

## Thailand Diary May 1969-May 1970

In 1969 I was stationed at Seymour Johnson AFB, Goldsboro, NC. I was with the 334<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron and ran the Gun Shop on the night shift. We cleaned and performed maintenance on the SUU 16 Gun Pods used by our F4D's. We also performed maintenance on all the ejection and other armament systems in the squadron's planes.

In the Spring of 1969 we were asked for volunteers for South East Asia duty. Since I was going into my last year of a four year tour, I thought it would be an interesting way to end my enlistment so I signed up.

On my arrival at Ubon, I was assigned as a Load Crew Chief and began working on the flightline. Since I had no previous experience with loading ordnance, I was glad to have a crew with stateside experience as Weapons Loaders.

The diary following was prepared from excerpts from my letters to my then girlfriend, Madelaine. We met during my 30 day leave before I left for Thailand.

A year and a half after my return, Madelaine and I were married. We've been together for 32 years and have two daughters.

Thanks to Madelaine, who saved my letters, I have this diary to submit to the archive.

Bob Santo

Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood

October 13, 2003

## Thailand 1969-1970

28 May 1969. Liberty Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand. Spending the night here waiting for a flight to Ubon. Drinking a quart of Singha beer. John Boyd and I got a little high on the Sunday before I left. The flight to San Francisco was great. Spent sometime downtown and was surprised at how un-quaint it was. A lot like 42<sup>nd</sup> St.

1 June 1969. First letter to Madelaine from Ubon. Warm and soggy here. I will be going on 12 hour shifts / 6 days a week in a week or two. Just discovered the Gekko. While shaving this morning, one of them walked across the mirror in front of me. I was so startled that I almost cut myself.

7 June 1969. On 12 hour shifts with no days off. The whole squadron. No mail from Madelaine yet. I've sort of adopted one of the Monkey's that hangs around the Weapons Shop. His name is "Sam". The town is off-limits because of a few cases of cholera. I went to get a booster shot for it but they still won't let us off base. The monsoons should be starting soon. Saw Paper Lion at the movies the other night. Opening scene is George Plimpton running down Central Park West. It reminded me of misplacing my car in that area with Madelaine.

9 June 1969.

Three letters from Madelaine in my mailbox today. Town is still off-limits.

13 June 1969.

Working nights now. 6 to 6. Rains every night. Daytime temps 95 degrees. Then rain with 60 mph gusts of wind. Monsoons to last until September. Had an appointment today with Wing Commander, Col. Stansfield.

14 June 1969. Making friends with some of the Thais working on the flightline. Helped them catch Baht bugs under the arc lights at night.

16 June 1969. Lunch hour starts at midnight. First time downtown today. Found a tailor shop, may have some clothing made. Took a cab back with a friend. Almost to the front gate, when we came upon what looked like a large shallow puddle. We assured the driver that it was very shallow, so he proceeded into it. Found ourselves in three feet of water, Toyota Corona taxi stalled out. Water seeping in through the doors. We were laughing,

the driver was cursing in Thai. We took off our shoes and socks, rolled up our trousers and pushed the cab to shore. The water was nice and warm. No harm done except the driver lost much face to the crowd of onlookers. We tipped him well, helped him bail out the cab and opened the drain plugs for him.  
Planning to buy a bike tomorrow.

Tried to get a sun tan yesterday. Sat out at noon for ½ hour and turned purple. Pool is still not open.

Made friends with a Thai by the name of Udon Pongchit.

20 June 1969. Sam the Monkey. Lives in a cage with two other monkeys surrounded by barbed wire. One of the guys was bitten. I had to remove a rubber band from one of the monkey's tail (Jake) last week and almost got bit, myself.

One of the guys on my crew is sick. Sore throat, chills, etc. I sent him to the infirmary to get a duty excuse and he came back with cough drops. (Doesn't even have a cough). They took a culture of his throat and said they'd let him know in a few days. Didn't even take a temp.

22 June 1969. First day off since I've been here (three weeks). We will be getting one day off every week from now on. Swimming pool has opened. Finally able to get a filter for it.

The mess hall is called "Golden Dragon No. 1. Chow Hall".

25 June 1969. Armed Forces Television Network. Pretty good. I miss the commercials. All they advertise here is safety, savings bonds, VD warnings, etc. An hour show in the US is only 40 minutes here. Drinking a Ballantine beer and having a ham sandwich at the patio.

Worked the last two nights at the end of the runway. Arming and de-arming planes. One of the F4's came back with two hung bombs and it took me ten minutes to convince the pilot to let me safe it. He made me call EOD even though I told him it was ok, and wasn't going to fall off. Before EOD got there, he decided to taxi back to the revetments and I had to explain to the EOD officer what happened to the plane I woke him up about. Some of the pilots won't give anyone a little credit for knowing what they are talking about.

7 July 1969. Moved to a new barracks. Looks like a prison, but it's much more comfortable. Had a long talk with Rogers (bunkmate) about homesickness and cling peaches. Runway duty tonight. Must be 10,000 toads and crickets out here. Mosquitos are starting in. Better start taking the big orange malaria pills they hand out at the mess hall.

10 July 1969. End of runway. Beautiful sunset. Later. 19:10 hrs Had two birds come in and five going out at the same time. Ears are ringing badly. Ear muffs are not enough for that many planes at one time.

Two communist terrorists gave themselves up downtown the other day. They turned in one shotgun and three bullets!

The planes are not staying up very long. They can't be going out very far to drop their bombs.

New refrigerators due to be put in at the barracks. One per ten guys. New houseboy, too. Must be from out in the country side. Head down and groveling a lot. Will try to befriend him.

13 July 1969. About 4 AM this morning, I wasn't paying as much attention to what I was doing and ran a piece of arming wire into my arm. Not unusual, since I do it every once in a while. Today, though, I hit the jackpot. I didn't think much of it, just cussed a little and continued working, when one of crew said, "Jeez sarge, your bleeding all over the bomb." Squirt, squirt, squirt! I pierced a small artery. One tetanus shot and a bandaid later, I was back at the barracks. Got off work early, so it was all worth it.

17 July 1969. Last night sappers penetrated the perimeter and set off satchel charges damaging two C-47 aircraft, a mobile ground control unit and a radar unit. One of our SP's and a K-9 were wounded in the attack.

18 July 1969. I found out today that one of my men is taking sleeping pills to get to sleep. I noticed that he was kind of fuzzy headed at work and in our work that's not such a good idea. I'd like to get my hands on the MD who supplied him with them. Anyway, I found out that he got a letter from his girl back home and she's pregnant and I guess that's why he couldn't sleep. Well, he'll be going back to the states for 30 days and a honeymoon which is better than sitting over here all bottled up becoming a junkie and a hazard on the line. Meanwhile, I've gotten him to have a couple of beers after work each morning with me which is why I don't write in the morning much anymore. He says the beer puts him to sleep OK which it should after 12 hours of work. Only trouble is it puts me to sleep too and I don't have any trouble snoozing, ordinarily.

We do have air conditioning over here, by the way, So complain. The theater and library are cool or should I say cold.. I'll get pneumonia one of these days. Sometimes we get a couple of hours off to see the shows when it's hot and you've been rained on for four hours straight and go to a movie with air conditioning. It's like going from a sauna to a walk-in freezer.

The waitresses at the NCO Club are giving me a hard time. I'm kind of a young staff sergeant and have picked up the nickname "Baby-san" Aaargh! Rots of Ruck!

22 July 1969. I'm experiencing that rarest of days, a full day off. I've discovered that there's really not too much to do here, especially when it's raining sideways, so I'm in the library. I spent much of yesterday glued to the radio as Armstrong and Aldrin strolled around on the Moon; it's almost too much to imagine, but it's been done. I really got a kick out of it as did most earthlings, I guess.

We're going on three days on and one day off, starting today. I'm still working at night. It's definitely turning out to be a boring war for me. My concept of time is becoming

blurred over here, and I usually have no idea what day of the week it is, since there's no weekends and it makes little difference whether it's Tuesday or Saturday.

0615. In my bunk, looking out at old Siam through a mosquito net. Breakfast was excellent this morning- mushy eggs, cold toast, frozen butter, lukewarm coffee with huge bugs floating in it and orange juice with PUCKER POWER! I heard a new sound on the way to the mess hall this morning, the famous f--- you lizard! I was ready to fight until I realized what had uttered that famous anglo-saxon phrase. I couldn't see what he looked like, but he sounds like he deserves to be a lizard.

10 August 1969. I'm out at the end of the runway again. I was supposed to have a half-night off but I was just informed I'll be working all night. Someone messed up the work schedule. I am definitely burned up. Also, I got squirted with hydraulic fluid from the last jet we de-armed. They had to shut it down and tow it in. Also, the one before that, the crew chief (tire kicker) disappeared and I had to park the bird myself which is not my line of work. Anyway, by 6:00 AM I'll be off.

We've gotten some more people in the squadron so maybe we'll be getting some relief on the line. I hope so. Back in a minute.

I should have said back in 2 hours and 45 minutes. Busy, busy, busy. I'm not so grumpy now. Getting close to chow time. The rest of the night shouldn't be too bad as I hear we have quite a few birds fragged (loaded with weapons) already.

0100 hours (11 August). I'm at the Patio having a coffee before going back to the line. Udon just came over and gave me a big sandwich. He's the guy who's trying to learn English, or teach me Thai, I'm not sure which. Either that or I must look very hungry or something. He's looking through my Playboy I just got in the mail. He keeps saying "soo wee mak" which means he approves of the contents. I don't know how I'll finish this sandwich. It's got a fried egg, a hamburger, two slices of fried ham, a pile of onions, slice of tomato, lettuce and a slice of cheese. Besides, I just came from the chow hall where I had a stack of hot cakes.

18 August 1969. Finally getting a bicycle today which will improve my situation tremendously. I've already worn out my first pair of jungle boots here but I guess all the walking has done me a lot of good. If having tired feet is good.

I received a package from home today with three salamis in it!! One of them was covered in green penicillin-like mold so I threw it away. The other two were in excellent condition and I got quite a few laughs when I hung them on the wall at the barracks, especially among the homesick Italians. Maybe tomorrow I'll go to the NCO Club, buy a bottle of Chianti and a loaf of bread and have a feast.

Loading bombs, goes on and on, nothing interesting in that. This morning we got off work a half hour early. Maybe the war's over. Some inspectors are coming around soon to watch the load crews, so I've been practicing doing it by the book. The book is fine in the States, but over here the demand is such that we've had to learn to do it quickly and safely. Unfortunately, the book just doesn't make it. The funny thing is that everyone from the top down knows how it's done day to day, but they still keep jumping on us, hoping we don't take them too seriously or the missions won't get off. What else can you expect from a non-profit organization?

23 August 1969. It's afternoon. I couldn't sleep for some reason. I hope I won't be too drowsy tonight because the IG (Inspector General) team from HQ USAF will be here tonight. It'll be just my luck to have them looking over my shoulder while my crew is loading. The head of the team is Col. Biretta, and I hear he's a mean one. Oh, well, maybe tomorrow night I'll be carrying a gun on the perimeter, or stringing barbed wire. With a little luck, we'll make it, OK. Better quit thinking about it. Time for chow.

Swimming pool is closed again. I've got it pretty good, though. Tomorrow, I'm off and will probably get a little drunk with the other guys, whether we get burned by the IG or not. Something to do, anyway.

24 August 1969. Last night was ridiculous. They gave me a plane to completely load, check out and arm, due to start engines in an hour and a half last night. Naturally the IG was sneaking around, so I had to use "The Book." I got everything done with 15 minutes to spare but it wouldn't check out electrically. Ended up with the pilots helping to arm it and beefing about the time. I kept silent so I wouldn't end up in jail but if they could only have heard what I was thinking. Anyway, the IG inspection turned out ok and I'm still a crew chief.

Tonight I'll probably go downtown and have a few beers (Singha) at one of the local pubs.

A lot of guys I knew back in North Carolina are showing up around here and I've heard from others at Udorn. If I ever get a three day pass I'll probably take the train down there as a lot of friends from my last outfit are there.

I'll probably buy a tape player this payday. There isn't too much good music on the base station.

25 August 1969. I ended up at the NCO Club last night. They had a great show, a couple of singers from the States called "The Mark II". They were very good so I didn't go downtown as it isn't often that we have such good entertainment as those two guys. I just had a midnight snack sitting on my fuze crate. Deviled ham on Ritz crackers, a chunk of pepperoni, a frozen Milky Way and a glass of iced tea. I must be crazy.

27 August 1969. It's 4 PM and almost time for work. Looks like a big storm is brewing in the Western sky tonight. I hope it won't last too long. Today, I've been here three months. I'm 25% through my tour.

It's nice to read of the Thai-US talks on troop reductions these days. I don't think we'll be affected here, though.

Everything is getting better at work since we passed the IG inspection and we'll probably have a party real soon. When I first got here, I tried to get a job in the Weapons Release Shop, to no avail. I just heard that one of my fellow load crew chiefs was caught without his check list and was punished by (you guessed it) being transferred to Weapons Release. Ridiculous.

My #2 man is back from the States, a newlywed. Maybe he won't need those sleeping pills anymore.

Tomorrow night is runway night again and I'll be off at midnight. It'll also be payday and I'm going to pick up my tape deck and scads of tapes.

30 August 1969. (0215). I'm sitting at the remains of an impromptu party that developed here at the patio where I had come several hours ago to write a letter. My old friend Udom introduced me to 3 of his friends (one female) and we had a party. So Somkhit, Pathang, Samlee (the lady) and I sat here and discussed things in general for a few hours. We all got along very well and me and Somkhit discussed foreign relations (me being the foreigner). Somkhit is very much like myself and we'll probably become good friends. Tuesday night I'm invited to dine at his house in a village about 12 km from here. I hope I can go there as he says very few GI's go there and I'd like to see and know some Thai folks who haven't been too "GI-ified". I hope it works out. He also said he has a friends who'd like to learn some English. He's had some basic English so it might work even though I know very little Thai.

Also at the party was a full-blooded Choctaw Indian who works in the laundry here. His names Gibson. He just left to go to the latrine but said he'd be back for some more firewater.

Gibson never did come back. He's married to a Japanese lady and has three Indian-Japanese children.

Somkhit is very happy and sad, too, about Americans and Thais and GI's and the whole world. He told me that one of his friends here, a soul brother, had told him that he could never go to the USA and told him that if he did he would die. I don't know what bitterness led to this thing, but I know I felt very bad when he told me this and still do, even now. In fact, Somkhit had tears in his eyes when he told me this and it was obvious he wanted me to deny it all. I did. But I explained, as best I could, a situation I've only begun to understand myself.

I wish the people back home could meet the people of Korea and Thailand and everywhere else. They laugh and cry for all the same reasons that we do and there is nothing strange or mysterious about the "Oriental" folks. I think we've all seen too many movies. They're beautiful people by and large.

2 September 1969. Sitting here wondering if I should even bother going outside. The base is flooded and it's been raining all day. I'm supposed to meet Somkhit at midnight, but it looks like I'll have to take a rain check.

I was listening to Johnny Carson on the radio, but it only lasts 20 minutes. I haven't bought my tape recorder yet. Payday, I overslept and by the time I got to the BX, they were sold out. My Schlitz is ice cold now. I've really done very little drinking over here, probably why I'm getting so skinny.

Schaefer just came in, soaking wet. He drives truckloads of bombs from the bomb dump to the base. His cousin owns the Schaefer beer company. I didn't believe him until he had two cases of Schaefer shipped to him last week.

Rogers just came in, also soaking wet. I offered him some pepperoni, but he didn't dig it. Also, he doesn't drink. Very religious. But that's OK. I just heard on the radio that we had 4" of rain today. I'm so happy I don't have to load tonight. Not much fun in this weather.

3 September 1969. I didn't get out to the village last night 'cause I nearly drowned getting to the Patio where Somkhit works. Anyway, I went to the 1:00 AM movie and saw "The Heart is a Lonely Hunter" which was very beautiful. In general. Anyway, I can't get back to sleep since I'm usually working at this absurd hour. Since nobody around here was awake, I sat down on my cot with a beer, a can of "Laura Scudder's Corn Puffs" and a smoke.

Today I'll have a pair of shoes made if I wake up in time. I'll also get some sun, I hope. I'm turning black. I'd better get tanned a little before I start dayshift or I'll be a human blister the first day. The sun is unbelievably hot here. It's a beautiful night out there, now. Water is everywhere but the moon is out and a million frogs are hollering across the road in the rice paddies.

6 September 1969.

0800 Hours. Sitting on my crate drinking a "shi-mau" (beer). I'm glad to hear that my colleagues on the other side (Viet Cong) are getting three days off. We don't seem to have slowed down any, though. I've gotten the hang of my job pretty well now, so it's a lot easier than it was the first couple of months.

The clowns at the base radio station are playing "Anchors Aweigh." Really turns me on! What's really funny is coming in after 12 hours of hanging bombs in the pouring rain, footsore and weary, and hearing on the radio: "Have you considered making a career of your present line of work on the challenging Aerospace Team?" Ha Ha Ha Harrumph!

I just realized it's Saturday 'cause some fellow on the radio is singing a Hebrew chant. I just found a Thai radio station playing Simon and Garfunkle. Now I feel better.

I'm supporting a mouse over here. I've only seen him once or twice but he has gotten into my footlocker and eaten half a package of ritz crackers, seven brownies and some fig newtons on half a dozen occasions. I'm going to have to find a way to keep him (or her, its hard to tell when they're running) out of my emergency food supply.

2100 Hours. Out at the end of the runway, now. There's a typhoon somewhere and quite a few Navy and Marine aircraft have been coming in here, unable to get back to their aircraft carriers, I guess. We just launched four and recovered one at the same time. It's going to get busy here, soon. I'll finish this later.

Later. At the NCO Club. Had two burgers with coffe and letting the sound of jets fade from my head. I was really starved! Time to step into the bar for a few drinks.

7 September 1969. The mail service is improving! I'm celebrating tonight because I have to fight the war on my birthday and I'm off tonight. Also, Madelaine's package of goodies came tonight. Right now I'm in the library as I was longing to write on a desk for a change. I thought I was coming down with a cold so I spent practically the whole day off in the sack as it's tough to get rid of a cold over here.

8 September 1969. It's early morning and I'm still awake, I went to the club last night for a steak and ended up talking and drinking until 1 AM. I've been trying to sleep, but I'm so used to the night shift I'll never get some Z's 'till the sun comes up. Rogers stole a chair from the mess hall and now I have a better place to sit and my fuze crate has become sort of a low desk with a folding doghouse greeting card from Madelaine on it.

13-14 September 1969. I'm on a four hour chow break. Someone messed up and scheduled 3 crews for duty tonight. Writing performance reports on my men. Some of the guys have made it a little tough to do. Still waiting to get my tape deck. BX sold out on the AKAI 1800 SD I want.

16 September 1969. I was supposed to have a half night off tonight, but one of the other crew chiefs came down with the flu. So I had to fill in for him. He has a darn good crew, though, so it wasn't so bad. Anyway, I'm down at the patio, now, its about 5 AM, and I'm hoping Ken gets over his flu by tonight or I'll lose my whole night off. Udon Pongchit just stopped by the table for his English and my Thai lesson. We really have a ball just trying to communicate at all. We have about ten words to talk with. You should try it some time. Nothing but "yes", "no", "big", "little", "thank you", "no sweat" and the Thai and English numbers. We're teaching each other pretty well, though. Lots of sign lingo and props (mostly beer cans). I've taught him how to say almost every brand of beer there is. Maybe he can get a job as a bartender somewhere, hahaha!

Only "songming loy ha sam" days to go.

21 September. It's the morning after my night off. Slept through it again, I'm afraid. I don't think I'll ever get used to these 12 hour shifts. After 3 days, all I can do is sleep. Things are looking up, though. On the 25<sup>th</sup> I start day shifts and will be on 2 days, off 1 day.

I have to go to the dispensary today for some shots. Typhus, Tetanus, GG and maybe a few others, I'm not sure. Then I'll probably wander around down town, maybe take along the camera.

Oops, I just realized its Sunday. No shots on Sunday. Also, they don't sell stamps on Sunday. Of course, we still drop bombs on Sunday.

Lately things have been very, very dull around here and the routine is murder! This kind of life is bad for my system.

I was about to go for a swim, but it's starting to rain. Can't win, today. Still no tape recorders at the BX. I'm in there every afternoon, bothering the poor clerk, but still nothing. I'll probably be broke when they do come in and will have to wait another month, listening to Armed Forces Radio and Television Service. Everybody around here is asleep! No one to talk to. What a crummy day!

I bought a Polaroid camera from one of the guys in the cube. I don't exactly know why. It should be fun, though.

22 Sept (0430). Small Triumphs Dept. I outwitted my boss and a weapons release mechanic and saved about an hour's work tonight by trouble-shooting one of the birds. Of course, the poor guy from Weapons Release didn't know I had 3 years experience doing that and he didn't expect a bomb loader to know what was what. When I told him it was a crummy \$2.00 switch I could change in 10 minutes he got sore, so I proved it. It was pretty funny. Also, I got off an hour and half early this morning.

My three crew members are all going to be promoted in the next few months. I'm happy about that.

26 September 1969. It's a beautiful, clear night tonight, full moon. I spent the day in the sun, at the pool (it's finally open). Really enjoyed myself and I feel pretty great right at the moment. I went to the show tonight and saw "Rachel, Rachel", The story wasn't much but Joanne Woodward made up for it.

I'm starting day shift in the morning, at last. I was to have started today, but I had to fill in for another victim of the flu, last night. A lot of the guys have been getting sick the past few weeks. I think it's the combination of pouring rain, chilly breezes and 12 hour shifts. I'd been feeling a bit below par all week but it never developed into anything.

27 September 1969. Today was my first day shift. What a sun! I was working a bird today when I looked up and saw a small hole in the speed brake. It later turned out that it was a bullet hole Those VC sure are good marksmen. It was from a rifle.

3 October 1969. 235 days to go. Had a good day today, until the wind shifted at about 1500 hours. I would have gotten off early, but they needed an extra runway crew. They were launching on one end and recovering on the other and we just happened to be doing nothing. They end they sent us to is rarely used for recovering so we only had a few safing pins. We didn't expect to be there long, anyway. About 1700 hours what seemed like a million airplanes were coming in and we quickly ran out of pins. I ran into the shack and called up for some more pins. About ½ hour later, someone came out there and I had seven fighters waiting with 14 very angry pilots in them. Oh, well, if they can't take a joke... Also, someone had moved the shack so that the tail ends of the planes faced it when they parked. Can you imagine trying to talk on the phone with jet exhaust of about

200 degrees blowing sand, dirt, boulders, etc in the front door. I thought I would be broiled alive! The planes were only about 250 ft in front of the shack. I'm going to have it moved. But, I loved it anyway, pandemonium always strikes me funny. All the noise (unbelievable), dust, sweat, pilots going crazy...hahaha!

Day shift is great. I'm still loading bombs, but not as many as on nights. I'm getting very brown and my hair is getting bleached from the sun. There's an article in the Bangkok Sun describing how Laotian Government units have re-entered Muong-Sou. Four North Vietnamese battalions had withdrawn after "months of intensive US Bombing of Northeast Laos. They also described how Laotian forces, with US logistics and air support launched a major attack on the Plain of Jars. I thought it was interesting, since it's only recently been admitted that we are involved there.

Our crew is scheduled for a 5 day R&R in Bangkok the 18-23 of January. I hope we can go; things change quickly over here and we don't count on anything, but it's nice to look forward to.

One of the guys on my crew (pneumonia, sleeping pills, etc) is giving me a problem. He refuses to remove his wedding band when he works. I knew a guy who jumped off an aircraft, caught his ring on a protruding screw and almost lost a finger. I guess he feels romantic about the ring but I doubt his wife would want him to lose a finger to prove his love. Guess I'll have to be hard about it and quit trying to persuade.

9 October 1969. The Inspector General is back! What a panic! It's been hectic around here the last few days with these inspectors around. They refuse to leave us alone. On top of that there's been a strong wind blowing out of the southwest for the past week and we've had to keep two crews on runway duty, one for each end. Also there's been a lot of rain in parts of Vietnam and we've been getting a lot of transient aircraft from all over, different models and types I've never worked on before. The other day, I was out on the runway and a Marine F4-B from Da Nang pulled up to be de-armed. Ha! I had to get the back-seater to show me what was what. He didn't know much either! He had a cannon pod on centerline that I've never seen before and two rocket pods that must've been left over from the Korean War, I think. We finally just disconnected everything we could see. It was pretty funny and the pilot was a real card!

The other crew has to man the NE end of the runway, so we'll be left to do all the work this afternoon.

After work. I'm on my third bud since I came in the door. My nose is really all burned up. The sun was terrific today. An old friend just got here from the States. We did the usual reminiscing. He was in Korea and North Carolina with me.

As soon as the IG's leave, I'm going to start taking some pictures around the flightline. The photo hobby shop is pretty good here and I'll be able to develop and print black and whites for a few cents each.

12 October 1969 I'm going on a little trip late this afternoon, to U-Tapao. I've developed a hernia and will be getting some maintenance done, probably next month. I have to go today for a pre-surgical exam, though. That means I have to stop over in good old Bangkok for the night. Wow! I'm not in such bad shape, though and I'll be allowed to work until I have my operation. It's very hot now, about 1 PM. My nose is bright red as usual. Yesterday, a couple of pilots we de-armed at the runway came back with a some cold Pepsi's which was pretty thoughtful of them and also pretty rare.

Usually they (the pilots) live in their own little elite world, though there are some exceptions. I'm told that when this wing was flying into North Vietnam a couple of years ago, the attitude of the pilots toward their ground crews was a lot different.

15 October 1969. Sitting here in the hospital at U Tapao, right on the Gulf of Siam which is just as beautiful as it sounds. I've been here for two days, but was only able to see a doctor this afternoon. So here I am in my blue PJ's and a plastic bracelet. I'll be here for a couple of weeks and then I'll be on light duty for a month when I get back to Ubon.

Yesterday I went out to the U Tapao beach. It's almost like Hawaii, with palm trees and white sands, but not a ukulele in sight.

I spent the night in Bangkok on the way down here. There's an enlisted men's club on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Windsor hotel. Had a few drinks there with a guy named Charlie Davenport who was also heading down here. They have a great jazz band there, and I spent the evening looking out over good old Bangkok.

16 October 1969. Things are pretty slow and boring sitting around here. Tomorrow should be a little interesting, though. Dr. Pennington says they'll be using a spinal anesthetic, so I guess I'll be awake fro the operation. Also no smoking for the next few days. I guess he doesn't want me coughing and breaking a few stitches. It's freezing in here! The temperature is down around 65 degrees. Not very wise to keep it down so low in the tropics as the change from the outside is rough.

19 October 1969. I still haven't had my operation yet because of a cold I caught my first night in the hospital. How could I survive the monsoon rains and all for four months without even a sniffle and then catch a cold here? Well, if I'm well enough, Dr. Silsby said he'd do the operation tomorrow. The anesthesiologist just stopped by to ask me a few questions. I guess I'm all set for 0800 hours tomorrow morning.

20 October 1969. I had my operation this morning. I was awake most of the time, but they wouldn't let me watch. The surgeon I was supposed to have showed up about an hour late so I had a Major instead of a mere captain. I've had my share of Demerol and Atropine, etc. Slept most of the afternoon.

24 October 1969. Getting exasperated with the postal system. I haven't gotten any mail forwarded from Ubon. Tomorrow I'll try to make a phone call to Ubon and see what's wrong. I was allowed to go for a walk this afternoon, so I proceeded directly to the NCO

Club for a cold beer. I'm afraid I've grown accustomed to the air-conditioned comfort of this haven of mercy. I thought I'd collapse from the heat. Never has a Bud tasted so good!. I nearly froze to death when I returned to the hospital. There's a guy on the ward who has a heart problem. He's been here for the last few days. Hooked up to an electrocardiogram and oxygen. I hope he pulls through all right.

27 October 1969. U-Tapao AB, USO. Tomorrow morning I'll catch a C-130 for the first leg of my trip back to Ubon. Back to the steaming flightline, the noisy, hot Phantoms, the bombs, bombs, bombs. I'll be on light duty for three weeks so I guess I'll have a chance to get used to it again.

The mail finally caught up with me several hours after I was discharged. I waited around the hospital for 3 hours this afternoon feeling sure that after 2 weeks without mail I'd get some and I did. Feeling fine except I'm not looking forward to lugging my suitcase around for a couple of days. Also, I'm about broke. I have \$5.00 in "Baht", though and I'm hopeful I can sell it to someone around here, even though it's close to payday

Antiwar Dept. It's too bad the few perennial anti-everything people were able to capitalize on those moratorium services. I wish there were a way for people to express their disillusionment with the conduct of this endless war without having to rub shoulders with the blank-eyed, unthinking "revolutionaries" who have a tendency to fly from one "cause" to another, accomplishing nothing other than alienating people against them and their cause. I know from experience that when I say I want peace in Vietnam and everywhere that people may identify my beliefs with the actions of the rabble-rousers. It's too bad. Maybe if they hadn't behaved like a bunch of animals these past few years, people could have remained open-minded. It's pretty hard to consider someone's position when he has just received a stream of obscenities at you and attacked your very way of life. I don't think they want peace. I believe what they want is the limelight. And where are the "intellectuals"? The "thinkers"? Stage-struck as well. Anyway, I'll be glad to get back to my "fascist, racist, imperialistic, capitalistic" country.

Sitting in the USO right now, which is where I always end up when I'm broke in a strange place. It's pretty corny, I know, but I appreciate the USO being here and in a lot of places I've been. There's only two round-eye gals and about 200 GI's so I'll behave myself. Besides, I'm still kind of sore from my operation.

30 October 1969. Sitting in the NCO Club having a cup of coffee and a hamburger. I'm not doing much of anything at work and I probably shouldn't even go in as I wouldn't really be missed. Something to do, anyway. I go in late and leave early and do a little paperwork and read the paper.

I'm being nagged at the moment by one of our lovely waitresses. You know "baby-san". I'm going to have to grow a mustache or something, I guess.

We've added a desk to our room, made of old CBU crates. A little touch of home. Tomorrow is payday and I'll feel a lot better with a few bucks in my pocket. Everybody is broke around here. Johnny's Jeweler and Concession Store is having a sale on stuffed

cobras and I am tempted to buy one. They are definitely different and only \$15. Third cup of coffee now. Won't be able to sleep at work tomorrow if I don't stop drinking it.

I had a few too many last night with the night shift crew at 9:00 AM. All I wanted was some scrambled eggs and I stumbled onto a beer party at the club. I didn't go to work until 2PM but nobody noticed since I don't really do anything.

When I was in Bangkok waiting for a plane back to Ubon, I narrowly missed astronauts Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins. I was sitting in the snack bar when my #1 shoeshine boy Too-Wan started tugging my sleeve and pointing at the door and trying to say "Neil Armstrong". Unfortunately, I didn't comprehend until later on. I knew they were in town that day because there were a lot of signs in the streets and American flags. Well, I guess they're sorry they didn't get to see the world's greatest weapons mechanic.

We've seen a lot of barbed wire going up in the last few days and some new watch towers and bunkers so I guess somebody out there doesn't like us.

5 November 1969. Just received Madelaine's letter of October 21<sup>st</sup>. Of course it went via U-Tapao. It's very difficult to write as it's very noisy here right now. One of those nights. I'm having a few cans of Bud, now, just finished some kippers (my dinner). I'll be going back to my job the 17<sup>th</sup> and I can't wait since I feel pretty useless right now. Today, I didn't show up at work until noon and nobody even noticed I wasn't there. So I left at 4 PM and on the way, the Lt. stopped me and gave me a lift. Nobody wants me. A new guy came in today and I showed him around for a while. I took him up to the club and found out he was an alcoholic, and I sat there feeling guilty about drinking my beer while he had a coke. I hope I didn't tempt him to drink. I'd feel bad if I did since he explained what he'd been through.

I listened to Nixon's speech the other night. I guess it wasn't Merry Christmas for most people, but I think he was very honest about the situation and he is determined that we aren't going to be mired down in another mess over here, though I don't know what will become of Laos. It will be in the news more and more if and when the North Vietnamese ever pull back from South Vietnam. Perhaps the next president will have to worry about that. It's a dirty business.

9 November 1969. Yesterday, I went roaming through the town of Ubon. I went to the open market place and found that frogs are sold there as a delicacy along with the dried fish. What exotic aromas met my nose. I nearly passed out. Also I was almost trampled by some water buffalos in the park after I took their pictures along with their young shepards. No, not shepards. Water bufferds? I took some pictures of the temple (Wat) which is beautiful, and I browsed around the shops and generally had a good time.

Tonight I went to a movie and saw "The Sergeant". Now I've got to get out of the service. It was very good and Rod Steiger was magnificent. Today at work, I read a book

of short stories by Ray Bradbury (science fiction) and I washed a truck. I also answered the phone a few times, tune in next week for the exciting adventures of Bob Santo, world's greatest weapons mechanic! I am eager to get back to work and I feel fine but I can't until the 17<sup>th</sup> come hell or high water. 199 Days to go.

13 November 1969. Four more days before I can get back to work again. It's not that I love my job so much, it's just that sitting around doing next to nothing is torture. Today was my day off, as if I really needed one, and I finally fixed my bicycle up, went out for a big plate of Kao-Pot (fried rice), bought a bottle of Chianti wine and sat down to write to Madelaine. Also I'm down to about 4 cigarettes per day. I just hope I don't have a relapse. I allow myself one after each meal or when I have a coffee. I still have my pipe and it came in pretty handy at first. I almost melted it the first couple of days without cigarettes, but that's under control, too.

I never finished this last night so now I'm at the shop. I went out on the line last night for a while this morning but that's about all. They've run out of crew chiefs so I'm going to work for a couple of hours this afternoon, which is OK with me.

It's a beautiful day, about 80 degrees and sunny with a good breeze from the SW. We've had very little rain lately and the mud has almost dried up. I had a smoke about a half hour ago and almost passed out!

16 November 1969. I'm at the NCO Club for a hamburger and coffee, went to the show (Shoes of the Fisherman) and enjoyed that. Tomorrow, I start work with my old crew on the line again. As if to welcome me back to work, tomorrow the load crews start working 5 on and 1 off. We were working 3 and 1.

Actually, I think we're lucky they're letting us have any days off as business has been very, very brisk lately. There must be a war going on somewhere. I went for a swim today and it feels good to get a little exercise after a month of inactivity. I probably won't feel that way tomorrow after work, though.

There are quite a few guys getting "Short" in my outfit. "Short" is when you are getting close to DEROS which is Date of Estimated Return from Over Seas. And they do rub it in.

25 November 1969. I think I'll talk about work. I'm on 7 days and off "0" for the time being. We have a couple of crews going through re-training due to an accident on the line last night. One of the crews was checking out a bird electrically and failed to make sure the rocket launcher was disconnected. I guess they were in a hurry. Anyway, Mark (one of my roommates) was next to the rocket pod, ready to read voltage to the cable when he realized it was still connected to the pod. He turned to shout to the crew chief to wait but he (the crew chief) had already signaled the cockpit man to select and fire. A 2.75" rocket launched, leaving Mark half deaf and slightly burned on his face and in a state of shock. (He's OK now and is at the Club getting shnookered). The rocket went through a lighting unit, crushing its fuze, and across the runway and just missed a plane. Luckily it didn't detonate, also luckily, no one was in front of or behind the launcher. Anyway, the poor crew chief is still pretty shook and eating his heart out and I know how I'd feel if it happened with my crew and the chief is responsible for anything that happens. Well,

everyone will be a lot more careful for a while, I hope, and we can be thankful no one was seriously hurt. I hears that it went up over downtown Ubon and through the roof of a hospital or something but no one was hurt. That's grim, isn't it? Enough of that. It's been on my mind all day, though.

I caught a lizard yesterday, rubbed his belly and he fell asleep.

3 December 1969. This past week has been pretty hectic at work. Last night I was off, finally, after 14 days. I slept right through the day. I admit it. I am weary of this. 176 days to go.

I'm at work, now. There's not much happening tonight except that it's cold (cold is 55 degrees).

We had a radio marathon the past few days to raise money for some schools around here. The Security Police donated their one jail cell to house various brass we paid \$50 to keep there. At one time we had the Wing Commanding Officer and Base CO in there.

Somebody stole a dummy 750 lb bomb and gave it to the radio station and it cost EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) \$50 to get it back. They played "Tip Toe Through the Tulips" by Tiny Tim for 2 ½ hours before somebody collected \$60 to get it off the air.

Somebody bought the Wing CO for 2 hours to serve drinks at the Airman's Club. They say it was pretty funny.

The war seems far away from here, somehow, and the only sign of it is the empty bomb racks and an occasional bullet hole in a fuselage or wing. It's so impersonal. Sometimes, I wish they would shoot back at us down here. It would seem fairer. There I go, again. I've about given up on the chow hall, it's not worth it. The other day, the milk was frozen solid, so I complained to the NCOIC who was, as usual, unsympathetic to my gripes. So, I thawed it out with some hot water. After all that, it turned out to be sour! Now I eat at the club so's not to develop high blood pressure or peptic ulcer or ptomaine poisoning (it happened to two guys last month, but they couldn't prove it was the mess hall). Must go now, as the war effort will surely collapse without me.

9 December 1969. At the patio having a beer for breakfast. I was really surprised when I received that beautiful (Christmas) tree yesterday from Madelaine. It certainly will brighten up the old barracks a bit for everyone.

Udon just came over and sat down. He likes Marlboros. He is also freezing to death as it is "Mak mak nao" this morning.

The New Christy Minstrels were here for a USO show the other night. Luckily I was off and was able to enjoy a fine show. Still no word on Bob Hope this year.

I'm trying to get a Sansui amplifier for my deck, but the BX is out as usual. Gripe, gripe! Did you see the picture in the papers of those two bombs (500 lb and 1000 lb) they found while digging under the Brooklyn Bridge? I guess some GI brought them back as souvenirs, ha, ha!

15 December 15 1969. I'm at work, now, sure to be interrupted with a job before I finish this. Pretty sleepy tonight thanks to an early morning beer session at the Patio. It's getting to be a regular pattern. The Christmas tree (from Madelaine) is slowly being decorated by

contributions of ribbons and candy from passerby. 163 Days and 163 Nights to go. Two airplanes and a hamburger later...at the NCO Club.

My friend Mark who was so close to that runaway rocket, had another astounding bit of luck out at the end-of runway when he accidentally stepped on a snake which turned out to be a banded Krait. They are supposed to be 19 times as venomous as a cobra.

We're trying to organize a steak and beer party for the night shift. They are usually pretty hilarious and lots of fun. We'll have to have it at 6:30 AM to allow time for the beer to wear off by work time. Got a care package from home today with a beautiful salami (which is almost gone). Back to the flightline.

23 December 23 1969. Things are the same here, kind of busy and I'm sleepy as usual. It's hard to believe it's Christmas time and 81 degrees, too, but I have a Christmas tree here to verify it. My last squadron back in north Carolina has been deployed to South Korea for six months. I would have gone along if it weren't for this trip. One winter up there was enough for me, though I imagine they'll have better accommodations than they did the last time.

Bob Hope is in the country but no word on when or if he'll be stopping here. I guess it's a secret.

I've been doing a little jogging in the morning after work. At first I thought it would be too much after 12 hours on the line but I feel better than I did before. Anyway it's something to do...

All three guys on my crew will sew on new stripes the first of the year and we're off New Year's Eve so I guess I'll help them celebrate. I have to keep 'em out of trouble, you know. They'll probably carry me back instead, ha! Must sleep, now or I'll be in a complete daze at work.

26 December 1969. Christmas is over and everything is back to normal until New Year's Eve. I got off duty at midnight Christmas Eve but did not have enough sense to go to sleep. I stayed pretty straight, though. Of course, there was no let up in the bombing here and I admit to some sadness as I watched a block of F 4's take off at midnight for their usual mission.

I guess December 25 is the first day of summer in Thailand. It was hot, 84 degrees, and stayed that way well into the night. I decided to get some sleep last night, woke up at 6 AM and now my sleeping schedule will be disrupted for days to come, Went out and jogged for about 1/2 hour. I walked some, too. Now I'll head for the pool and see if I can get tired enough to grab a few hours of sleep before work.

I've put a Sansui amplifier on lay-away at the BX. Perhaps payday I'll be able to bail it out.

Back from the pool, the water was c-c-cold! It sure does feel good, though.

I hope I can get into town New Year's for the Thai carnival. There is supposed to be Thai dancing which is quite beautiful. Should be a lot of fun.

30 December 1969. It's about 4:30 PM now and I'll be off to work soon. Hopefully, I'll be off a few hours early tonight when most of the work is caught up. Had a rough night last night so I skipped my daily jogging and collapsed on my bed at 6:30 AM. I'm

thinking of moving to another barracks as this one is noisy and a couple of my roommates are pretty sloppy. I'm not really fussy, but these guys are ridiculous. I don't think I can put up with them for another 150 days. Short!

All of my griping about things is beginning to pay off. Our runway shacks have been rebuilt, there is hot coffee and water there 24 hours a day and electricity, too. Hope they keep it up.

10:30 PM. At the library. I just had lunch. Scrambled eggs, phooey! Haven't done much tonight except download a few planes that didn't fly for some reason. I should be pretty busy after midnight loading for the morning missions.

In a way I'm glad the holidays are about over as it can be kind of depressing listening to the carols and all and being over here away from home. Not that it bothered me too much but somehow Christmas and bombs don't mix very well. Anyway, Spring is fast approaching and that is what is most important to me right now.

Maybe I've been doing too much thinking about this business over here, but there are many questions left unanswered in my mind as to our involvement here and where it will lead us. Mostly, I can't understand the secrecy surrounding us as if it were an attempt to mislead not the enemy, but the American people. Something is very, very wrong.

13 January 1969. Last night was pretty peaceful 'til about 0200. I was downloading a 2,000 lb bomb when I heard the pitter-patter of an M60 machine gun. Visitors from Laos! Wow! In case it's reported in the papers back home it will no doubt be exaggerated. And if I write much more about it'll be exaggerated even more.

Anyway, 5 VC were killed and possibly one SP. Yours truly found a comfy drainage ditch having abandoned his tools, airplane and bomb. Good thing it's not the rainy season or the ditch would've been full of slimy water and I'd be soaked.

Well, that's twice in 7 months, Not very hectic, but enough.

24 hours later.. The SP who was wounded will be OK. One K-9 was killed. All's quiet on the Western Front again, ha,ha!

We had some rain last night for about 10 minutes, the most in months. It's a beautiful morning, still cool but it'll be up around 86 degrees this afternoon. I guess I'll get burned when I finally start day shift again.

19 January 1970. All is quiet for some reason. Ralph "The Gladiator" received two jars of home made macaroni. Plan to share with him on next night off. Some wine and reminiscing about NY.

I am subsisting on vitamin pills, hamburgers and kaw pad. The mess hall food has never been worse. I still haven't taken down my Christmas tree. Still on a 70 hour work week, but hoping to go to 3 on and 1 off soon. Sometimes we receive ordnance only 45 minutes before take off time. The load crews, of course, are blamed rather than the gantry, bomb dump, etc.

24 January 1970. I'm having a pitcher of Kool Aid and trying to imagine how cold it must be back in the world. I'm working days now and am just getting used to the heat

which is in the high 80's. I like the sunshine better than working at night which can be sort of gloomy. Tomorrow I'm off and since I am really broke, I'll probably spend the day at the pool soaking up the warmth of the sun.

Our new expeditor is really funny. One of the pilots came down from his 100<sup>th</sup> mission this afternoon and as is the custom, he sent off a red smoke signal as part of the celebration. Davis saw the smoke and came running into the shop and told us to clear out 'cause we were being attacked or something. When we saw the red smoke we explained everything and he calmed down a bit.

My bomb lift operator took his lift to the repair shop this afternoon 'cause the engine was running poorly. As usual, he zoomed into the yard, hit the brakes, which didn't work and planted both forks through the maintenance office wall. Needless to say, we had the brakes fixed as well.

29 January 1970. 91 Degrees and no snow in sight. I'm having a big cold pitcher of Tang. Found out the big ice chest behind the chow hall is unlocked at night. What luck! I almost stepped on a big old toad on the way from the chow hall, the biggest I've seen over here. Interesting things are happening in the Air War but it's all classified.

Big party at Lt. Keefer's house downtown tomorrow night. Should be a big night being payday and the night before my night off. R&R's are being scheduled again so maybe the crew will get to Bangkok after all. I had my eye on a trip to Hong Kong but they say it's almost impossible for me to get a passport. I had one before I left the States but I had to surrender it. I could have spent 5 days there for \$200 airfare and hotel and all. Maybe someday.

I just heard on the radio that a rescue helicopter was shot down by a North Vietnamese Mig 21 on the Laos- North Vietnam border. That's what I was thinking of when I said the air war was getting interesting. Also why I'm tired since we spent some time equipping our birds with missiles for a change. I hope things don't get worse.

1 February 1970. Had a party at Lt. Keefer's house downtown the other night. It was pretty good. We all had too much to drink. Many laughs, sang a million songs. The wing commander had our crew in for a talk he's been giving to everyone. He's okay, but not very down to earth. He's been in for 29 years and this is to be his last and most troublesome command. He was only here 6 weeks when we launched that rocket. Then somebody stole a trailer of aerial flares and parked it behind the NCO Club (pretty dangerous). On top of that a guy punctured a wing tank with a bomb lift and spilled fuel all over the ramp. Also we currently lead the base in arrests, assaults, etc. Quite an outfit. Our new OIC has been transferred to the bomb dump! Lt. Reis got promoted and will take over. He's OK, knows the operation and isn't looking to take any scalps as he's not a career man.

We understand that we are doing well against our targets, but the enlisted men are pretty well kept in the dark. Morale would certainly be better if we were given more information. I mentioned this to the colonel and he got pretty indignant. He did promise to give us some kind of briefing at the monthly commander's call.

4 February 1970. Had a few beers with the gang after a long hot day in the glorious February sunshine. We've been restricted to base for the next few days due to the Tet holidays. There are a lot of North Vietnamese refugees in the country and I guess they're not too crazy about us.

Thai watermelon is in season, now and one of the Thais brings them in and sells slices in the phase hanger. I'm getting pretty sunburned at work again.

20 February 1970. The past few weeks have been murder. The War in Laos has picked up and we've felt it on the line. It's OK, though, the days go by quickly and I'm getting used to spending most of the day in the sun, turning brown. I usually stop at the Patio for a few brews after work with a few friends and 2 hours later I'm asleep. Not a very exciting life, I'm afraid, but lately we've been putting in a pretty full days work. Right now, I'm taping a Tom Jones album. Ralph (The Gladiator) has a deck also, so we use each other's to make tapes. If I'm not too lazy about it I should be able to accumulate quite a few albums this way.

One of my crew members (Van) became a father just the other day and has practically been doing cartwheels since. We had a few beers to celebrate last night and this morning the crew (including yours truly) was just not up to par, even though we loaded seven planes. Got off work two hours early to go to commander's call which only lasted one hour. Fantastic! Such simple pleasures. Haha!

24 February 1970. Yesterday was the hottest day ever. For an hour, the temperature on the flightline was 108 degrees, at least that's what the flight surgeon said. It was very dry, though, so we weren't that aware of it. Got my return orders. Sent a copy to Maddy.

5 March 1970. Just got back from temporary duty at N.K.P. (Nakhom Phanom). Had to go up there on our day off to download some weapons from a couple of our birds that ran into some trouble. NKP is pretty much a hole-in-the-wall. It's located right on the Laos border. The only good thing about the trip was the absence of jet noise for a few days. All props at NKP. The bad part is the reddish-brown dust that is everywhere. There isn't much pavement there. I'd hate to be there in the rainy-muddy season. The town is about 14 miles from the field and is about half North Vietnamese refugees. They can be unfriendly at times.

Anyway, I'm glad to be back here, at Ubon, strange as that sounds.

One of the guy's on our crew had to go home on emergency leave. Van's wife was very ill. She had given birth only a week before. I haven't heard from Van yet, hope everything will be OK. He was a pretty good guy.

I've gotten my tuner-amplifier and it's great. In fact I'm listening to it now. It's about 9:30 PM and still about 85 degrees. "The Endless Summer". There will be no R&R for this guy but that's OK. 83 Days left.

No, I haven't lost much weight in fact I'm gaining again probably due to those after-work beers lately. That old flightline can work up a guy's thirst, especially these days. Laos is in bad shape, I'm afraid. I'm glad to be getting out but it's going to be messy in SEA for a long time to come.

10 March 1970. Sipping iced tea and listening to Charlie Byrd. Should be getting a port call in a couple of weeks. Lately I've had an insatiable thirst for cold beer after work. The pilots are throwing a beer party for us loaders Saturday morning and Saturday night (for the day shift). I'm off Saturday, so maybe I'll try to make both. Mosquitos are starting their nightly air raids so I'd better take shelter under my net.

15 March 1970. Had a pretty busy morning. Two pilots were down somewhere and we had to support the rescue effort with a lot of bombs on short notice. They were picked up O.K. though. Quite an effort goes into an operation like that. Anyway, we had so many birds loaded up, it covered most of the afternoon missions so we didn't have much to do for a change. Well, our 5 day R&R which was cut to a three day pass is now down to an extra day off following a regular one. Wow! Maybe. Ha, Ha! I guess my visit to Thailand will include only memories of lovely downtown Ubon and dusty old NKP>  
72 Days to Go!

Vodka with Lemon-Lime Kool Aid Makes a terrible gimlet, but that's what I'm sipping at the moment, plugged into my tape deck and wishing it would snow.  
I'd better get some sleep now. What a drag! If I could get along on 4 hours of sleep, things would be much more interesting. No can do.  
I'm getting short.

?. At the barracks listening to some sounds. Jay and Bob Lewis came by the Patio and we decided to play some tapes and drink some beer. Bob is the guy who replaced van on the crew. He's turned out to be quite a great guy (so much for first impressions). Anyway, he's gotten himself a job singing at the officer's Club. He was a singer before he enlisted and was pretty successful. He is very good and has a good repertoire. We may go back on the day shift since his new job and since the officers can arrange anything. Almost!!! Think I'll just amble over to the Thai restaurant for a delicious omelet, and watch the sunrise.

25 March 1970. It's late at night and I'm off (working nights, now). There is a cool breeze coming in which can't be appreciated without a sultry, hot day before. I haven't been very well the past week going from strep throat to the flu. I'm okay now. Everybody here (almost) has been hit with the bug or virus lately which strained the manpower a bit but "The Show Must Go On" you know. As I understand it, we are getting some news coverage of the new war at last. How gratifying! Ha, Ha.  
Time goes on. Only 63 days left. Oh, yes, I'm getting restless, going off into long stretches of daydreaming, looking off into the deep night trying to see 63 sunrises in a row. I guess I'm suffering "short pains as they are called over here  
I had hoped to stay on the day shift until the journey homeward, but nights it is. Things are funnier on nights, anyway. We can get away with a lot more horseplay 'cause the wheels prefer the daytime. Except for Major Chastain, who never sleeps. He's okay, though, at least he knows what's happening.

26 March, 1970. I pilot I remembered from N.C. was downed in Laos last week. We were really busy providing ordnance to protect him and the rescue helicopters for two days and two nights. He was picked up O.K. at last, but was in pretty bad shape. Our pilots had to destroy 12 antiaircraft guns in one valley as well as try to hold off several hundred N. Viet troops while the rescue choppers made their attempt.

Things in Laos are real bad, I guess. Nixon said that we haven't lost any ground combat troops there but has he forgotten the aircrews who have been killed over Laos? I don't like the half-truth deceptiveness we've been hearing but it's better than it was. At any rate, I know we won't get too tied down there as long as it's being kept public.

1 April 1970. 0030 AM. At the moment I'm a little bit "kimau" or high, or schnookered as the case may be. It's my night off again. I had planned to go to town tonight and make the rounds but I slept too long and everyone had left by the time I woke. So I went to the club and had a big dinner and proceeded to get drunk with a few of the career NCO's (lifers). I was drinking gin and tonics until MSGT Smith from Tennessee came along and I had to drink Jack Daniels sour mash which was all he was buying. Anyway, I got tired of that so I'm at the "Patio" having coffee all by my lonesome.

Tonight it rained! First of the monsoon season. Buckets! I saw the lightening on the horizon and the wind was coming in at about 10 knots.

Laos is very much in the news lately and of course I'm interested since our mission here has been primarily in Laos since I arrived. We are about 40 miles from that troubled land and even the language here is very much Lao-Thai. I hope we won't be involved there for such a long time but it is a fully legitimate problem there. There is nothing ambiguous about the 60,000 North Vietnamese in Laos. I don't see how anyone can call it a civil war. The Thais are very upset about it as they feel quite threatened. There is very little love lost on the North Vietnamese here in Ubon. It is a very painful situation for us to be involved in but it is clear that things are not as they have long seemed to us in the States. The Chinese Communists are building a road through northern Laos and are headed for the Thai border. If only we could unwrap the secrecy that surrounds everything here, perhaps it wouldn't be so bad. All the people get at home are "leaks" and this isn't going to encourage much support, I'm afraid.

Oh. Well, that's my uninformed opinion. I guess I'd rather have an uninformed opinion than none at all.

Night shift is such a drag. It seems I do nothing but sleep and work. When I worked days, it seemed like I at least had a few hours to spare but now I get off work and immediately go to sleep until 4 PM (1600) and go straight to work.

12 April 1970. It's Sunday afternoon and I'm at the NCO Club and am off tonight. The past 5 days have been very busy and I'm glad for the time off. I'm afraid I'll be in bad shape before the night is through; haven't been to sleep yet and it's 3 PM and I'm going out tonight for a few drinks downtown. At least I hope it'll be a few drinks. We have to carry our booze in hip flasks here as the base commander has decreed a pint limit on booze bought downtown. This was brought on by an inordinate amount of fist fights in

the clubs downtown. Especially on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor of the Ubon Hotel which is where we go for coffee after a night on the town. It gets pretty wild there some nights. They just announced 5 cent beers on the PA, but I think I'll pass it up this time. Maybe I'll have a black Russian just for the sake of nostalgia. Still no port calls for May and it's getting late. Looks like I won't be getting out much before the 27<sup>th</sup>, my DEROS (date eligible for return from overseas). I hope I can remember to drive on the right side of the road when I get back. This is a left-handed country in the British tradition. Well, I'm going for a dip in the pool before visiting the night spots of beautiful downtown Ubon.

22 April 1970. Port call has arrived and I'll be leaving Bangkok at 07:01, 25 May. My four years before the mast is almost at an end, sigh. Last night was murder. An aircrew is down somewhere in Laos so we were kept pretty busy getting as many planes into the air as possible. I imagine it will be the same for the day crews. It's 3 PM and 98 degrees. I'm having some clothes made finally. I was supposed to go for a fitting this afternoon but it is too hot and I'm too tired to face that jolting ride to town in the Baht Bus. It's really something. I'm at the Patio now, having a breakfast of tuna salad sandwiches and Budwiser. Breakfast of Champions!

3 May 1970. It's been pretty busy here with our new involvement in Cambodia. I hope it will all be over very, very soon so everyone can go back to living and giving rather than dying and taking life. It's a bad scene. There's no glory in war, any war. Just heard on the radio of the 120 plane raid on N. Vietnam yesterday. That was us. Wish I knew if we had a strategy at all.

6 May 1970. 18 Days left in Thailand. I just got off and tonight's my night off. It's really a beautiful day today. This time of year, the skies are full of huge, white clouds in every direction. They're magnificent until one passes overhead and deposits its wet cargo on us working troops. I've got lots to do these days trying to figure out how to get my things home. I suppose when I clear out the stacks of newspapers and paperbacks it won't amount to much. I do accumulate things.

Speaking of lizards, one of the guys found a big one in the fuze well of a 2000 lb bomb the other night as he reached in to make sure it was clear. Somebody at the bomb dump has a sense of humor it seems. The lizard didn't seem to get a bang out of it though he would have, of course.

I listened to Hanoi Hanna for a while, yesterday, on Barry's multi-band radio. It's really interesting. I'm going to try to tape a couple of broadcasts before I leave. For 15 minutes yesterday, she related every anti-war demonstration we had in the States last week. They really enjoy it.

12 May 1970. It's sort of my day off. I go on duty for 5 days then I'm off duty 'till I leave. Right now, I'm waiting for someone to come by the barracks to pick up some baggage I'm shipping home.

It's only about 95 degrees out now.

I have to carry my amplifier and speakers to the Post Office later. The amp weighs 30 lbs and each speaker is about 55 lbs so I have a job ahead of me.

1 hour later. My baggage is gone, I hope I will see my things again. They wouldn't let me ship my 40mm shell casings so I guess I'll have no souvenirs.