

Chu Lai
February 17

Dear Mom -

Reassuring Letter: (What else would I be writing to my mother?) assurance that I am well-fed, housed, clothed, healthy and deliciously happy.

Actually, I am rather well-off here. While the Mess Hall isn't exactly noted for its fine cuisine, I do eat enough, and even stuff myself occasionally, just to be sure. Beyond that, there are various items of food which are concocted on an impromptu basis - from the contents of various welfare packages and odds-&-ends bought at the PX (items bought at the PX tend to be odds-&-ends; I'll never understand the principle behind their stocking of goods.) I think I wrote to you about our pizza, & last night we had a sort of stew made by throwing together all sorts of packaged and tinned foods. It came out mostly chicken and was excellent - much better than anything issued.

I received a letter from Hillbrook today, this time from Ken. I am really impressed; now both of the Uncles have written - probably and almost unheard of event. Letter was quite nice and had a really beautiful photograph of Penelope in the snow - which I showed around the office and introduced as my girl friend. I'll have to write back to them as soon as I can, but I'm afraid my side of my correspondence is already falling behind. Yet it seems that all I do, besides sit at a typewriter, is to write letters! It's probably good for me, keep me out of trouble or something. Incidentally, could you send me Calvin's address? I'd like to write to each of his children to thank them for the artwork (I especially liked Thomas').

Did I tell you I now have maid-service? My room is so small & spartan that I really don't need any help in sweeping it out morning & night, but the company frowns upon people who don't subscribe. So, for \$3 a month I get my boots shined every day, my room cleaned (sometimes),

and am not responsible for the condition of my-
room during inspection - a reasonable bargain.
I must admit that I was hesitant at first, the
idea of hiring a Vietnamese to polish my boots struck
me as being a little too much like the old-style
imperialist hiring natives to do his menial chores
while he fights the colonial wars. However, it's
worked out quite well... most GIs behave
quite well and occasionally even spoil the
hooker-maids. "Mama-san," who is usually as old
as the hills, is often slipped cigarettes or cokes
as she sits on the door step polishing away. An
occasional here with sufficient language training
will try out his Vietnamese, but generally all
communication is in a sort of Viet-Speak, a
limited mixture of English, Vietnamese, & what
is apparently French - it doesn't always work
too well.

Write when you can; mail takes about
5-7 days to get here, recently.

Love,
Rob