

[REDACTED]
O'Fallon, Illinois 62269
22 May 1996

Dick,

I sure was glad to get your letter and the pictures. Quite frankly, I had -to a great extent- forgotten what immediately beyond the great gate of Camp Ranier looked like, but I do remember that beyond what you see in the picture there was a bend in the road. At or near the bend was a grave site with a large cross. Going past that, and heading for the bridge over the Saigon River, there was a brick factory on the left side of the road -just before you get to the bridge. After crossing the bridge, the road went through a wide open area until it reached a rubber forest. I would know that place again to this day if I were there, and I sure do want to see it again someday.

You say you've heard that the communists have built a dam across the Saigon River and flooded the area that used to be our base camp. Well tell me this: Do you really think they would wipe out something that would be a source of revenue for them? These rubber trees yielded something to bring in money, and our base camp was within that rubber forest. I don't doubt that they built a dam somewhere there, for there is a resort area there now. I really wonder if they flooded all of the rubber trees though.

I am going to use the best recollections that my memory will produce and I am going to draw a sketch map of what I remember of Bau Tieng -the 2/12 area, the 188th area, the motor pool, PX, swimming pool, the library and all else that my memory will yield. Then I will send it to you. I'd really like to know how your memory coincides with mine.

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No, I don't have a photo facing that sign at the gate, but I WISH I DID!
I remember what the sign said though. After all, I walked by it a number
of times!

I know all too well what you meant about the "four former flyboys" and
"old times" and ESPECIALLY not enough time to cover 20 years. I knew that
all too well! Back in 1992 we had a reunion of B-2/12 in St. Louis (near
where I live). Strangely, I didn't know most of the guys there; they were
mostly ones who had gone over there with the unit in 1966. But there were
enough of them that I did know and we had some good times going over a lot
of memories.

An interesting parallel: I have more contacts today with the guys I
served with at Bau Tieng than at Cu Chi. Not that it really matters I guess,
but Bau Tieng had a "small country town" atmosphere to it. I believe the
guys in units there were closer together. Cu Chi was more like "life in the
big city." You were more "on your own" there. Even so, I can still relate
to what you said about, "...extend for some place like Bien Hoa or Vung Tau
or something like that."

It made me feel a lot better about it when you said that I deserved the
DPO. I like to think that I did, but I've also felt that I was only doing
my job. I knew that you guys in the 188th did things like that many times
and with no reward.

Just as a consequence, I've often wondered if a nondivisional unit -such
as one of the 1st Aviation Brigade- was better than a division aviation unit.
I really don't know as to say it was better, but there were differences. The
1st Aviation Brigade gave aviation a command of its own. In a nondivisional

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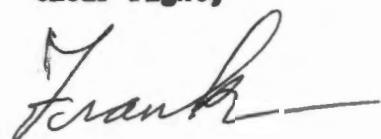
unit you generally had more freedom of action. In a division there were more idiosyncrasies, but I believe you generally got more administrative and logistical support. As an example, when the new hangar was built at Cu Chi we got it; the 116th moved into our old tent hangar and sandbag "bear pit." By the way, after I was in the Little Bears, I had a chance to go to the 116th. If I'd had more time in country to do, I would have taken it. It would have been better. At least I think so. Would you agree?

Speaking of a sorry awards system (which is a morale breaker in itself), when I was in B-2/12 we got into a real bad firefight one time. It was on September 11, 1967 as our CO led us right into an L shaped ambush. Nobody ever got anything for it. The battalion commander (LTC Greer) got relieved. The company commander would have been relieved too, but he got wounded and never came back. At that time, I had -concurrently- the worst company commander and the worst battalion commander I ever had in my entire life! They both were sorry, and I mean super sorry!! Perhaps as part of the battalion commander being relieved, all awards recommendations were trashed. If so, then I got screwed out of a Bronze Star that I was put in for.

I know what a good awards section can do. I ran them myself. In addition to aviation, I also worked administration as a secondary MOS in later years.

Well, I'd better hurry up and conclude this letter if I'm going to get it in today's mail. Once again, it sure was good to hear from you. I'll get that sketch map done soon and on its way to you.

Clear right,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank".