

This section of the Journal takes me from my arrival in Vietnam to my first time out in the boonies.

## **November**

### ***4 Nov 67***

Around 8 PM this evening, after 18 hours of traveling via Anchorage and Tokyo, we landed in Cam-Ranh bay. It was hot, like we expected and even hotter in the buses that took us to the processing building where we filled out "mucho" papers. They let us go soon after that and we went to our barracks which are surrounded by sand bags. That night as I went to take a shower we heard a fire fight across the bay. They fired machine-guns, flares, the works. First time I've heard them firing at men instead of paper targets. We'll stay in Cam-Ranh Bay two days they said. It's pretty dark around here, but we've been told it's the safest place in Vietnam. Too bad we got to leave so soon.

### ***6 Nov 67***

I'm suppose to leave today [for Phan-Rang]. While I wait, I'm ducking all the details they're handing out. I feel very lazy.

### ***8 Nov 67***

I've been in Phan-Rang since the sixth. We came here by truck over forty miles of road. I was a little nervous when they first told us we were traveling by truck. You hear so much about ambushes and all that every time we passed through a thickly wooded area I would casually sink lower into the truck. We did have one M-16 rifle on the truck but we really didn't need it. The road was busy and secure.

It was a beautiful ride as far as the scenery went. All the kids waved at us and some asked for cigarettes, or just held their hand out for anything. When we would roar by without giving them anything they would still keep looking at us until we disappeared around a corner. They never looked mad or indignant because we didn't hand them anything...

Here in Phan-Rang, the home of the 101st Airborne in Nam, it's pretty deserted since most of the division is up North. The 506th (new here from the States) is having a beach party today before they leave for the boonies, too.

The Air Force has an airfield here and jets and helicopters are always zooming and turning and making a lot of noise.

An artillery position of 102's are about 75 meters from my barracks and every time they fire at Charlie my body feels like sound waves were passing through it.

The Australians are here in Phan Rang, too. They wear shorts and them hats with a side pinned up. They look real British and real cool.

I forgot to mention that all the guys that were with me at Ft. Benning were sent here to the 101st...When I was in Cam-Ranh Bay I met Seda, who was with me in Basic Training. He told me that Camacho was in a California hospital recuperating from wounds he got from a mine.

### ***9 Nov 67***

Yesterday Westmoreland talked to the 506th before the assembled battalion. I wasn't to far off behind him listening. He said if a combat jump is necessary he would consider the 506 for the job - and that brought cheers. They left this morning for the boonies in a convoy of trucks.

[Later]

Today I went down to the strip, a sort of Vietnamese Bourbon street. It was one small dirt street about 200 meters long bordered by "tea houses" and bars. Me and Chirella, an Italian from NY went into one of the bars where he knew the girls. He had a girl called Kim there and Mama-san sent me one called Len. They both looked like ...children but Kem was 17 and Len was 24. They were very small and seemed to be clean. We drank and bullshitted for a couple of hours.

...Chirella and I were sitting- fooling around with the girls when we heard shots out in the street. My heart dropped like lead to my ass. We dropped the girls and headed for the door. This strip is outside the perimeter and we had no weapons.

It turned out to be a Vietnamese nut who was walking down the center of the street shooting a carbine in the air. For the rest of the time I was there I stayed nervous....

### ***10 Nov 67***

It's 7 am and it's raining outside...This is a week of classes and exercises in case we forgot some of our training. Today's the first day I put on my [jungle] fatigues with all the patches - it feels pretty good.

[later] It's 10 pm...and I just came back from the water tank where I tried to wash myself. Like usual the shower tanks ran out of water...We were issued much of our equipment today and after I got it ready I went to the beer hall where I had a few and took a picture which I'm going to send home with a letter I'm going to write next.....

I fixed up all my financial records today [insurance, etc] and they told me I'm going to the 506th. That's terrible. They're green, like me, man. I was hoping they'd send me to the 17 Cav or the 502nd. Very few fellows wanted to go to the 506. One guy re-enlisted for four years [to be re-assigned] when they told him he was attached to that regiment.

#### **12 Nov 67**

Today I got the GI's, the shits, the runs- they finally caught up with me. I've gone to the latrine mucho times and I've stayed long periods of time. But I talked to the guys about it and many of them got it too. It's the food and weather here. I've got to get used to it. I've noticed another thing many of us have in common. As we start getting assigned to regular units, everybody starts talking about "I'm going to make it." One of the guys said he's going home even if he's missing a leg or something just as long as it not his jewels and he can get layed.

In the showers I heard a fellow say if he spent 11 months in the front he'd be ok because Charlie doesn't have a bullet with his name on it. Some guy answered "it's those to whom it may concern bullets you gotta watch for."

They issued me my weapon today and I'm gong to take good care of it. That rifle is going to be with me a long time.

It's 10 pm now and I think back home it's morning and mom is working and Betsy's in school and I'm in this dark hooch full of cots and mosquito nets and surrounded by dark hills. I better go to bed and stop feeling sorry for myself.

#### **13 Nov 67**

Last night I woke up feeling terrible...I caught the chills and by the time awoke this morning I was a sick dog. I didn't eat breakfast and went on sick call.

The First Sargeant caught me sleeping in my cot later and put me to work constructing a floor. Man I sure felt shitty. This evening I ate my first meal and I'm feeling better.

#### **15 Nov 67**

...I'm not feeling bad at all...Today is the last day of P-training. Tomorrow or the next day we join our unit...I think I've lost over five pounds...I can't eat the slop they feed here, I'd rather eat C-rations.

#### **16 Nov 67**

I'm with my new unit [506] sleeping in a tent...Last night I got smashed on five cans of beer...They had a show by the Red Cross...They had some Filipinos that were all soul...The group, called the Jaguars, wouldn't come back on stage until so much was collected. When they finally came back the mood of all the G.I's had changed a little and some beer cans were thrown on the stage. Some fights broke out in the crowd, too. I was a little drunk myself, so was Chirella. We left when the show ended and sat down by a pole. We started talking about problems, Vietnam, and everything else. Finally, I got back to my tent and just fell down on the cot and was out.

#### **17 Nov 67**

They worked me hard today. I dug a hole for dumping burnt shit - painted a floor red- and the ultimate, they put me on KP for the afternoon.

#### **20 Nov 67**

...The last three days I've been doing the same thing-details...They told us this morning that we'll leave for the field on the 22nd. I haven't got any letters yet, but I should soon. This afternoon Stutter Brown asked me out to "lunch" and we got high. I was blind, man. Everything was green, man, the grass on the field blinded me. I didn't think I'd make it to the Red Cross. Man, was I sweating. Let me tell you about Brown. He's a brother from Philly ... He stutters when he talks but, man, he can sing. He's 23 and has a wife and a kid.

We kind of want to go (me and Brown) [to the field] because we hate these details they're always putting us on. And I think I'd prefer to sleep in the open than in this hot stuffy tent....

**22 Nov 67**

Today we waited until 2:30 pm with all our equipment ready; rucksack, ammunition, etc. then they told us we weren't going to the field. I didn't care but they put us on details immediately....Tomorrow's Thanksgiving and I wish I was home.

**23 Nov 67**

Thanksgiving Day. Today I was on K.P. all day. Thanksgiving Day on K.P. We worked hard because they served a real big meal for dinner. They had turkey and potatoes, candy, cakes, shrimp cocktails, everything. They tried to make it real nice and it was in a way. They put white table clothes on the tables- they needed ironing but they were clean. Man, when I started eating the dinner, I thought about home and I felt real bad. When we finished K.P. the mess sargeant had a bottle of vodka and some rum. We drank a lot and I got high...I wrote Joe because the other day I saw his name on the killed in action list...but his name was under the Marines Killed so it can't be him...

**24 Nov 67**

It's early in the morning and we're ready to move out to the field again. We waited three hours on the [helicopter] field and we didn't go out. We're back in the tent again.

**25 Nov 67**

We're not leaving today either. I'm getting kind of use to this place now...Last night there was a fight in the beer hall...A Mexican sargeant is sleeping in our tent now. He's a young guy...looks like Victor...He got a three day pass for supposedly killing the battalions [3rd, 506] first gook...

Everybody smokes pot her in Nam. Well not everybody, but a good fucking bunch of them...Then there's 'D' (we call him D). He's a Texan who smoked it here in the tent for the first time a few nights ago. He went a little crazy and took a knife and stabbed himself in the belly. All this time I was in the tent sleeping. I found out about it the next day....They told us again that we leave tomorrow.

[later]

A little while ago while we were painting metal cones they came and told us to get ready to leave...Well history repeated itself. We waited, the helicopter came and left, and here I am in the tent again.

Tomorrow's another day.

**26 Nov 67**

It's late in the evening but there's still light. But it's getting dark quickly because the skies are gray with clouds. I'm sitting behind the tent writing this. The other fellows are on the other side hitting a softball. I heard them call my name a few minutes ago but I didn't answer because I was reading. I like to play softball but I like to read, too. Especially Hemingway. I was sitting on the sandbags that surround the tent (that I filled and carried here) when I suddenly felt like writing. So. I think it's Hemingway. Every time I use to read him at home the same thing would happen- I'd close the book on a chapter and go write until I got disgusted then start reading again.

As I look around me now, it looks like something out of a movie. The scenes around me could have been erected by Freedom Land or Disney Land and titled "An Army War Camp". It looks so perfect that it's hard to believe. Yet, I'm still in Phan-Rang, imagine how it will be in the field. I know my eyes are looking forward to it. Then if somebody looked at me right now they'd see a young man sitting on sandbags writing something in a large notebook. He doesn't have a shirt on and he's dirty. On the tanned bare parts you can see a light film of dust and his baggy pants are really filthy. And finally, along side of him is a book titled "Earnest Hemingway's 'A Movable Feast' "

Well I just felt like writing.

Today I received my first letter. I was happy as can be. It was from Betsy and she said mom worries a lot. That worries me.

Today I also got assigned to a platoon (2nd) by the bull of a First Sergeant. He practically promised us that we'd leave for the field tomorrow- we'll see.

Now I'll read some more.

This part of my journal takes me from the first days in the boonies to my first day in Phan-Thiet.

### **29 Nov 67**

I'm on top of a hill near the China Sea, and I'm very tired.

Yesterday they finally brought me out to the field. First they took me by truck to HQ camp and from there they put me on a helicopter and flew it between hills into a valley where "A" company had its perimeter. That ride was something. "A" company was in a small deep valley.

One side of their perimeter was on a wooded hill which was practically a cliff. On all the other sides there were hills. The copter came back about three more times to drop provisions and every time he left his propellers would chop some branches off trees. We left that valley around 4 pm and climbed to the top of a hill where we bedded down.

I froze. [The nights were cold on top of those hills.]

The next day we tried to find a way down this gigantic hill. We humped and humped, but every time we found ourselves in front of steep rocks. Finally the platoon leader sent a squad to find a path. It was a six man squad and I was one of them.

Well we finally left that hill just to climb this one.

The China Sea is in front of us and to our right another hill. I'm finally in the boonies...

### **30 Nov 67**

Today we got re-supplied. I was really terrified at the thought that I have to carry all this stuff. I got 9 C-ration meals- that's a hell of a load- plus a hundred rounds of ammo for the M-60 and a trip flare. [I also carried ammo for my rifle, grenades, panchos, entrenching tools, etc]... we went down by the beach to get our supplies...I got about six letters...I also got to take a bath in a small stream. I took off all my clothes and went in. The bottom of the stream was mud but I didn't mind.

As I was getting out, naked, a helicopter landed a few yards away and everybody saw me and kind of new how great I was feeling. They also gave us beer and cokes and a hot meal...We all know this means that we aren't going back to Phan-Rang but instead to Phan-Thiet.

[Later, back on the hill]

It's starting to rain this evening so I built me a small hooch with my poncho. I got mines between two rocks and I'm under it writing right now.. It's about 3 1/2ft by 3 1/2 ft and 2 ft high.

One of the letters I got today was from Betsy who said mom doesn't drink milk because I wrote and said I don't drink milk here. Man, that's just like her. God bless her and Betsy.

## **December**

### **1 Dec 67**

Today we stayed on the hill. In the afternoon we went down to the beach and swam in the nude. [In the China Sea with those luscious green hills behind us. It was a beautiful day as I remember it.]...

I'm beginning to dig this nudist stuff. Tomorrow we leave for Phan-Thiet and as I hear, ACTION.

[Four days later. In Phan-Thiet, where we will be based for the rest of the year]

### **5 Dec 67**

I haven't had much time to fill this journal in, but I'm going to try today.

We left the beach on the 2nd in trucks and went vis Highway One (the best highway in Nam) to a base near a town called Tram.

From there we made a helicopter assault [my first] on a paddy field about seven miles away. Since then I've been humping like a mule. We've heard a lot of firing but we [my platoon] haven't been in a fire fight yet. A fellow from "B" company was killed the other day...There are VC in the area because we came across a VC camp and we burned the

hooches and destroyed the rice. I'm writing this in a hurry because we're moving out in a little while and I'm suppose to be watching the woods...

[later, same place]

I've been on guard here for quite a while so I think I'll write. This mountain we're on was really hell to climb. One time I thought I couldn't sweat no more. Another time I was sure my legs were going to buckle under (That rucksack is really kicking my ass.)

It's nice and flat at the top though, but we had to dig in when we got up here.

[The next paragraphs shows that we are green , nervous troops]

Last night a few grenades were thrown because the guys thought they heard something.

When I was on guard (about 4 am) it was black as outer-space and all I could do was listen. Then the wind -which sounds like a subway train when it's coming, then shakes all the trees around you, then leaves quiet behind-well this wind grabbed a branch and hit me with it. Man, I almost screamed. I couldn't see what hit me.

I'm so thoughtful while on guard, I think about home and what time it is and where mom and Betsy probably are...and what I'm going to do when I get back. Real nice, you know, then this branch hits me, Wow.

[Betsy, the night was so black, I couldn't see what hit me. I remember almost jumping out the foxhole.]

Descending the mountain, my squad is going to be on point and they've designated me and Owens as left flank men...

I haven't taken a bath since the 1st of December...I'm scared my teeth will rot if I go on like this for a year. I'm already at the point where not washing doesn't bother me. I even take a crap in the woods like it's normal.

#### **7 Dec 67**

...we mad a helicopter assault in a rice paddy but we didn't surprise any gooks. We've been here all day waiting for the supplies to come in. This LZ [landing zone] is just one big rice paddy field.

The other night ...at trip flare in my pack went off and destroyed my shirt, ammunication, the firing device for the claymore [mine] and other odds and ends. It was early in the morning and still dark when it happened. I felt shitty....I don't know what's happening to me. I left my bandoleer under a tree the other night and then I thought I lost my claymore. I think this place is getting to me. I can't stand humping. I think about ways of getting out of this....Today they made me assistant machine-gunner. That's more weight. That M--60 is heavy.

We [2nd platoon] still haven't seen any gooks.

#### **10 Dec 67**

We're back in Song-Mau...Since the 7th all we did was hump.

...Today we got everything ready to move out at a moments notice, all we're doing now is waiting around. It's very hot and Gunner just brought some cokes back. They're hot but good. In Betsy's letter yesterday, she says Victor got wounded and is going home. It had always occurred to me that one of us would be wounded. Probably more. ( I forgot to mention I got 15 letters the last time we were re-supplied.)...We think we're moving to the Cambodian border. It's a little hotter over there, I think. [Hotter=more Action] All the guys are itching for a fire fight because all we've done so far is hump. We're suppose to leave here in C-123's.

Every day makes me more home sick. It's hard to believe I have to stay here 11 more months. Mom keeps writing and asking me to send her the Chaplains's address. In her letters she keeps blessing me and telling me to have faith. She sure must be nervous.

Betsy's letters are funny, sometimes she writes them up like newspapers. I hope I keep getting their letters...

#### **11 Dec 67**

We're in Bu-Loc.

We have no idea what's going to happen next. All we know is that we're near Cambodia.

We're dug in and waiting for an order to move out. It's cold here....

#### **12 Dec 67**

Again, this afternoon, we moved from Bu-loc, in my third helicopter assault. It was the first time I came in on the first helicopter load, and when the gunners opened up with the M-60's I thought we were being fired on and the LZ was hot. I became a little scared but not as much as I thought. As it turned out the LZ was cold and the gunners were shooting it up just in case....There's a trail near our position and we've set up and ambush.

A little while ago a trip flare was set off accidentally and maybe gave our position away. These woods have tall thin trees that are close together. The trees are bare and leaves cover the ground everywhere. I believe we can easily hear anything moving if we're alert. As a matter of fact I thought I heard something just now but I think it was an animal. It's twilight now, almost dark...

I'm assistant machine gunner now so I'm set up with Edwards, "the gunner", and Sargeant pulley. We'll be pulling guard every third hour...I have the first guard...I wanted to sleep good tonight because I ate a LURP (beef with rice) and canned peaches and apple juice that mom sent me. I also finished the Fig Newtons. I'll write mom and tell her to send me some more...it's a luxury out here.

#### **14 Dec 67**

Today we're suppose to be annihilated. At least it was predicted by the same lady who predicted Kennedy's death...

Well so far it's been pretty quiet around here. We moved last night and set up another...ambush.

...Last night another platoon had an ambush set up on a trail near ours...somebody walked into it. We heard lots of firing and we got ready to move. But instead they called in artillery and we remained in position until night time when we moved here.

#### **17 Dec 67**

Well, she was wrong. At least the 506th didn't get annihilated. I haven't heard anything about the 502 or 327 either.

We got re-supplied yesterday and with it came lots of more mail. I read these letters bookoo times before I burn them.

Betsy's got her teeth missing but she should have'em replaced by now because the letter was dated the 6th...Mom's letters seem to be a bit less frantic, maybe she's calming down. I also got a letter from ...Lydia, pop's daughter. She wants me to write. I'm not too sure if I want to. She seems like an intelligent girl from the letter.

We're way up in the mountains and it's 8:30 in the morning. It's real foggy around here. I think it's really a cloud up here with us. The terrain is mostly very high grass and rice paddies. It's not thickly wooded, but sparse.

I'm making some hot cocoa now with cookies. I'm getting pretty good with these C-rations. We're learning to fix them up like regular meals.

We've been traveling mostly at night and waiting in ambush during the day. Humping at night isn't so bad cause you don't sweat that much and now that I hump the m-60 every other day it means a lot not to sweat...

#### **20 Dec 67**

First let me say that today I complete eight months in the army. And I think this stinking Army is going to keep us out here for Christmas.

The night before, Sgt Keefer's 3rd squad was set up along a trail in ambush. We weren't too far away up on a hill ready in support. That night, while I was on guard (1:30am) shooting broke out. I heard the Lt. say "Put your stuff on," and I knew Keefer's squad must've seen something. We grabbed our weapons and jumped in the dug position. The Lt. took the second squad to secure the perimeter. Me and the gunner stayed in the foxhole and the rest of the fire team was moved to another position. We thought we'd get hit that night. In a way I was excited and ready. We heard helicopters coming so I knew somebody must have been shot. Later we learned Keefer had been shot in the hip and Campbell in the leg, arm and throat. Campbell died before the helicopters got here. Campbell is the first man killed in the platoon. The medic tried to help him breathe while still on the hill by punching a hole in his throat and inserting a tube for oxygen (tracheotomy) . All this in the thick of night.

I met Campbell back in Phan-Rang when he gave out some cookies he had received from home. As a matter of fact just the day before he was killed I traded him a pack of Winstons for a fruit cake. He smoked a lot while humping. He was a nice guy, a country boy. Keefer and Campbell were hit by the trail where they sat. No VC were killed. I'm glad I didn't know Campbell as well as these other fellows. But everybody seems to forget fast.

#### **21 Dec 67**

It's early in the morning and it's cold and damp. I'm under my poncho liner writing this. I guess we'll leave this hill we're on soon and start down for the valley. It's gunner's turn to hump the mg today. We take turns every day. That gun kicks ass. The valleys are all swampy and mushy. Sometimes you fall in holes up to your knees and you can't get out without help. The grass is real high and thick around here, and I've seen my first leeches in the water. Last night while I was just going to sleep I heard music. I thought I was dreaming but when I opened my eyes I still heard it. It was faint but distinguishable, and it WAS music. Well, Gunner, Craig (the grenadier) heard it too and when we told the Plt. Sgt (Bunn) he said it came from a village near by. I think they were celebrating a holiday. Anyway, maybe we'll head that way tomorrow.

#### **23 Dec 67**

We're on a small hill again, (we're always putting in on a hill), and I believe we're staying here until after Xmas. They're going to blast an LZ right on top of the hill for the choppers to come in. This is ORW, so far. Sgt Hayes went in today because he was sick. Now our squad has four men in sick. Sgt Pulley wants to go in because he has hemorrhoids - and brother, I lost my glasses yesterday. I might work on a profile myself. Trickle wrote me and said he got out of the field telling the Doc he had bad night vision. Man, all I keep thinking about is Xmas at home. The tree, the lights, mom and Betsy, people over the house, mom laughing cause she's getting high, Betsy dancing in the room if she couldn't go out to a dance. Beer and whisky and pretzels in the kitchen. The other night I was thinking about how I used to get mad at mom for giving me too much extra servings when I asked for only a little bit. How fucking stupid can I be. She's only thinking about me. I can't wait to be home and here mom and Betsy fighting. I don't know how I'm going to take another ten months here. Betsy wrote and said to get drunk on Xmas so I won't think about home. But, we won't get enough beer for that out here.

#### **25 Dec 67 Merry Christmas**

Last night we all slept on guard because the hill was packed with men and it was Xmas Eve. Besides that a cease fire was in effect, but that really didn't mean anything. All the RTO's really spirited up on the radios. They talked about Santa coming into the perimeter on 0001 hours of the 25th,

"so don't fire up". And another was saying songs like,

Jingle Bells, shots and shells, VC in the grass

Take this Merry Xmas and shove it up your ass

We had the radio at our position and they had us laughing. This morning when we woke everybody was in good spirits. A fellow walked around the hill with a shaving cream as a beard and a poncho liner under his shirt for a belly. He strode around saying "ho,ho,ho", but Santa doesn't wear a steel pot and an M-16 rifle.

Later the choppers came in and we ate hot chow and went to mass. There was a girl from the Red Cross in a Sant uniform serving food - that was something really out of place out here. We sang carols while we ate near the choppers. Trying to sing Silent Night with turkey in your mouth. I didn't really go to mass because I had to stand guard, but I sneaked over near the mass and stood guard there. When the priest started giving communion I went over, received, then went back on guard.

We brought beer, cokes, C-rations, candy, and other supplies back to our position. I also got two packages beside the mail. One was from mom with bookoo stuff, and the other was Spanish candy from Abuelo. I really ate like a starving dog and traded all my ginger ale for beers. Man, I had to run down the hill twice to take a crap. Everybody was doing it. Lots of guys received packages and people were trying to give food away. Man, to

think of those times past, and to come again, when we'll jump ten feet for a can of c-rations.

The squad leaders received helmet receivers and transmitters. I hope they work out ok. Mom wrote and said that she didn't put up no Xmas tree this year. That hurt me, and made me a little sad. She also said Betsy's going to play the conga in a school show. And she'll be wearing her new teeth, too. Wow.

I hope they had a happy Xmas home.

Mom also sent me my lighter and "Catch 22" besides all the food. I got them cookies and canned fruits in my rucksack. I threw away c-rations to make room. Well, I hope next year I'll be home with the family for Xmas, and we will definitely have one gigantic Xmas tree.

## **January**

### ***January 1, 1968 Happy New Year***

I haven't written since Xmas because there really wasn't anything new to say. As a matter of fact, all we did was hump right up until New Year's Eve and we're resting today. New Years was even less a day than Xmas. we didn't get beer or anything like that. The only real big thing that happened today was my bath. I finally took a bath in a cold stream of water hidden in the woods. I stripped naked and jumped in happily.

There was suppose to be a cease fire but on New Year's Eve we waited on the slope of a hill that faced a trail in ambush. we had about five claymores and two machine-guns. Nobody showed up. But if somebody had, cease-fire or no cease-fire, they definitely would have been hurt.

I thought about the day back home and I know mom wasn't going to celebrate too much. I sure miss them. I hope there New Year's went well. (We've got to dig a foxhole now because it's getting dark.)

### ***5 Jan 68***

I don't have much time to write. We were suppose to be in Phan Rang yesterday, but C company ran into some gooks and had about 15 wounded and six killed. They also had eight missing, but these finally showed up. On the morning of the third, instead of walking down the highway to get trucked to Phan Rang, we made an air assault in C company's sector. The rest of the day, yesterday, we ran into a VC base camp. There was a small firefight (we got two wounded) then we called in Arty and FAC. They smoked the area then we moved in. We slept on a low hill that was black from the bombing. All night fires burned down below the hill. It's been about six days since we got re-supplied and I'm out of food. But today I think we'll be re-supplied. I hope we don't get too many meals.

I haven't written mom in six days, but its not my fault. Anyway, I hope she doesnt worry because I don't think I'll have a chance to write today, either.

### ***8 Jan 68***

My squad is pulling perimeter around some engineers who are behind me making bookoo noise as they cut an Limz zulu. You know why? Because we're going to Phan Rang that's why. Solid. As I write this artillery is smoking a hill (more like a mountain) to my front. so far I count about ten rounds- 2 more - 3 more. Thats it. We're glad we're going back. Behind me some guys are singing "Get on Up. Get on up now. We're going to dance, dance, dance" (more artillery). Man, I sure ate this morning. (Wow, Arty hitting hard.) I had two hot whole breads with pineapple jam. I stuffed them with hot cocoa, fried ham with hot sause, cookies, pecan cake roll, fruit cocktail and lemon-lime cool-aid. i was going to opem my can of pound cake but I was too bloated. We got re-supplied with 6 meals yesterday and for awhile I thought they'd keep us out here, but we're going in. Since we ran into that VC battalion base camp we haven't humped very much except yesterday when we humped down that bamboo cluttered mountain to get where we are now. Back on the mountain we left our rucksacks on a secured hill and went out on patrols. We destroyed everything we found. The engineers that were attached to us used explosives to demolish the bunkers. We found one cache with about 100 lbs of penicillin and three bottles of wine. (Cp got those) clothes, cans of condensed milk which we used to make milk shakes, bags and bags of rice, salt and other items. The engineers found



some rifles (mausers) using some detectors and the third platoon uncovered some VC bodies.

I saw the bodies. They were piled on each other and thousands of flies and insects were crawling all over them. I couldn't stand the smell so I had to move away and I almost fell in the hole with them too. They looked like slimy stiff plastic dummies. They had bullet holes in them and one of them had his ass sticking up and it was blown to bits. The other guys put a Recondo patch on the ass and a 101st Airborne patch on another's black smoked face.

We also saw a foot, just a foot, which was blown away by shells. I guess it was laying near the VC hospital we found. All in all we had about seven dead and twenty wounded but all we found was seven VC bodies. I hope and thing we killed more but we can't find the buried bodies.

Two other guys were killed from C company and others wounded when a grenade went off accidentally in their CP when somebody picked up an LBE. Their CO was wounded. I was near by when it happened and I could hear the yells and moans after the explosion. That sure is a waste.

Well the engineers are trying to finish up behind me so I think I'll finish here, too, for now.

### ***10 Jan 68***

Yesterday we had a seven hour truck ride. That's all right for we ended up in Phan Rang. We got picked up at that LX and brought to some small artillery rear camp. Then the next day we left on the trucks. It was an unforgettable ride. I saw so much I only wish I had a camera.

Today they gave us passes after we cleaned our rifles and got paid. Most of the guys went to the Strip or to Phan Rang, but I'm leaving it for tomorrow. Instead, I just took a bath (a cold shower, man, so good) came into this empty tent (only big Henry the soul Sargeant is here) and read my letters again, smoked a cigar and slept. The wind was flapping the sides of the tent and I was getting such a nice breeze (the sides are up). Tonight I'll write letters in the Red Cross and get high again like yesterday, the first night. Then I'll eat some french fries or steak, or bebecue sandwiches, or chicken, or fish cakes, and ice cream, or milk shakes. Man, I'm going to be piggish. Yesterday, and today, I've been eating out of snack bars. I hope we stay here awhile. In any case I'm going to see the doc about my eyes and see what I can do about getting off the line.

Yesterday night tear gas sobered me up. I was high and standing near the orderly room waiting for Owens to finish pissing so we could go to the snack bar when I suddenly whiffed some in. Somebody had thrown one (CS). Man, I ran and ran and I heard people yelling "gas". The tents were emptied as the guys ran out in underwears and blankets and all. I got it bad though and when I stopped running I coughed and finally threw up. It was worse than Basic (training).

Tomorrow, if I go to Phan Rang, or to the strip... Well, I already got my protectives for that lucky girl.

### ***14 Jan 68***

Well, we're going to make a combat blast. We will probably jump on the 17th. I'm not to nervous. Maybe it's because I imagine it will be like any other jump, or maybe it's because I think it'll be a chery jump like the 173rd's. Anyway, we were told photographers and writers will be here soon to cover it. We've been marshalled and we're restricted to the area. They have barbed wire and guards surrounding the battalion. We're jumping from 850 ft. The normal is 1250 feet. Still, there's time for the reserve (that's negative talk). This will be really something big. I wonder what mom and Betsy will say when they read it.

Yesterday, I went to the strip with my new Yashika camera and got so drunk I forgot to take pictures or get anything else. Instead, I blew about \$30. I played cards with this baby-san (about 16 years old) for drinks. She was beating me until I changed the game to blackjack and with me dealing it was easy to win five straight games cheating and get drunk.

She was chubby and I got her by accident, but she could talk to you and she kind of grew on me (maybe it was the booze) but I could never see myself in bed with her. She was called Vida.

**15 Jan 68**

This morning I dropped and broke my mirror in the showers. Everybody turned and looked. We aren't superstitious, but it's so close to jump day that we don't want to take any chances.

**18 Jan 68**

I'm in Phan Thiet and we didn't jump. On the 15th the BT. Co, Lt. Col Geraci came to tell us the bad news. He shouted it out as soon as he opened his mouth. He doesn't fool around, he's a Brooklynite. The jump was canceled at the last minute and we were trucked instead here to Phan Thiet. (Probably because intelligence was aware of a VC buildup and offensive.) We're taking over the 1st Cav's section. They're pulling out in a few days.

It's not so bad over here. Right now we're sleeping in tents and sandbag hooches, [bunkers] but we'll be moving into barracks soon. The way I hear it, one company stays here than goes out than comes back every three or so weeks. That sounds good if it's true. I think it sounds too good to be true.

Phan Thiet is a pretty big town, too. It's almost a city and they got their shit in order. Their rice fields are huge and symmetrical with windmill pumps to keep the water running. They also have a tremendous grave yard. The land is flat and we're only a few hundred meters from the sea. Yesterday the guys went to the beach, but I had KP. Those are the breaks.

**21 Jan 68**

It's morning, but it's still dark and I'm writing this with a flash light. I'm in a bunker(13) on the Phan Thiet base perimeter. Edwards and Morgan are sleeping on wooden double beds behind me, and Sergeant Pulley went to chow. This bunker holds four men tightly. Today we're making an air assault with our LBE (load bearing equipment, belt/harness) and field pack - no rucksack. We're going to check out an area and if nothing is found be extracted around 4:30 PM.

This Phan Thiet seems to be OK (guarding perimeter, going out on patrols). It's not bad. I hope we stay here a long time.

**22 Jan 68**

The patrol turned out uneventful as expected. The land is real flat though, so humping won't be so bad (except we're getting out of shape.)

Today we fixed up our bunker. We got a flare parachute spread out over us like a ceiling and we've pinned up about 16 playgirl pinups. We also fixed up the entrance with more sandbags, plus my tent half as a covering. Sgt Pulley and the Gunner left to scavenge anything that the 7th Calv left behind. I've stayed behind to listen to the radio. Luckily I found some American music. I'm going to write home now. I haven't written for about five days or more.

**24 Jan 68**

Today we've been laying around the helipad in reserve. As long as nothing happens out there it's like a rest day. We read and they bring us meals. I just finished "W.F. Robie's book "The Pleasure of Love" and I'm going to try and get "The Art of Love", "Rational Sex Ethics", and "Sex and Life" by the same author.

I wrote home telling mom not to write to the captain. I was a little irritated when I got her letter saying what she was going to do. She's doing it for my good, but it might be embarrassing. (I shouldn't give a damn what the army thinks.)

**26 Jan 68**

All day was spent in the bunkers. Sgt Pulley just went to see what we're doing tomorrow. I'm in the bunker now having a difficult time seeing this since Edwards is covering the candle light, but it's his candle.

Yesterday we went out on a patrol. While our squad was following some trail prints the first three men saw about three gooks. VC? Farmers? Whatever they were we opened up. We didn't kill anybody because they took off faster than rabbits through a rice paddy.

The gunner had just given me the mg to carry because he was tired when we spotted the gooks. I didn't see them but I ran up to fire. I got off two rounds when the mg jammed. I turned around for Edwards but he wasn't there. I always told him that whenever we get into action for him to take the machine gun but instead he ran off firing MY m-16 which he was carrying. I don't know much about the m-60 and when it jammed I got excited for a moment. I was cursing him and calling his name and we argued hotly later on. I took the belt out of the gun and reloaded. I fired and it jammed again. By the time I had fixed it the gooks had disappeared.

Whenever we get into a fire fight I want to have my M-16, not the M-60. But so far, everything something happens, I was carrying the M-60.

## **February. TET**

### ***1 Feb 68***

Yesterday we killed 15 VC and captured two. We also killed two innocent people. "Sorry about that" said the Lt.

We broke into a house and shot a Buddhist monk's brains out and in the next house we left a wounded old man crying with his daughter and grandchildren and their grandmother laying on the floor with a bullet through her face.

I was getting to feel sick in a queer way because it seemed nobody gave a damn. Later I put five bullets in a dying VC's stomach and shot another in the head "just to make sure." One VC came out of a bush with his hands up and everybody just looked at him. He had a 45 in his hand and he suddenly started shaking it. Everybody opened up and he fell like a crumbled dummy. When later I looked at his body, his arm and finger had been shot off. His guts and brains were laying on the red ground.

Agaro was wounded in the arm. One VC we captured was a political officer. He had been wounded in the leg and he stood up with his hands way up. That saved his life. Earlier me and the gunner patched up an old man that we wounded and left babbling with fright. Nobody gave a damn.

That night we surrounded a pagoda that we received fire from and called all kinds of shit on it without success. When we moved out the first platoon on our opposite side opened up. They shot our way and killed two Arvns and wounded two more. Those little guys were ok and I had given them cigarettes and they gave me and the gunner cake.

Before the second one died me and three other fellows carried his litter over the grave yards and all the time he was moaning and drowning from blood in his throat. Craig was really frustrated, and later he carried the Arvn to a jeep that took off to the aid station. But the little man died soon after that...

Later, I didn't want to look at the Arvns because we had killed them but they didn't seem to care either. I made a foolish attempt to apologize to one. Bon, the interpreter was slightly upset, though. It was a really fucked up day.

That was yesterday. Today we went out on patrol for about four hours and came back.

### ***5 Feb 68***

On the third (actually on the second), we made an air assault into a VC area. As we combed the area we came upon a young man and his family in a hooch. As we were checking them out we received fire from the next house. Schultz and Daniels were hit by the initial fire. Schultz in the chest, Daniels in the leg. As we fired back I received some shrapnel in my foot, but it hardly penetrated the boot.

When there was a lull in the fighting, Gressett came out and told me (with his eyes wide open) that there were gooks inside the house in a tunnel. The Gunner put half a belt into the hole. When we looked we had killed four people. Two kids, the father and mother, plus shot the hand off an old lady. Another blind feeble old lady and a small boy weren't hurt. What can I say.

Schultz was carried inside the house as we fired and received fire from other houses. Air strikes were called. We watched the jets destroy the houses while Schultz moaned and the lady with her hand shot off moaned and the flies began to nibble at the dead kids.

Daniels was left on the porch of the next house because we couldn't get to him. There he would bleed to death. But I still think we could have got him.

Finally they got men to carry Schultz back for a dust-off. Sgt Henry, Gressett, Rincon, Sgt pulley, Sgt Mathews and another guy from another platoon started to take him . Schultz is a heavy guy. As they passed over open ground they were hit by automatic weapons fire. Gressett was hit on the hip, later he went into shock. Rincon was hit by shrapnel on the knee, Sgt Henry in the arm, and the other fellow also in the arm.

While I was in the house, I heard somebody say Sgt Bunn was hit. We found his body that night. The first Sgt was killed, too.

In the house we received fire sporadically. I covered the dead kids with a bamboo mat and tried to console the old woman without a hand. But how do you do that. Nobody else cared. They kept her in that hole with all the dead and stink and the flies. I bandaged her hand and gave her water. The kid too. The other guys played a radio they found while Daniels was bleeding to death on the nearby porch.

We moved out that night and the next morning after a sniper had two companies pinned down in the open LZ (We Fac'ed him, too) we returned to the battle area. i guess all the bodies were dragged away because all we found was some dead women. One was pregnant.

Later during the day we moved through the outskirts of Phan-Thiet where the Arvns had been battling. Many bloated and burned bodies lay in the streets and houses. We went through the homes eating the bananas on the alters that they leave as a sacrifice for Buddha (snatched out of Buddha's hands) and taken anything else we desired. Yesterday morning while it was still dark, they extracted us. It was good to be on the chopper riding back.

Sgt Fellman is our new platoon sgt (Bunn being killed) and Sgt Gentry, that fuck, is acting first.

That was on February second and third. Today we've been resting except for Gunner who is on K.P.

I think I earned my CIB.

#### **15 Feb 68**

I'm writing from the hospital ward here in the Phan Thiet base. I came here with stomach pains, fever, languishness and the doctor thought I had hepatitis. That's a liver disease. But today's the third day I've been hear and they'll probably release me tomorrow. The pains have practically gone.

I haven't written in here for long while because I've been lazy and not in the mood. I should keep this journal more diligently because many things have happened since I last wrote in it. I'm too tired to write about everything that's occurred but I'll talk some.

Jackie Walker, D'way, Georgia and Owens were all wounded by a rocket when we were making a sweep through the Phan Thiet countryside. The first three were badly mauled.

We now have 18 men in the platoon and they're going to switch squad members around. I also forgot to mention that I met a PR from Bklyn named DeJesus. He's a cool head.

#### **17 Feb 68**

This morning I left the hospital but didn't return to the bunkers until this afternoon. First I got my clothes fro the gook laundry, then a haircut and massage. I showered, ate lunch and then left for the bunkers, and here I am now.

The place is cleaned up and my shit was thrown in my duffel bag by pulley, I imagine. I'll bet they put me to work this afternoon.

(18 February - near midnight, Phan Thiet is mortared but I didn't write about it.)

#### **20 Feb 68**

It's very early in the morning and the skies are red in the east where the sun will show itself in a small while. All night there was firing in that direction with bullets whizzing over our heads now and then. I'm behind a dyke and there's an open field in front of me, then a wide shallow river, then houses and palm trees. The gooks and Arvns have been having it out on the other side of the river all night.

Yesterday on this side (three bullets more now just went over my head) we were really mauled. Luckily my platoon was trail so the first and third got all the casualties which totaled 8 dead and 10 wounded. Rate was killed and D.J. my boy, was wounded. How

serious I really don't know because of the confusion, but I'll find out today. I hope the mg works well. Yesterday I had a malfunction.

Well we've been here all day (it 10 to 5) and we just had CS (gas) dropped on an area near by. They had us wear gas mask as a precautionary measure. Its been pretty hot just lying under the sun all day, but it's better than humping.

Today, while out here in the field, I got to put in for R&R. I chose Hong Kong in March.

**21 Feb 68**

Last night we shot up the perimeter and tis morning we found a dead good, AK-47, rucksack, chicom grenade, and a few other things.

The train flare incident shook me up a little and I thought it out real good.

When I get back home I'm going to learn how to play an instrument, take up radio as a hobby, and write. It'll be good for me.

Last night flares and artillery were fired all night pieces of shrapnel kept flying over my head buzzing. Some even stopped right near me. We're going to move out now.

**23 Feb 68**

We were extracted on the 21st and stayed in Phan Thiet base camp. I wrote letters, drank beer, and saw movies. Today we're back in the boonies. We made a combat assault this morning. I'm on the LZ now.

They told us last night that Schultz died in Japan of complications.

**25 Feb 68**

We made another combat assault yesterday and today again I'm writing from an LZ. We made an uneventful sweep of the area burning houses as we went. Today we'll do the same.

Gunner came back from R&R pale and clean. The fool's leaving us. He took a burst of three years so he could get door gunner on a chopper. The career counselor ate his mind up in Phan Rang.

Well, I didn't want to stay with the MG so I traded Craig the mg for the M-79. Now I'm a grenadier and he's the machine gunner. Sgt Hayes is back form R&R, too. He's the new squad leader and that's bad for me cause we don't like each other.

It's 12:15 now and everybody but me is eating chow (C's of course). We're strung out along rice paddy dykes and from where we're at we can clearly see the Phan Thiet base with the high antenna tower and the buildings that surround it. I got the runs again and I also have aches and all the kinds of disturbances in my stomach. Almost the same symptoms I had before. But I just went behind a burnt house and relieved myslef and I feel a little better.

I've fired about 12 rounds from my 79 so far. It's almost fun as long as nobody's shooting back. The Lt. sees a house or haystack and he says "Put a round in there" and I fire.

(Same day.) It's night time and I'm writing this by the light of a flare. We're in the Phan Thiet base camp and being mortared. the air strip near the tower is in flames and a tremendous explosion that threw a cloud of fire into the sky must have been a gas tank.

I'm in a little hole and around it I have duffel bags. The flare is dying.

**26 Feb 68**

Well, today they put us back on the bunkers because of what happend last night. I sure hope it will be like last time. I share the bunker with Sgt Hayes and Craig. Man those mortars last night wrecked bookoo shit here. Lots of buildings are no more, and they got the ammo dump.

**27 Feb 68**

We're on top of a mountain, but still in a bunker- it's LZ BARTLEY. We came up here this morning, pulled a patrol and we're back for the night. Everybody is outside bullshitting while I'm here, inside the bunker, writing by a lit electric bulb- believe it or not. The ports in the bunker are draped with ponchos so the light can't be seen outside (cause it's night now.)

There are two Puerto Ricans talking away from the group. They're behind us on a slope and you can here their quick clicking tongues talking Spanish. By that I take it they're from PR and not from NYC. But I feel for them and got mad because I heard this guy say that the two "think they're better and don't want to talk English."

I can see why Negroes get together against Whites. The Whites are nice to you when your around, but thye talk behind your back. I wish my name was Rivera or Gonzalez so they'd alway know right away that I was Spanish instead of finding out later. When ever I meet new poeple I'm going to talk Spanish first chance I get to let them know what I am. Well, we'll be pulling guard for the night soon. We have about nine guys so it'll be an hour a piece tonight.

The Spanish guys are stil talking. One is spending the night with us. He's a colored PR with a mustache. They both have mustaches. Too bad they don't let me grow one.

Chicken shit Airborne.

### **29 Feb 68**

It's just first light. It's dawn but the sun isn't out yet. Last night we left the bunkers on an ambush patrol. We set up about 8:30 PM and had 50% alert all night. Well, sgt Patterson is sleeping in our shallow foxhole behind me and I'm getting ready to make some coffee. All night I had to nudge Pat when he started snoring, that kept me awake on guard, but when he was on guard I could hear him snoring still.

## **March**

### **1 March 68**

Yesterday we went to Phan Thiet to get our A bags and rucksacks. Some joker stole my rucksack with my camera, films, pre-paid envelopes, letters from Queens college, the works. I had about \$100 worth of stuff.

Today, they're letting us relax on the bunkers. I just finished a book I started this morning and I'm startnig another one now. We might go out to the field tomorrow.

### **3 March 68**

Well, we did go out. Yesterday we made a CA and after walking and walking all that happend was that we shot at a gook we saw from a distance. I got only one m-79 round off before they yelled cease fire. IT's morning and we'll probably wal alot like yesterday. at least there are no hooches around her to be fired from.

### **4 March 68**

We woke up this morning at a quarter to six and soon after two ak-47's opened up on us. The shots came right over my head. We slept near a Viet hooch last night and the rounds came right over the hooch which is only about six feet high. We're suppose to go in today. Right now we're using Arty to shell some tree lines where some of the firing came from. Just a few minutes before they opened up I was walking around, too.

### **6 March 68**

We've been back here on the mountain since the 4th. That day the 3rd platoon took our place in the boonies, but their platoon leader sprained his ankle jumping off the chopper and our Lt. Harrison had to stay out with them. He was understandably pissed. Well, we got a new guy in the squad from Mass. He has a French name so we call him Shortround. The first day he came, me and Sgt Patterson started talkinga baout some of the fighting we've been in. We don't admit it to ourselves but subconsciously we want to impress new men and make them think we're old hands at war. I guess all men of war have always been like that. But I realize why we're going over those actions so to satisfy myself I talk the least about them. Yet I'm guilty, too.

There are rats in our bunkers, but we rarely see them. I just mentioned this because I just now saw one in front of our bunker. He looked like a cat, he was so large.

Our squad now consist of six men. Sgt Hayes - squad leader, Sgt Patterson- Team leader; Spc Craig- machine gunner; Spc Hass. The last two were just promoted yesterday to specialist. Then there's shortround and myself, the two PFC's.

Sgt Hayes, I've never got along with until very recently. But even now I'm not sure about him. He goes home in about twenty days. He don't drink or smoke and said he planned to be a priest when he returns. But that's bullshit. He probably made that promise to God before he came to Vietnam so he would be protected, but I don't think he'll even think about priesthood when he returns. When we're in action he is usually the most frightened person in our squad, but that doesn't mean he's a coward or anything.

Sgt Patterson has five years of collge in Political Science and his 24 years old. He's conscientious and careful. His biggest fault is he snores and sleeps on guard. He's always

calling me a low class Puerto Rican, or something like the inferior race- but, he just jokes. Still I can't say he's a close friend.  
Craig on the other hand is like by everybody. He's generous, brave, kind, all the good things they might say in a book - and he's only 18 years old. He's from North Carolina. There's a lot to say about him but I'm tired.  
Hass is all right. He hasn't been in our squad long enough for me to know him very well. Shortround has been with us for two days now. He seems straight.  
I wonder what they think about me?

#### **7 March 68**

Whether, it's my fault or not this journal hasn't been what I wanted. It's awkward, uninformed, and written badly. But it's written mainly for me and as little as a sentence might re-ignite my memory and fill my mind with many other things.  
There are three hills situated around LZ Bartley and all are O.P's. I am on one now. We are an early warning if gooks should come. Last night a squirrel (I believe) kicked some cans and made lots of noise (this place is littered with C-ration cans) in front of our position. We all thought there was something out there at first.  
Tomorrow we'll be going out to the field again. I heard we'll hump the mountains this time. That's bad.  
There's a lot of phoniness in this war. Guys exaggerate combat stories and make up things that make them feel bigger. Many are trying to see this war through the same eyes they see war movies of Korea or WWII.

#### **10 March 68 Happy Birthday Me**

I'm not especially happy that I'm twenty years old now.  
This morning a fellow called Nelson from another platoon was killed while his squad was on O.P. My squad was also on O.P. and when we heard all the firing we did the area. I didn't know Nelson.  
It's 11am and the second platoon is now out here alone. The rest of the company was extracted. From what I hear we're going to set up an ambush tonight and get choppered out in the morning.  
Well today I'm twenty but I don't feel any different. I always said that I'd be a man when I reach this age.  
Sgt Patterson saw me writing and wanted me to mention the fact that he saved this journal this morning when we were running back from the O.P.  
Man am I funky. I or my clothes or both stink. It's about ten days of soot and dried sweat that combines to perfume me with this smell.

#### **11 March 68**

Yesterday we killed a VC for Nelson. After they sent everybody back in but our platoon we were resting near the river, well hidden, when we saw four gooks cross the open field. When we opened up they started running (of course) but we got one and wounded another who got away (Hass finished him off later.) Last night we set up another ambush further down the river and got into a little fire fight with some VC. Nobody was hurt.  
This morning we're getting re-supplied for another day or two in the bush.

#### **12 March 68**

(back at LZ Bartlett they held a ceremony for the company's KIAs. but we were in field)  
Yesterday after walking until about 2:30 PM looking for Charlie Cong we stopped and ate. After we ate we spotted five gooks and while we waited for them to get closer they saw us and opened up. We returned fire and called in arty and gunships then we moved out under darkness and made a perimeter around a rice paddy dyke. I'm here now.  
This morning we had a wild minute where we fire all we can outside the perimeter, this is in case there were VC out there ready to hit us at dawn. We might go in today.

#### **16 March 68**

Well I didn't know I had neglected this book since the 11th. Time sometimes disappears so fast. The same thing happens with letters. I believe I wrote a letter just the other day when in actuality it'd been more than a week.  
Well, on the 11th we came back to the mountain bunkers on LZ Bartley. We've been here since, but today I'm on one of the O.P.s Last night when we got here we got high listened

to the music box. There was a full moon and being on top of this mountain by ourselves (nine of us in my squad) it was a cool scene. We have nine men in our squad because of two new guys.

I still have stomach problems which are causing diarrhea. Sometimes when I take salt the trouble goes away.

It just came to me that the radio we're listening to now is the same one we found in that hooch the day Daniels, Bunn, and the others were killed.

**19 March 68**

I'm in the rice paddies again. I've been here since the 17th when I made my 17th chopper assault. It hasn't been too eventful. I mean we get shot at by snipers but that's a common everyday occurrence. We'll probably go back to LZ Bartly today or tomorrow, stay there a few days then come back out on patrol. (They keep rotating the platoons.) Last night I slept pretty good in my prone.

**22 March 68**

We made another CA this afternoon after only two days of rest back at Bartly. I'm resting by a rice paddy dyke and behind me some guys are digging up a bunker after they threw a grenade in it. The just pulled out three little girls and a boy, miraculously all alive, but in shock I think. Now they say somebody else is in there.

I just went over to see. It's gory. There's a dead mother with her dead baby on her stomach. There's another young woman, dying. I think they're digging up another body now. The little children that are alive don't seem to be in shock and they are very cute.

Big eyes and round faces.

Dig it. They just gave the order to eat.

**23 March 68**

Still out in the field.

**24 March 68**

Still in the field and will probably be here a few more days. We get shot at almost everyday by snipers. Captured two detainees and a woman from a hooch after we saw another man running from it with a weapon. We opened up on the hooch with everything and I set it on fire with one om my 79 rounds. When the fire slackened the old woman (skinny with hair cut like a man) ran out behind the house with a white kerchief and waved and bowed and kowtowed and practically started crawling to us until we stopped firing. (I was the first to yell, "Stop firing motherfuckers", and when the LT heard me he repeated "Stop firing motherfuckers", and they did.) After the lady came two men. When we finished searching the area and killing all the dogs and chickens around, we were fired at by two weapons and a 79. WE then called in ARTY.

**26 March 68**

We're still in the boonies. I've been out of water since yesterday at 2:pm and it's hard. We tried digging a hole in a stream bed, but the water's too far down. There's a lake near by and maybe we'll get water there.

**27 March 68**

Yesterday we moved to the lake like I thought we would. We got our water and dug in. That night at 1:30 am while I was on guard, AKs opened up to my front. I jumped in my position and quickly fired a 79 round at a clump of bushes that I saw tracers coming from. After my round went off, he stopped firing. Maybe I got him, I thought. The firing was still going on and I loaded another 79 round to fire at the same spot. Then my face, head, and neck were slammed with shrapnel, a rocket went off right in front of my position. I'm hit, I thought and was scared. Then I said I'd better keep firing but I only got off one more round. My head was aching and more rockets were coming in. I layed down in my position and searched for blood. I found it quickly. There was a hole in my chin and another in my neck. Later I found another hole in my head. All were bleeding. I became more scared. I thought of bleeding to death and many other things but remained cool. When the firing stopped I told Pat I was wounded. He called back and asked me where? I told him and then he called the medics. Lopez was also hit that night and we were both medevaced about thirty minutes later in the darkness of night.



I'm in Phan Thiet ward now where I stayed when I had hepatitis. My neck and chin are swollen and I'm all bandaged up. I don't know what they'll do with me, yet.

**30 March 68**

I'm in the 24th Evacuation Hospital in Long Binh, near Saigon. I was choppered here on the 28th. My face and neck are still swollen but that's the only discomfort I have. I sleep on a bed, female nurses, movies, good good, etc, etc. We're not suppose to drink beer but I have three cans by me right now and it's only 7 am in the morning. I have them in a green cloth bag so the female Lieutenants won't see them.

They approached me yesterday and got the information for my Purple Heart. Sometimes I think my mind can force certain things to happen. The hospital's alright but they've been putting us to work because they're having an inspection. Almost everybody's working, guys in light blue pajamas with arms in cast or patches eyes or noses- all working.

Today I might try to call home. (also Betsy's birthday) I hope it works out well. My face is less swollen today. For breakfast this morning i go two hard boiled eggs and a slice of toast.

(10PM) Tonight I saw a good movie outside in the hospital square. But just like the Army, just before the film ends they shut off the projector and have a police call.

Everybody wants to see the end of the flick so the job is quickly done.

**April**

**1 April 68**

My face is looking more like a face, but it's still swollen. Yesterday in a very perfunctory bedside ceremony they handed me my Purple Heart. I told this fellow across from me to take a picture when the Major shook my hand, but it all happened so fast he didn't have time.

It came to me the other day that a few days before I was wounded the body of Christ fell off my little cross that I have hanging around my neck. The fellows had said - oh-oh, he has abandoned you.

This morning they had me go to all the wards delivering news-sheets. My stomach got weak in some of those wards. I thanked God I escaped with these minor wounds. One of the patients reminded me of

**2 April 68**

There's alot of things been happening in the News:

- Johnson isn't going ato run
- Mao-Tse-Tung is dead
- A De-escalation of the war
- Israel is fighting again
- Kennedy having a good chance at the Presidency

In the local news- a 122 rocket hit here in Long Binh the other night. Unfortunately it hit an officers barracks and six of them were killed. And, the Doc said he might put some wires in my jaw today.

**3 April 68**

They wired my mouth up today. I almost panicked at first. It's a horrible feeling not to be able to open your mouth. I thought of the way I use to keep dogs jawsd shut until thye squirmed. Won't do that again. It was painful at first but now it's just very irritating. they put about a dozen needle around my mouth, jaws, and gums. At first I almost felt like laughing. The dentist and his assistant put on gloves and then another senior doctor came along and they were discussing what they were going to do using such technical language that I only recognized the "in" "and" "to" and "in" words. They discussed all this while looking down my mouth. I would've laughed if I knew where my mouth was.

I eat only liquids (liquid diet). I'll lose weight. I've also been putting a straw through a gap in my teeth and sipping cokes. My tongue feels like a caged animal looking for a way to get out.

They brought in a wounded Arvn and he just vomited. Lopez the Spanish orderly brought him a silver pan and wiped up the mess. Lopez is a PR who is about 49 years old. He's always talking Spanish and to me especially.

**7 April 68**

Today I went down to the Red Cross to return some books and I ended up calling home at \$4.40 a minute. Just before they connected me I got nervous and had to smoke. I thought mom would come on crying and nervous but she came on calm and it calmed me to, though I have to admit I was almost disappointed. But she soon began to cry like I knew she would. I talked to Betsy who asked if maybe they'd send me home. They both sounded the same. What I'd give to be home soon. Many guys here are going to Japan and I envy them even though they're leaving with bad injuries. I'm more scared than ever to return to the line. Before while I was reading I heard explosions and I got scared. My mind said they were missiles like the one I got, but bigger and soon one would hit here. I calmed down and tried to laugh at myself.

It will be Easter soon. Yesterday was Palm Sunday and I didn't know it until I ran to church thinking I was late for mass and found myself in a protestant service. The chaplain kept looking at me. Maybe it was my blue pajamas or the fact that I didn't know any songs or the liturgy of there mass. I thought about telling him at the end of the service and maybe make him laugh but I changed my mind.

I've been living on soup and ice cream sodas. 157 is my weight.

I was just visited by some nice old cowboy radio celebrity doing a good will tour.

### **13 April 68**

We have the new E-5 in charge of the hospital ward and he's bucking for E-6. Therefore, like a chickenshit army man, he puts everybody to work cleaning this and that and changing everything around. We have Tao leave our table tops almost bare now so they look uniform throughout the ward. Isn't that just like the army, they sacrifice utility for ordiliness.

Brice is leaving today- the fellow whose boat was hit by a B-40 rocket. I don't know how much longer I'll be here but it's at least another week. Some other fellows from my company came in yesterday. While the company was patrolling, they said, a sniper opened up wounding them and killing an FO.

Yesterday was good Friday and I missed mass.- They just grabbed me for another detail.

### **15 April 68**

Today my close friend Pete came down all the way from Danang to see me and to tell me Joe is dead.

I was happy to see Pete. I wanted to talk all day about home, the block, the people. We could talk about the war, too.

I told him Hose must have about 30 days left in Nam, although I hadn't heard from him. Then he told me Joe has been dead since the 31st of December, almost four months. And nobody told me. I believed Pete and yet my mind and soul didn't. My etes got wet because somewhere my brain said they should. I should have felt numb, but I couldn't. I spoke of hatred for the VC that I didn't feel. I asked how everybody took it when I was more curious then concerned. Later the conversation changed back to home and the war. I dared to laugh and act very normal.

Eventually, I'd ask about Joe again, then satisfied the talk would return to reminiscing and the future. In talking about the past, Joe's name would naturally be mentioned, but like if he was alive. About 10pm the lights went out and Pete went to bed and I lied down and listened to records on a cassette recorder turned low. As I listend, thoughts of Joe returned. I saw him playing ball, arguing with me, acting stupid, talking seriously with me, dancing at a party (slow dances only). I saw him getting shot and falling, panicking because he thouht he might die, for a fleeting moment thinking of Susie, calling for help, but I wasn't there to help. If I was there maybe I could have saved him, I thought. I would have prayed and held him and told him not to die. I turned off the recorder and grabbed a can of food and a cigarette and went outside. I ate the food and smoked the cigarette and thought more of Joe.

He really is dead. But it's funny because they always thought we were brothers and I felt it, too. He was a lot like me, but he's dead and I'm alive and can't die. But if Joe's dead why can't I die, too. Joe and I use to know what each was thinking. He probably thought he couldn't die, like I do. I'm scared now. We were both wrong. I decided to say a prayer for him. But half way through that prayer I broke and cried for the first time in many

years. Now I really believe it. Joe is dead, or I wouldn't be crying. It felt like I owed it to Joe- to cry, because soon I would be acting normal, and I knew that by crying I had acknowledged the death of a friend. When I stopped crying I felt better.

Pete is sleeping in the hospital, where they let him stay. It's late. I'll go to bed now.

**17 April 68**

This morning Pete and I shook hands after smoking one more cigarette and he left for Danang. I watched him as he walked away. He had his baggage in his right hand and the m-16 rifle slung over his left shoulder.

After leaving him I went to the dental ward and typed for them the rest of the morning until now. I hope Pete has a good trip.

**20 April 68**

It's about 11:30 Pm and I'm sitting outside my ward in a blue bench facing the hospital yard where they show movies and give shows for the patients. The lights in the ward have been out since 10:30, but I wasn't sleepy so I came out here to read by the lights of the walk-way. It's a comfortable clear night.

Earlier tonight I met a PR from 136th and Amsterdam named Cruz. He's a stone head. You can tell just by looking at him. For some reason he reminds me of Napoleon. Maybe it's his size or the shape of his head. Even though he has a busted foot from stepping on a booby trap (his third wound in Nam) he's under guard because he was in the Long Binh Stockade for being AWOL almost two months. It's a miracle he wasn't charged with desertion. After he was released from the stockade he was put to work driving a water truck. He left it one day and went to an off limits village where he stepped on a booby trap. They arrested him again even though he's wounded. He's been here ten months with the 1st division and will probably leave for Japan soon.

Two very old memories popped into my head today. The first one was about Mom and how she use to tell everybody how good me and Betsy were. Especially how Betsy would help with the dishes and keep the house clean. The second was about a friendly ghost me and Betsy use to have when we were young. I think his name was Charlie. We use to talk to him. Laura must have thought we were crazy

I had a dream a few nights ago. I saw Betsy and children who I knew were my brothers and sisters. I was on one side of a muddy pond and they, trying to cross it and reach me, drowned. I wanted to cry and with this feeling went to eat and tell mom. But Betsy, mom, and Nereida were at a table eating when I got there. I was glad to see Betsy was ok, but the other kids weren't around. I think it has something to do with Joe's death.

**22 April 68**

This afternoon Lt. Harrison, the colonel, and two other officers came to see me with the first Sgt. I was kind of surprised and embarrassed to see and talk to them. The Lt. brought me my mail and after we talked awhile they left.

Tonight I saw a great show at the mess hall. It was put on by some Vietnamese with some beautiful bitches. They could play good music and they finished it off with magicians.

**May**

**3 May 68**

I'll leave here in a day or two. The wires on my teeth have been off for four days and they even cleaned my teeth. I'm starting to gain weight again..

I've been reading a little Philosophy lately. I once read where every man should have a philosophy. It's a good idea.

**4 May 68**

Today I complete half my time in Vietnam - 6 months to go.

I met another PR here in the hospital from the 101st ABN. His name is Jose Pacheco. He was wounded in the leg when our own artillery fired short and killed 7 G.I.'s and wounded 20. Today they took off his right leg above the knee. He's taken it pretty good.

**6 May 68**

38 Days in this hospital now.

Pacheco was out taking some air today. His missing leg didn't seem to bother him. They cut it above the knee. There's a little girl here with her father who's a Lt. Col in the Vietnamese Army. She's blind and they're operating on her eyes to try and save her sight.

She's real cute and is constantly playing with her hands and talking. Another patient, a middle aged sargeant came in yesterday practically deaf and blind. A bomb exploded near him destroying most of his ear drums and knocking out one eye. I sure have been lucky. Another Vietnamese old man across from me has just smoked some opium. He's real small and skinny and the blue pajamas the army gave him are much too big. He has his right eye bandaged. I don't know what happened to him. He has a bag of opium under his pillow and once in a while he rolls some in a newspaper and takes a dep drag before quickly putting it out. Now he's lying back and looks very contented and satisfied. From where I'm lying writing this I see the little Vietnamese girl sleeping and her father counting money on the next bed. To my left is a tall blonde fellow, infantry. There is the little old man high on opium, the deaf sergeant, the Jew from NY with both eyes hit by shrapnel. Across and to my left is a tall, thin mustachioed fellow with army glasses reading a novel. He has 5 years of French language in college and studied a year in Paris before he joined the Army. Why? I don't know. He was shot through the ear lobe and plans to go back to France when he leaves the Army. Banyon, the colored medic is walking around. He's a homeboy from the Ft. Green projects.

**7 May 68**

I saw "Bonnie and Clyde" tonight. I think it's one of the best pictures I ever saw. It was so good I had to say it in this journal. The part that touched the core of my heart was the moment before they were both riddled with bullets. One minute they were happy and suddenly they knew something was wrong and the look they gave each other as Clyde tried to reach her. I thought, that's the way it would be at death.

**15 May 68**

I'm now in Phan Thiet. Arrived yesterday evening. I was released from the hospital on the 10th of May, but I stayed on Long Binh for two days drinking like a freed man. Then I went to Bien Hoa and stayed there tow more days spending boo-koo money int he tea houses there. One tea-house, the 32, was pretty expensive and when one of the girls tried to cheat Hernandez, the PR I was with, I straightened her out. She got mad and said she hoped the VC crocodiled me.

I went to another club the next day and had a good time, but in the afternoon I left for Phan Thiet. This place has changed some and not all the fellows are here. I'll probably join the company in the mountains tomorrow.

**17 May 68**

Instead of joining the fellows in the field they came back into Phan Thiet, but my platoon left again to be guard on a truck convoy of engineers to Song-Mau, I think. More important is the reason why I didn't go with them. I heard about a job working with Vietnamese recruits training them and I put in for it. So far they're still talking, but they're keeping me from going out until I get it- or not. I pray to God I get it.

I found out that while I was gone, Guymon was killed in a helicopter accident while his platoon was being extracted. Guymon was a good guy. He use to be a machine-gunner in my platoon. I remember one night in the beer hall when Guymon and me and Brady had a real good time.

Almost everybody in the company is new. I don't know hardly anybody, but the old-timers. Pitts, Clark, Adams, Craig, Hass, Sutton, Kaiser, are all still around. They're having a big infusion of men between battalions and only a very few of the old-timers are not going. Most of the fellows are going up North to Phu-by with the 327th. I'd rather stay here in the South.

**22 May 68**

Well, I'm in a Vietnamese compound where Sgt. Laus and I just finished talking to Major Ski who's in charge. He told us that what we are expected to do and the condition of the PF and RF troops here. It seems that we go out on ambushes with them and advise them when we see fit. But, they do not have to listen to us. We might go out tonight.

They put me in a billet, where I'm writing this, with a soft bed and mosquito net. The billet is divided into rooms by boards of wood and there are two men per room. They put me in someone else's bed until he returns. The compound is not at all near the town of

Phan Thiet, although there are many homes and civilians around. I think I'll like it here. Sgt. Laus, an older brother, and I hope we can do a good job here.

**29 May 68**

I notice that my last entry was written when I first entered this Vietnamese compound.

Today's entry should be the last one at the compound.

Everything was going great. Sgt Lyles and I went out on two night ambushes with the gooks and observed them. We had everything ready to start the classes and today the first Sgt. told me that we both have to go back to the 101st. They're sending men with profiles, Ford and Gregory, to replace us. We leave tomorrow.

It wasn't a bad week. I learned to drive a jeep during this last week and went on two medcaps where I helped treat Vietnamese children and adults that suffered from ailments. I felt good doing it, but the kids want you to treat every little scratch on them. The more bandages the better, and the mothers want all kinds of medicine, even if they don't know wheter to apply it or take it.

I made good friends with the houseboy, Ai, and about the only incident that occurred happened when I wrecked a stick-shift jeep belonging to a civilian. I didn't crash it, but I messed up the insides. Oh, well, That's how you learn. I'm really sorry to leave this place. I got a few letters from home. Betsy is going to work for the city, and Laura is pregnant. Another letter from Larry Trickler's mother gave me a shock. First, she said Mazitis was killed, and second that Trickler had gone awol over here.

Next week I'll complete 7 months in country. Well, Sgt Smith is fixing us our supper - I'm starving.

**June**

**4 June 68**

7 Months today. Five to go.

They've decided to let us stay with Mac V, but I don't know when we'll return. The company was in for two days, but left for the boonies again today. I haven't been missing anything, they haven't seen any action.

It's late now and I just saw "Bonnie and Clyde" for the third time. I really dig that flick. I came back to the orderly room and Pelley, Ellison, and Frenchie started a poker game, but I didn't get in it. As I watched them play it occurred to me that all three of them had been shot in Vietnam. When I turned to tell Kaiser who was siting next to me, it hit me that both Kaiser and myself had been wounded, too.

I'm sleeping on a cot outside the orderly room. Sgt Lyles is playing records out here and the night is peaceful.

**11 June 68**

I've been here at Van Lam (the name of the village right outside this Vietnamese compound) for about a week. We've started given classes to PF troops and everything is running satisfactory if not all that well. We give classes to groups of 13 or more.

Sometimes like today they look bored as hell. I don't think Sgt Lyles gives an interesting session, maybe after the interpreter gets through with what he says, it'll sound better than it does to me. Al (cowboy) and I will be given classes ourselves soon, I hope.

I've been fooling around with the girls around here and I've messed myself up. The girls don't go for that. You have to like just one. The Vietnamese Sargeant Majors daughter, Co-Hung, isn't bad but I think she found out I gave some medicine to Co-Hun and she's mad with me. I use to go on Med-caps and that's how I managed to get some aspirins for her. She wanted penicillin and I think that's what she thinks she got, oh well.

I've been taking alot of pictures lately, especially when we were given classes on the same balcony Daniels died on. I didn't recognize the place. It's funny to see the place peaceful when only a few months ago the blood was everywhere.

**20 June 68**

Yesterday I went out with Lt. Stallings to join up with a Vietnamese company that had engaged some VC. As soon as we arrived (right on highway one) we called in gunships and artillery. The Vietnamese already had one killed and one man badly wounded. He had been shot under the right eye and the bullet had exited behind his right ear. The VC were in a tree line about 800 meters from the road when we started to move up they

opened up with a machine-gun. Later after we called in artillery they stopped firing. We started moving up again when one shot was fired. The bullet landed in front of my foot. The VC positions were still quite for so hem must have been aiming carefully at me, or the Lt. I was carrying the radio and I gues I was a good target. Anyway after more artillery, we finally overran the positions in the afternoon. Well, I didn't do any charging, but the Viets did. We found only five bodies and two weapons. The rest of the VC took-off. They had real good camaoflage and bunkers. We found one VC who was about 14 years old. He was still alive when we got to him but died soon after. I think the Vietnamese soldiers did great. Many of them were standing up when we were receiving fire and the charge they made looked good enough for Hollywood. All in all, it was a pretty cool one day battle.

We had a meeting a little while ago and the Major said that Army Intelligence reports a regiment of VC moving down route 8. The number of VC are probably exaggerated like always , but he told us to be ready anyway. Yesterday, during the action, Major Ski showed up in a jeep with a Viet Major and he took over the action right away. He doesn't talk down to you, and is liked by everybody. When the Vietnamese started to attack he called over to me (he had to yell so I could hear him over the shooting) and said, "Hey, Blanco, is that the way the 506 does it?"

There's this girl down in the village who says she likes me. I know it's not for me but for my money and what I can do for her. She tells me to give her my camera and buy her necklaces, etc. I keep seeing her and promising everything to her but I haven't and won't bring her anything but myself. That should be enough. Her name is Co-hun.

**21 June 68**

Today I was told that Lt. Grazoda was shot in the head.

**26 June 68**

I went into Phan Thiet yesterday and I met Sgt Patterson who was going to a rear area job. He told me that Shortround was killed. He was a good little man from Boston. When he first went out to the field with us he had to be taken out by helicopter because his little body wasn't use to the heavy load he wasy carrying and his feet were all blistered.

**28 June 68**

Yesterday set this place back at least 3 weeks work. First the 10kw generator burned along with a 55 gallon drum of gas. Al was trying to start the generator by jumping wires. A spark ignited some spilled gas and it spread like napalm. We were lucky nobody was burned. then this morning when we got up the bunkers we had completed had caved in with the monsoon rains of last night.

**July**

**2 July 68**

Yesterday I went back to the Phant Thiet base camp to get payed. Well, I also received the ARCOM medal with a "V" device (for valor). The colonel pinned it on me after reading why I got it in front of the company. It sounded like I held off a whole VC attack. It wasn't all that bad, but I'm proud to have it anyway. (I think I wanted a medal.)

Yesterday, I also went on a short one day patrol past Go-bay hamlet and the twin bridges. We didn't see anything, but last night the VC came back and blew one of the twin bridges. The VC probably watched us from some camouflaged hideout and until we left then waited for dark to blow the bridge, which had only just been repaired last week from the last time they blew it. One thing out of the ordinary happened on the operation. Young Captain Townsend (Wyoming) let me call in artillery on suspected enemy locations. It's the first time I've ever called in artillery.

Last night while I was on radio watch we heard bookoo explosions down the road about a mile where the artillery unit was located. Captain Townsend called them asking if they were being hit. The artillery radio man answered with only three words, "That's a Rog." (Battle of Tittie Mountain begins)

**16 July 68**

It's about 5:30 PM. I didn't do anything today but in an hour I'm leaving with Sgt Lyles and a Vietnamese platoon on a night ambush. We're going in the area where the artillery

battery was hit in the hope of catching some VC trying a repeat performance. With God's help I'll be back by morning.

**17 July 68**

Last night we were almost shot up by our own choppers. Tonight we go on another ambush by the bridges past Go-bay.

**27 July 68**

Yesterday I got some good news and some bad news. The bad news was that the new company commander A/506 wanted me and Sgt Lyles to rejoin the company because he was short of men due to some heavy casualties the company took recently. However, Sgt. Lyles talked him out of it and got him to say that he'll think about it and leave us out here for awhile. Paulson was one of those hit when the company fought the last time out. That's one of the last guys I know in the company. He got mortar shrapnel in the face. The good news is that I finally made spec/4.

Yesterday I ate at Co-hung's place with Tiwi Ngugn. Ngunyn and I got on his Honda and when we got down there they had the table all set up and the food dishes covered with metal netting to keep the flies off. Co-hung, according to Tiwi likes me. He told me she could be my wife for \$4000 piasters a month until I leave. The chow wasn't bad.

Lately my head is filled with thoughts of the future like what I want to do with the rest of my life.

**28 July 68**

Yesterday I almost got pulled back into the company. The Captain said he needed me on line and I gulped. I told him how much I liked the job out here, etc, etc and prayed in between and thanked God when he let me stay out here. It was close.

Just about every night there is shooting and explosions outside the perimeter, but everybody goes right on sleeping. Once in a while we are put on alert and go to the bunkers with rifle and ammo. This is only when the VC are very close. The other day they were right outside the gate, but they never hit the place. It's 2:30 am. I'm on radio watch and all is quiet on the front.

**30 July 68**

This morning we left for Mung Mon to go to a catholic mass begin giving by a Vietnamese bishop. I'm glad I went. The Vietnamese mass was really something. The girls in there white Ao-dais and the boys in white shirts and blue pants. The older people were in the back. Because we were Americans they escorted us to the front of the pews designated for the elders. This was an honor. Everything was beautiful, the singing, etc. After the mass we ate fruits and beer with the bishop and talked to him. He looked so clean but was a travelled man and spoke very good English. He talked about the catholic religion in Asia and how Vietnam had more catholic priest than any other asian country, proportionately, even more than the Philipines. He said the catholics were very strong in Vietnam because they were organized. There are more buddhist but they are not organized. He smoked one cigarette and talked very intelligently. Then he left on a chopper that picked him up.

The VC had blown the bridges at the entrance to Mung Mna the night before so we had to leave our jeep near the river and cross on an old railroad bridge. Because of the blown bridge we had to take two other priest back to Phan Thiet later in the afternoon in our jeep. They were two great and funny fellows for men of the cloth. Since we had to stay until the afternoon we were the guest of the Vietnamese company commander who treated us to beer, cakes, and chicken. Then he let us sleep at the top of one of the town's towers where it was cool. He was also a very intelligent man who fought with the Viet-minh against the French. Now he fights the VC with the Americans. I asked him questions through Chief Mastalski who speaks pretty good Vietnamese. After that we took the two priest to Phan Thiet, and returned here to Ham Thuan.

**August**

**1 August 68**

When I found out they were moving Sgt Coleman to Mac V Hotel I decided I wanted to go too, and here I am. We have a room in a building adjacent to the hotel and we have some cute little house maids that do our laundry, Hen and Ben.

According to Sgt Coleton we're suppose to get a jeep or truck and then we'll visit Vietnamese compounds and outpost and help them one way or another.

**3 August 68**

I'm just about drunk. I've been drinking all day and I just returned from a girls bed who kept telling me I was bookoo dep (very handsome, thank you) until I payed her the required sum for her companionship.

**11 August 68**

I sure am neglecting this book. I met two PR's here at the hotel, Roman and Ortiz. My work at the hotel has been so easy I'm afraid I'll lose it. They told me my R&R is set for Sept 12-17 in Hong Kong.

**15 August 68**

Last night a fellow fooling around with a 45 shot himself through his left hand. They helped him to the aide station through the lobby of the hotel where we were watching a movie. He was real light skin and the blood looked so rich and deep red compared to his skin tone.

Mom wrote and I think that she wants to tell me about Joe's death but is waiting for me to return. If only she knew I knew.

Next door they're playing Spanish records (Gran Combo). It's great to listen to.

**24 August 68**

Since I've come to this hotel very little that is interesting has happened. Most of my work consist of driving a truck. When Lt. Ross first asked me if I could drive a big truck I looked confident and said "Sure". But I never had. Lt. Ross doesn't know I almost tore down the fence at sector HQ's with the truck. Also, I almost killed a little kid about 2 years old, but that wasn't my fault. He came running out across the stree in front of the truck. Luckily, the truck has power brakes and I smashed them and simultaneously truned the wheel. I thought I hit him, but Al who was riding with me was saying, " You didn't get'em Blanco, you didn't get'em." He was right under the wheel. I thanked God right there.

They had the town off limits for awhile because Intelligence said the VC were preparing a new offensive. Well they did if you want to call a few mortar attacks an Offensive. Two days ago they trapped a bunch of them four miles from town and it took all day and half the night with artillery and air strikes to kill seven of them. About a million dollars per body. The town was put back on limits yesterday.

**September**

**4 Sept 68**

There was this small skinny fellow from L.I. called Meany who I met here at the hotel. He'd been in country only a month and due to a slight mix up had a good job here at the hotel instead of out in the boonies. Well, when they finally straightened out the mess he was told he had to go out to the field. Naturally, he didn't want to go. He was scared and was saying the radio (he was going to be an RTO) was going to be to heavy for him. We drank at Rita's and I tried to sooth his anxieties by telling him this and that about the field. Well, he went out and seven days later got hit. The GI next to him was killed. Poor guy, at least he's all right in the hospital.

**11 Sept 68**

It's about 10 o'clock and it's been raining since dusk. I'm at camp Alpha which is a processing center at Tan San Nhut near Saigon. Tomorrow I leave for Hong Kong. The barracks I'm sleeping in are full of Australians just arrived for their tour in the Nam. They look pretty cool in their Roosevelt hats and look different from Americans in that they all look alike where Americans come in all sizes, colors, and forms.

**13 Sept 68, Friday 13th**

I've been in Hong Kong one day and one night and have already blown \$350. That includes my Mamiyaflex c-33 camera which I purchased for \$115. I'm learning about these Chinese hustlers the hard way - but they're all so pretty. I had three up here last night. The first one wanted too much money so out she went. The second one got sick so she went home. I was getting desperate. Surely I wasn't about to sleep alone my first night on R&R. Out I went into the street and found a skinny doll who



was going home. I walked her to her pad which wasn't anything shabby so I figured she and her friend who shared the 4 1/2 rooms were doing pretty good. Anyway we finally came back to my room. She left about 1 o'clock today and wants me to call her but I'm thinking about the one who got sick. She's only eighteen and isn't skinny. Well, I'm off.

**17 Sept 68**

It's 5:15 am according to my new Ricco watch and I'll leave for Vietnam with a sad heart today. Hong Kong was expensive (I'm broke), but I learned alot plus satisfied my childhood urge to visit this place. I didn't get to buy any stereo- but that's the way it goes.

**23 Sept 68**

I've grown to an emaciated mustache and two lymf balls in my crouch. I went to the doc today and he said I have an infection somewhere but I don't have VD.

**October**

**4 Oct 68**

I'm in my room listening to records and searching for a the direction I should take the rest of my life.

**21 Oct 68**

Yesterday I wrote something like this: "I'm going to be either a history teacher who's hobby is photography, or a photographer who happens to be a history picture." At this moment I don't know what I'm going to do. History or photography. Maybe the latter is just a crazy idea like me wanting to be a writer.

**29 Oct 68**

I have six days left in Nam. Lt Ross who leaves in about ten days wanted me to take him to Johnny's bar adn wait for him outside while he bullshitted with old buddies. The thing was I had to watch the jeep. While I waited outside I read and listened to the Vietnamese boys asking passing G.I.s, "Hey, buddy," they'd say, "You want numbah one girl?" or "Where you go now, man?" Whenever a kid came near the jeep I'd tell him to get the hell away. I'm not to sure if I should call these young boys kids. Earlier in the day I was drinking with Roman at Rita's and a little boy walked in and asked us for money or a cigarette. Roman asked him how old he was and I believe he answered, "I'm an old man."

**November**

**5 Nov 68 (FULL MOON THIS DAY)**

I'm home. Thank God. I arrived the 2nd at 9:30 Pm and Betsy, Arlene, Cookie, Victor and his girl were waiting for me at the Airport. When I saw Betsy and the others, it wasn't real. I can't explain how I felt - like if I had been smoking pot and was real high. And when I got home, Mom, was waiting with all our friends - Neddie, Aida, etc. And of course, my main many, Yito. I'm on leave for about 30 days then off to Ft. Bragg for another month and a half. It's all over now. And when I leave the Army I will start my real life.