

[REDACTED]
Fallon, Illinois 62269
24 February 1996

Dear Dick,

I just can't elaborate enough on how excited I was to get your phone call last night! I wish we could have talked longer, but I understand. In any event, we covered a lot of ground in a short time. I feel like nearly thirty years go time passed before me all in a flash!

Somehow, it just doesn't seem right that in all that we did back at Dau Tieng and elsewhere in Vietnam IT REALLY SHOULDN'T BE as long ago as what it has been!! We were like kids then, in our late teens and early 20s; now we are in our latter 40s and early 50s.

I don't regret what we did then and I see where we have nothing to apologize for. Like you said, we were pawns of the Johnson and Nixon administrations. Yes, we were. However, we can't answer for what they did. We can answer for what WE did. And at your level and mine -at individual participant level in war- and especially in units such as the 188th, it was a matter that can be concisely summarized: Selflessness and common valor were common virtues.

I'll never be able to explain in words how much that meant to me when you answered my question as to whether I would have got into the Spiders. Gun platoons were the elite of the organization in all units, and it was usually only the best who got there. I would love to have been in the Gun Platoon of the 188th and I would like afterwards to have been in D/101.

When the 188th joined the 101st Airborne Division, the 101st was assuming the same role that 1st Cav Division had been doing -airmobile. Afterwards,

(next page)

101st Airborne Division assumed airmobile operations in the northern part of South Vietnam, and 1st Cav Division moved south and assumed the same operations in the southern part of the country. As I was leaving Vietnam (near the end of October '68), I saw some of the first of the 1st Cav aircraft that were moving down to that part of the country. By the way, near the end of their stay in Vietnam, the Black Widows were at Hue and Phu Bai; they moved into where the Marines had pulled out.

Have you thought about a trip back to Vietnam? The year 1999 -in other words, three more years- is their year of tourism. They might have special rates then. If so, that would be a good time to go. I'm planning on a trip back there. I'd like to see that country at least one more time. But it all depends on how things work out for me in the next three years.

I really ought to write a lot more than this, but I've got some things I need to get done today. Besides, I need to conclude now if I'm going to get this letter in today's mail. In any event however, I'll write again soon. Again, it was great pleasure hearing from you. Take care now.

As Ever,



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FRANK B. AUSTIN