

September 14, 1990

Ms. Dawn Abbott
345 N. Pantano #327
Tucson, AZ 85710

Dear Dawn:

I appreciate the note directly from you. Because of your age I see no reason for your going through another for the information you seek. As you continue your search I recommend that you emphasize, rather than set aside, the military aspects of your father's experiences. Even in peacetime the military forces close interpersonal relations because everyone must depend on others to accomplish a mission. In a combat environment this mutual dependence is intensified. Because our lives depended on each other in Vietnam, we all learned to evaluate personalities quickly. Thus, even those who were with your father a short time probably got to know him quite well.

I was with your father about three months (March-May 1969), when he was acting company commander of "B" Company, 1st Battalion, 3d Marines, 3d Marine Division. I was one of four platoon commanders under him. I remember him as an activist rather than intellectual in his approach to the things we had to do. By that I mean he liked to get his hands dirty with the "how-to" of solving problems rather than

speculate at a distance on implications. He was definitely an optimist about overcoming obstacles, not one to say things like "This looks too tough for us."

He had a deep-throated easy laugh and would sometimes throw an elbow playfully into another to underline a quip or joke. He also had a quick temper, and occasionally expressed it without regard to who could hear. In a hierarchy like the military, commanders should not criticize subordinate officers or sergeants in the presence of lower-ranking enlisted men, but rather talk to them privately. Your father disregarded this ethic a few times in my experience. He cared a lot about his men in a protective kind of way, and would not let them relax about anything he considered important. He was very conscious of details, as we were trained, and had a habit of repeatedly demanding confirmation that did not sit well with others: "Are you sure this is the hill?..Are you absolutely sure?" As for his personal courage, there is no doubt at all. I saw him ignore his own safety several times, and he willingly faced danger in the incident that took his life.

You might be interested in a book I wrote about "B" Company in Vietnam, since it details events of the last two months of your father's life. Title: The Grunts; publisher: Presidio Press in hardcover, Berkley Books in


paperback, both in print. The character closest to your father is Lt. Lancaster.

I am sure several others knew your father much better than I when he was in the Marine Corps but I can't give you any names. One you might have a chance of finding is his roommate during training before he went to Vietnam. That man would have talked and worked with your father daily for five months, maybe more. The training facility was called The Basic School, located at Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Virginia. When we graduated we were given a roster of classmates with addresses. Maybe your mother would have the roster or know who the roommate was. If not, you can get a roster from Headquarters, Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., using a freedom of information request form. His month of graduation was probably March or April 1968, or thereabouts.

you see, and (Other machine gave out here)

If you'd care to write again, I'd be interested in what you're doing now, or plan, and what your mother has done since 1969. Don't hesitate to ask if questions occur.

Sincerely yours,



Charles R. Anderson