

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

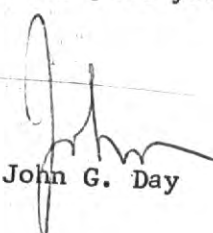
TO : O/FSI/VTC - Mr. Ogden Williams, Coordinator

DATE: January 29, 1970

FROM : PER/JOP - John G. Day

SUBJECT:

I thought you might be interested in reading the attached letter from Mike Cotter who, I think, is one of the better FSO's to enter the Service in the past year or so.


John G. Day



5010-108

PER/JOP:JGDay:afr

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Dear Mr. Day,

Just thought I'd drop you a note to thank you for the very nice letter you sent me mentioning my promotion. The letter came as quite a pleasant surprise (as did the promotion). I might also say that some congratulations are due to you on your new, expanded position. It sounds like quite a load but seems to me to be a wise consolidation. It is reasonable that the Officer in charge of training would best be able to determine suitable assignment.

Well, here I am in Vietnam. They've got me down in the Mekong Delta, which is where I wanted to be. I'm a Deputy District Senior Advisor, in charge of civilian affairs, which is also what I wanted. The Province I'm in, Kien Hoa, is a real challenge. It ranks 44th out of all 45 provinces in terms of pacification on the controversial HES computer rating. There are more Viet Cong in this province than in II and III Corps combined. This fact limits, to some extent, the value of a civilian advisor since there are quite a few areas in the District which I can't go to. This doesn't mean that there isn't plenty of work, however. My District includes Centre, the capital of Kien Hoa, which has 60,000+ people. Since I've only been in the District for only 2 weeks I'm still wet behind the ears and quite unable to make any judgments about the job or my ability to cope with it.

The training course at VTC, as with much of life,

seems much better in retrospect [?] than when I was experiencing it. 10 months is a long time and one becomes quite divorced from reality which makes it difficult to absorb the material. I imagine that is one reason the material is repeated so often - you absorb it by osmosis. Now that I am here I feel reasonably prepared to perform a job. I am familiar with programs, problems, and the facts of life in Vietnam. While my Vietnamese is much less than perfect, I find I can spend a day alone with Vietnamese people and communicate - haltingly and uncomfortably at times, but communicating nonetheless. I guess, at least in my case, we did what it was intended to do.

I still find it difficult to go to sleep with the music of artillery in my ears and I keep waiting for the evening when we will be mortared. Out here, in the "boondocks", one is always aware that there is a war on. Somehow, though, I find it hard to consider myself as a part of it. I wonder what I'll be like and how my attitudes will have changed when I finally do consider myself a part of it. Perhaps when I find out I will let you know.

I'm afraid this has been sort of a strange note. I hope you don't mind my rambling on like this. Thank you again for your letter.

My best regards,

Mike Cotter