hit up north way back in September, October. One of the guys from this camp who was here at the time took an operation up north and they came across this tank and

shot it with a couple of LAWS and blew it up. He won a silver star for that. You can still see the tank hull sitting up there in the road, right up near the border. It was kind of spooky flying around, but quite exciting too. Of course we all had our survival kits and canteens and ammo and weapons and compasses and everything like that so in case we were shot at or shot down or anything we could have all our survival gear. We also had a couple of extra radios.

After fifty minutes we came flying back. We dropped everybody off and they continued on into Tay Ninh with the Chieu Hoi and about half an hour later while we were out on the turn around point, two more gun ships came flying up over the camp and went back up north where we had just been. I imagine they hosed down the area some more up there, trying to scare out some VC and get them running. Once they get them running they can pretty well follow them, keep shooting at them until they get them. I think that's all the news I have right now. I'm pretty sure.

I just finished signing that card from the bank, both sides. I put that in the envelope with a clipping concerning that medal that we're authorized to wear now, that Vietnamese I don't know, Cross of Gallantry I guess it is. So I put that in the mail for you.

I just finished up another roll of movie film. I took a picture of a big explosion that we set off this afternoon. We had about 125 pounds of explosive packed in around an old metal bulldozer hull that's been sitting out here for the last year or so. It's located right at the southern end of the runway. Our stupid LPs keep setting up their hammocks and tents and everything right at that old burned out hull and we don't want the LPs there. We want the LPs about 200 meters south of that point, farther down the road. No matter how many times we tell them to get back down the road, they keep coming back up as soon as we leave and setting up that old tank hull. So we thought well, we've got a few dud rounds we want to blow up and everything so we'll go out and pack them around that hull. Did I call it a tank hull? I meant to say bulldozer hull. Pack it around the hull and blow it to smithereens so that they have nothing there to help them when setting up tents and stuff.

So, I took a before the explosion shot, maybe about ten seconds of movie film, and we went halfway down the runway and we got turned around and set up and everything and the explosion went off five seconds prior to the time it was supposed to so I just barely got my camera up there. I just caught it as it was blowing up. I shot a minute or so of that and I shot an aftershot and close up of what was left of it after the explosion. We did a pretty good job although there is still enough metal there for them to come back so any time we have more dud rounds to blow up we'll take them out to that point, pack them in around the hull and just keep blowing it up until there's nothing left.

I had a little frog here in my room in this cage that I've got. I covered it with a board, but

there was an inch that wasn't covered. Although the cage is about a foot high, the doggone frog got out. He can jump up on the side of the wire and hang on and just climb out, which is what he did. So, next time I'm out running around by the turn around point I'll check the puddles and catch some more frogs.

I've got two complete sets of Vietnamese fatigues which are flower power type fatigues. They are the largest size that the Vietnamese make and they just barely fit me. I've got two complete sets so I think I'll wrap them up sometime, send them home to you. You can give one set to Chuck if you'd like. They're both exactly alike. I'll have two shirts and two pants. I don't know if I'll send them all at once or not, but you can send the first set that I send home, you can give that to Chuck. I'm sure they'll fit him. If they fit me they ought to fit him perfectly too. They're just perfect for hunting, real nice colors of greens and browns and I'll keep trying to get more.

I wrote a letter to Larry the other night. I didn't tell him a whole lot, just local news and stuff. I wrote a letter to Phil Frank. My mom sent me a birth announcement of his latest child which is a girl. It had their address on it in East Lansing so I thought, "Oh, what the heck. I'll just write them a quick note saying 'hi,' and 'congratulations.'" Stuff like that. I told them I saw his two cartoons in a couple of different Dune Buggy magazines. (Gap in tape) regular fatigue jacket, let's see, besides my Special Forces patch on the arm, my First Lieutenant bars, my crossed rifles, my jump wings, my Vietnamese jump wings, my name tag, US Army tag. I've got a LLDB patch that goes over the left pocket and I've got my Vietnamese rank which goes about the second button down in front on the hole side, not the button side. That would be the left side. The left side overlaps the right side.