

W.A.Koudelka, [REDACTED]
Castaic, Ca [REDACTED]

Castaic, Ca, 11-18th-1991

Mr.
Dick Detra
[REDACTED]

S a n F r a n c i s c o , Ca [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Detra,

it is really interesting, how small this world is....
I happened to go through a Volume 11, Nr 8/9 of the
Aug/Sept Edition of the "Veteran" from Washington D.C.,
and discovered your add in the "Locator" on page 32:
I served in Vietnam from 1949-1952, altogether 34 months,
with the 13th DBLE (Demi Brigade Légion Étrangère) in Hoc-
mon, Tayninh, and from 1951-1952 in Dau-Tieng.....We were there
to protect the Michelin Plantation. If I recall right, there
were altogether something like 22 small villages, where
the workers lived and we were there for their and as I said,
the whole plantation protection against the Viet minh (later
Viet-Cong). I was actually right across from an old catholic church
and we had a little hospital next to us. There was an old
Vietnamese Padre (named Le Vinh Kuong) who wrote me for the
last time I believe 1954, while I was stationed already in
Germany on the occupation. I never forget how a Lt. from the
Spahi's detachment saved my life, by passing our convoy, with
his jeep from Dau-Tieng to Tay-Ninh, and although the road
was supposedly checked with mine detectors, suddenly right in
front of us, his jeep hit a mine buried under the soil, and all
what was left of it were the 4 wheels.....Later we discovered,
that the ennemi was wrapping their mines in parafine (which is
used for candles manufacturing) and thus, the mine detector did
not sense anything! Anyway, if you have some negatives, or pic-
tures from your time over there, I would be grateful to you,
for lending me some, and in return, I will be glad to make some
with my macro-lens from my scrapbook for you. If you feel like
writing me when you have time, please, do not hesitate. I am here
with my colleagues in the so called "Lost Patrol"-Vietnam Vets,
in Canyon Country, mostly Green Berets guys, and Navy men and
Air Force friends. They accepted me, although I am already over
70, however the camaraderie and brotherhood-in-arms exists!

With my best regards
sincerely



Hi, Dick

"Beautiful Downtown" Castaic, 1-15th-1992

First, Please, do, accept my sincere thanks for that beautiful shot from "your" chopper window. Simply excellent! Needless to say, that had WE have the equipment in those days, YOU and all the other guys most likely would not have to go in that bloody country.... BUT, it is too late to bitch about it now, is not it? In any case, WE, meaning you and I and all the others did NOT lose that war the Government did! However, I have to apologize for one thing. When I send the blow-up of the map of the Michelin plantation in Dau-Tieng, I discovered later that I simply forgot to add my letter and this enclosed picture to it. Well, I think that only shows old age (!!), well, yes, my friend, I just turned 17 last september (the other way around that is = 70 so I am going on seventeen, funny, huh. But, that's life! Also, what I forgot to mention to you, that there was one guy in my company, by the name of DETRE, (not Detra) but I do clearly recall, that he was a Frenchman, maybe that your ancestors were from France? And not to forget, thank for those calendar, they sure come handy. On that cut-out picture of yours, you sure look good! We had a pleasant X-Mas, altogether 8 people, and I made a smoked turkey hen, and guess. Nothing was left, so I think they must have liked it... There were snowcaps on our mountains, so it was really like Christmas. Well, and by now, half of the month is already down the drain, pretty soon we will have Easter, and it won't be long, and there will be X-Mas again... HUH! What a way to go? So now, to come back to your picture of that bloody mountain over there, (we used to say in "Hinterreissfeldshausen" = that was a halfway fucked-up german slang, meaning so much as "in the boondocks, way behind them their rice-fields...") You see, in my time there were lot of German guys, who singed-up rather than to starve as POW in french camps right after WWII. So, needless to say that there was also german spoken in our rangers. However, french was the official lingo of the Legion, please, don't forget that. And, of course, to me, it did not make any difference, as I speak both, (beside my mother lingo, czech, of course) and few more... (russian, polish, amharic = east african language, of the leading tribe of Ethiopia, and quiet good italian, as we had latin for 5 years in the college. That is why I did not have any problems with spanish speaking population in our State.) I could tell you funny stories, which happened many times while I was a cop for 23 long years... Meaning, that f.ex. when we stopped someone, and there were two people together, suddenly talking to each other in other lingo, so that we "could not" understand what they were saying, and when they finished, and I started talking their lingo, they almost shit! But to me it was a challenge and my goal was to give something back to this country, for we got accepted like orphans... So, as I said, my goal was also to help people. As 99% of people is basically good people, so when you really have to throw some A.H. in jail, you are actually helping those 99% of good ones. I said "when you really have to..." and I meant it. Because I always left that last step, if everything else failed! And God is my witness, during my 23 years, I took my nightstick out of the ring only once and used it, and that was only one smack, and well deserved, and I did not have the slightest problem with it. But I have the feeling, that the biggest mistake of all P.D.'s is simply one: Hiring people with starting age of 18 year of age. What the hell young kid knows about the real life with 18? Shit! How can he properly solve a domestic dispute, when he was never married? Never in the service, etc, etc? Bullshit! If it would be up to me, I would not get anyone until he is at least 25 years of age. Mature enough. The damned gun and badge does not mean anything. What counts, is when you open your mouth! However, now, as we were looking forward to our "golden years" of our retirement, my poor wife had a severe stroke in September of 1987, which left her right side paralyzed.... And I don't have to tell you, what that does mean... We have been married 39 long years. So, I am taking care of her. And I do not have to tell you, that it is not always easy job. So, I am just dragging it, and making the best out of it. Hope you will not have to go through something like this one day! When ever your time allows, do not hesitate to drop me a line, ok? Best regards, your old-brother-in-arms

