

Koto Miyamaedaira 403

December 5, 1979

Mr. James Webb

Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

Dear Mr. Webb:

Have a Christmas card from Japan.

I just finished reading your Fields of Fire and I don't mind going out of my way to say you did a great job. I hope you make a zillion bucks off it; you certainly deserve it.

Like you, I was a Marine platoon commander and I also wrote a book about the Vietnam War: The Grunts, Presidio Press, San Rafael, Cal., 1976. But unlike your work, mine was a personal account, and its scope was smaller, one operation. At T.B.S. I was in G-68 company, graduating 29 May 1968. I spent my bush time with 1st Battalion, 3d Marines sweeping along the DMZ from the sea to Laos. Another former Marine platoon commander-turned-author, Phil Caputo, A Rumor of War, was also in 1/3 but in the early days of '65. As near as I can tell from references in your book to events back in the world, assuming they occurred during your tour, the beginning of your tour probably overlapped the end of mine. But then such details of chronology are probably of more interest to me, the historian, than you, the novelist.

I've been in Japan five years now and just completed a book about present-day Japan. My wife (a daughter of Japan) and I plan to return to the States in 1980, when I hope to meet you and many other veterans. Japan offers a nice degree of detachment for one who wants to write but I don't find as many veterans as I'd like to. What has surprised me about living in the Tokyo area is the number of Marines to be seen. The American military still leases one downtown hotel (the Sanno) as a transient billet, and on weekends many young troopers come in from training at Camp Fuji, on the slopes of Mt. Fuji. They are just about the same troopers we saw a decade ago -- feisty, street-wise and swaggering with their scarred hands and bent noses. Snake lives.

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I was pleased to find reference in your book to the problems of abandoned bi-racial children on Okinawa. I have dealt with the issue at some length in my Japan book. Earlier this year my wife and I visited several orphanages in Okinawa, all of which are caring for some bi-racial children, and we contribute to them. During the same visit I showed my wife Koza City (now Okinawa City) and Kin Village. Everything is still there except the streets-ful of troops and the anxiety about going south in a few days.

If you have the time for a reply, I'd like to know where you can be found. Good luck in 1980.

Sincerely yours,

Charles R. Anderson

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