

STATION HOSPITAL
HEADQUARTERS SUPPORT ACTIVITY SAIGON
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96243

30 June 1965

LCDR Helen Roller, NC, USN
U. S. Naval Hospital
St Albans, New York

Dear Miss Roller:

Your orders for duty at the Station Hospital in Saigon recently were forwarded to my desk. I hope you are pleased with the assignment. The experience is unique, demanding, yet satisfying and rewarding. While all the nurses here think fondly of CONUS, there is not one who does not feel privileged to be a part of history in the making.

A converted French apartment house, our hospital was commissioned on 1 October 1963. At the present time it has 73 operating beds with capacity for expansion to 100 beds. By air evacuating patients two times per week, we keep our census to about 40 - 45. This allows room for mass casualty input which has been quite frequent of late. We take pride in the high morale, esprit de corps and team effort which exists among the staff here. Time passes quickly; one is never bored.

Presently the nurses are billeted in two BOQs. You will live in the Ham Nghi BOQ where you will share a three bed room apartment with the anesthetist and myself. We have our own galley and we hire a cook and a maid. Living is comfortable. The bedrooms are air conditioned. We enjoy meals which we plan ourselves.

The BOQ is basically furnished so major furnishings are not necessary, however there are some items which are not supplied that you may put to good use. They are a toaster, perculator, an iron and an electric frying pan. There are no electrical problems with these appliances, however, electric clocks and clock radio do not work well here. Lighting is poor. If you like plenty of light in your room it would be advisable to bring a few lamps. A desk lamp, one for a night stand and/or a floor lamp could be useful.

Regular shipment of household effects takes about three months to arrive. If possible have them send all or in part by air freight. Your request for this type shipment does not necessarily mean it will come by air as it is not unusual to have it arrive surface despite. Bring as many of your uniforms and clothes with you as possible.

Enclosed is a list of suggested personal effects to bring which I hope you will find helpful.

Uniforms

1. Light blue dacron - two sets.
2. Service dress whites - one set.
3. Ward whites - bring an ample supply of uniforms and caps. Hose are not available in the Exchange. Bring a generous supply of white hose, they wear out much faster than in the States.
4. If worn, the white evening dress would be required here.

Shoes

1. Bring an ample supply of both, duty shoes and street shoes.
2. Closed pumps are most satisfactory during the rainy season. Sandals "go aheads", and sneakers are good for casual wear. All kinds of dress shoes are worn.

Dresses

1. The climate is warm, temperatures range between 75° - 95°. Summer-type dresses, blouse and skirts are best. Social functions are fairly frequent and all are rather informal - elaborate cocktail dresses are not worn. However, dressy cottons, silks, jerseys are worn.
2. Dry cleaning facilities are scarce and of poor quality, so avoid non-washable clothes.

Sports Clothing

1. Bermuda shorts, pedal pushers for in-quarters and active sports.
2. Bathing suits, tennis clothes, golf clothes and bowling clothes and accompanying equipment if you are sports minded as these sports are available.

Lingerie

1. They say cotton is best for this hot climate. However, this is a matter of preference. I wear the same lingerie I wore in the States. The supply in the Exchange is limited, so come well stocked.

Wraps

1. One lightweight coat and one or two sweaters - synthetic. One plastic raincoat and perhaps a lightweight or knit suit for travel to a cooler country. An umbrella.

Jewelry

1. All kinds - costume, etc.

Linens

1. Towels and washcloths, as these are not furnished in the BOQ, however, they are usually available in the Exchange. One blanket is needed because of the air-conditioned bedrooms. Sheets are provided by the BOQ.
2. A bedspread, twin or 3/4 bed size.

Cosmetics

1. Bring your favorite brand, as the selection in the Exchange is limited and very expensive in town.

Radios and Phonographs

1. Transistor radios are best, and are available here.
2. There is no television in this area.
3. Phonographs need cycle adjustment (from 60 to 50 cycle) this can be done here.

Car

A car could be useful but I strongly advise against bringing one. There are no parking facilities and traffic defies description. For the most part transportation is provided to and from the hospital, supplied by the hospital and at other times we use the local cabs which are very reasonable. Hospital transportation is always provided after dark.

You may be interested in reading something about the city of Saigon and life here under wartime conditions. An excellent article, richly illustrated with authentic colored pictures, appears in the June issue of the National Geographic Magazine, page 864.

Upon arrival in country you will spend approximately two and one half days in briefing on the complex military organization which serves in this war-torn land. You will find this enlightening and helpful in hastening your adjustment to life in Vietnam.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to write me. Best wishes for a pleasant leave and a safe journey westward. We look forward to having you join our staff.

Sincerely yours,

Aline E. Morin
 ALINE E. MORIN
 CDR NC USN
 Chief, Nursing Service

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P.S. Was real pleased to hear you were joining us. Always recall how kind you were to me when I was visiting Mary Barnett in Charleston -

AGM