

28 AUG 78

Mike:

Sorry to wait so long to answer your letter but I wanted to plan this carefully so I don't leave anything out. I was extremely pleased to hear from you after so long and I was really surprised to read again the letter I wrote you in '69.

I could really "feel" the Nam again as I read it. I enclose a couple pictures from my wedding on 29 DEC 77. She's Japanese and we had a ceremony

all in Japanese-style, at a shrine. My mother came over and stayed with us a couple weeks. My wife's name is Akiko, which means "bright child" but only the first of those words is true now, since she, like me, is 35 now. The damn time does fly, doesn't it? But I never believed my parents when they told me it would. My father couldn't make it to the wedding since he died five years ago. I also enclose a couple ~~of~~ envelopes

so you can keep in touch with me, and I'm serious about that, not only because you're a good friend and vet, but because someday I want to write something about the veterans — what happened to them in the years after the war. I've been collecting information for the last few years whenever Vietnam veterans are mentioned in the papers and I'll continue for another 15 or 20 years before trying to write something. So keep in touch and I'll write you up again. (That's an order!)

Thanks for the picture of your daughter. Send more pictures if more offspring arrive. I'd really like to have a picture of you and your wife, for the record and so I can "introduce" you two to my wife. We have no immediate plans for children since she is still working and we both want to save some money and do some more traveling before we decide on a place to live. We still feel kind of up in the air.

I'm really glad you liked the book and found it realistic. I value the reactions

of ex-grunts like you more than those of professional critics and reviewers, the most of them who read it liked it, too. Presidio Press was good enough to send it all over the country so it got very thorough exposure for the first book of an unknown writer like me. I've received a few other letters from vets I never met who read it. My publisher says this is the year for Vietnam things, with several movies scheduled for release. Maybe you've seen advertisements.

There was one thing I didn't understand in your letter, about your job. What is a "Chinese Factory?" And what did you do from the time you left Nam until your marriage? Do you see any other vets regularly? Did you join a VFW or anything similar?

From what I've heard of some veterans, I guess I had relatively little trouble adjusting to life back in the States after the Nam. But I did get sick of the Americans' "I don't care about Vietnam"

attitude and the smart-asses' question, "How many babies did you kill?" And I find it more difficult to make decisions than before I went. Those things made it easier to leave the States.

I left the Nam in August of '69. I don't know if you ever heard or not, but Capt. Sam was killed the next month in a night battle just north of Dong Ha. He had caught an NVA company in a valley, and hit them hard with mortars,

artillery and air all afternoon  
That night they snuck up  
the hill and over-ran Bravo.  
Sam took a rocket square in  
the chest and his parents  
got a Navy Cross to remember  
him by. You might remember  
Bruce Williams, my radioman  
in 2d Platoon. He lost a hand  
in the same action.

I almost helped Bruce  
get in more trouble after he  
got home. I thought I  
would be a nice guy and  
let him have my .45 as a  
souvenir. They didn't check  
officers' luggage very carefully!

So I visited his parents on my leave (in Chicago) and left it for him. He came home with his injury soon and, when he recovered enough, started showing it around to friends. He got to drinking and telling war stories with his buddies one night, got picked up for drunk driving, and the police found the .45 in his car. They took him downtown, kept the .45 and made him tell who he got it from, then let him go when they found out his father works for

the city. If you know him well, you know that kind of thing is perfectly possible with him. After he got out he went to a junior college in Chicago then went to California where he finished college and met his wife.

They lived in Alabama for awhile (wife's home area), long enough for her to have twin girls, then went back to California where he works for the Veteran's Administration, with other amputees. His address:

Mr. Bruce Williams

ANAHEIM, CAL. 92801

After I got back from the Nam I still had fifteen months left to serve. I was sent to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, which has just about got to be the worst Marine base in the States. We called it "Swamp Lejeune." All sand dunes and pine trees, and surrounded by hill-billies ("You-all want some more guts?") But there was a nice beach, miles and miles long, clean and never crowded,

for our mid-weeks and  
weekend battalion beer  
parties. Otherwise it sucked.

After life and death in the  
Nam, I wasn't ready to  
shine my boots and pick  
up cigaret butts. For six  
months I was on a Med  
cruise on a Navy ship, and  
that was one of the worst  
ordeal anyone ever thought  
up. We were on a flat-bottom  
ship (LST), which means  
the slightest ripple makes  
the ship roll, so everyone  
was seasick most of the

time. We didn't eat much, so the government saved on food. When not on ships, we played war games with the French Foreign Legion or the Greeks, and chased whores around. Then on the way back to the States the ship sprang a leak and flooded. But I missed that - I didn't know it in Nam but I got malaria over there, and had two reactions in the Mediterranean. I flew back on a hospital plane, and was discharged at the end of 1970.

I went to grad school from '71 to '74 and came to Japan in August 1974. Tell me more of what you've done since you left the Nam.

Life in Japan is pretty good. It's just as modern as the U.S. so we've got all the conveniences. The inflation is even more "modern" (higher) than <sup>in</sup> the U.S. and it's much more crowded. Imagine half the U.S. population in California and that's what we've got.

But bus + train transportation is much better than any-

where else in the world so it's  
easy to get around without  
a car. We're buying a small  
condominium, probably about the  
size of your closet, but that  
doesn't mean we're settled here,  
it's easy to sublet or sell, so  
we can pick up anytime.  
We've got a nice view of  
Mt. Fuji until about 9 AM  
when the pollution blocks it  
out. My job remains  
interesting after nearly four  
years. I've met about 800  
Japanese at close range, most  
of whom I would never meet

any other way. They've taught me much about Japan while I've been teaching them some English. For the last year and a half I've been writing a book about Japan, for Presidio Press, and it should be finished early next year.

When I get tired of that, I work on my second Vietnam book, this one about life in the rear with the beer. It's based on my experience, like The Grunts, I spent seven months in an M.P. battalion in DaNang before I went up

worth to you guys in Bravo  
One-Three. The rear was a  
crazy place, I'll tell you.  
Full of liars, race riots and drugs.  
So I've got plenty to do,  
hell, I wish I could just  
write all the time and not  
worry about making money  
and paying taxes, but  
damn, that's life ain't it?

You mentioned your mother  
in your letter. Does she live  
with you and your family?  
Is your father still working?  
My mother is still working,  
as a sorority house manager  
for Northwestern University

in Evanston, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. She's 66 and in good health.

Well, I better wrap this thing up — I damn near wrote you another book!

Hope I didn't make you too tired reading it. The way I see it, there's got to be a way to get together someday. The veterans can't stay apart all the time, even if they don't live next to each other.

My wife and I might be coming back to the States in '79 or '80. When we do

I'll give you a ring. And if I get within a couple thousand miles of New York I'll drop in. I read in the paper the other day there was a reunion of ex-Marines who fought on Guadalcanal back in 1942.

They flew out to the island, near Australia, and met some of the Japanese they fought against. After 36 years, all those guys were fat and retired but I don't want to wait that long to get together again. Maybe we

could even go back to  
the Nam someday, if the  
communists would stop  
screwing up the place.

Anyway, I'll let you know  
when I get back and  
you'll be thinking of something  
in the meantime. Until  
then, give Williams a letter  
and see if you can't locate  
some other ex-jarheads.

Say hello to your mother  
and wife and teach your  
daughter well. Keep in touch.

Mark R. Anderson