

Koto Miyamaedaira 403

March 2, 1979

Mr. David M. Stamps

Elgin, Illinois 60120

Dear Dave:

Thanks for taking the time to write "a really good letter," to borrow your words. And thanks for the clipping about the James Webb book, Fields of Fire. I make a point of keeping track of both Vietnam veterans and books, so my file is now more complete.

I really misplaced you in history, didn't I? What high school did you graduate from, anyway? Did you have any connection with Elgin at all before you left the Army? The yearbook page copies sparked a nostalgic digression. The Alumni Office probably kept you informed of all the 125th anniversary hoopla. And did you notice from one of the "Monmouth Moves" issues that the senior American POW was an MC grad -- Rear Admiral James Stockdale ('46)? At least two others on your freshman basketball team went to the Nam -- Rodgers and Basler, both drafted -- and I know of five or six others from our years at MC. I enclose some clips for you. I'm sure you could have predicted Westy's views. The others might be of interest.

Your job title really sounds like something, though I know almost nothing about your profession. Did anything besides your Army PIO experience point you toward journalism? Why did entering before the Woodstein era make breaks possible? And I'd be interested to know how you evaluate Vietnam War reporting a decade after most of it.

You've got an anniversary of sorts coming up I see -- ten years since you left the Nam. Maybe you don't observe that in any way, but you didn't sound bitter in your letter. This spring and summer are anniversary seasons for me -- ten years since I was in the infantry in "Eye Corps." Do you remember that term? I was in the rear (Da Nang) the first half of my tour and the bush the second half, the reverse of normal junior officer assignment policy. The war was far and away the biggest experience of my life, so remembering the details of it everyday since has been easy. Thus the detail in The Grunts. I remember almost everyday, every incident in my tour, and things like voices, PA announcements and faces are engraved deeply in the memory. Some of the names, however, are getting fuzzy. I guess I have near total recall of the

war but, obviously, not of things like where I last saw you. The decision to write The Grunts came slowly during my tour but was set at about the halfway point.

I try to read all I can about the war, especially veteran's accounts. Good ones continue to come out. I started Caputo's book but had to give it back to the lender, so I'm looking for another copy. From what I read it looks good. Now I'm into A Decent Interval by a former CIA guy who was one of the last to be evacuated from Saigon. Have you read many Vietnam books?

I have been away from Uncle Sam's big PX over four years now. One of the few things I miss is talking with other Vietnam veterans. The day of my return, however, is approaching. I will be staying until I finish the Japan book I'm involved in -- probably through this year -- but next year could be the season. The job I'm using to feed myself -- teaching English -- doesn't contribute much to career development, and I've got to get something cranked up. The Grunts was a modest commercial success, enough to entice me into thinking the next one could do well.

You sound very pleased with your family, which is the only way to be if you're going to have one. When I was teaching in the US I had to deal with some products of people who had little interest and no qualification beyond the physical in being parents. Teach them carefully. My wife and I have decided not to join the ranks of parenthood for the foreseeable future.

I just put you on my appointments calendar for 1980. Until then, keep in touch.

All the best to you,

Charles R. Anderson

CRA:aa  
Encl.