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June 29
Chu Lai

Dear Family -

What an annoyance! Not writing to you, you understand, but writing this all over again. I typed up a letter yesterday and slipped it into my pocket so that I could put it into an envelope when I got back to my room ... and discovered when I got there that I couldn't find it. Which is actually all right, since it was just another "I'm all right and nothing much is happening around here" sort of note.

At any rate, I'm all right and nothing much is happening around here. After Saigon, Chu Lai is rather a bore. However, now I'm learning how to drive a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ton truck, since there aren't enough people in the Motor Pool to drive the guards around. So, on the days when I have guard duty ~~and~~ there's no one to drive us around ... I'll do the driving and get credit for having done my guard. So, a couple of us from the office go down to the Motor Pool at night to be instructed on "servicing military vehicles." The instruction is something that has to be seen and heard to be believed. Someone pointed out that the person who began our "classes" was a true motor-pool person; he began the class, "You guys there..."

It's come to my attention that my Mother doesn't know why we named our dog the way we did. "Sham" is the modern equivalent of goldbrick. They're not quite the same in meaning however, for it's assumed that everyone shams at one time or another. Sham-time is time not actually spent at the job (excluding actual time off, say, in the evening). Suppose that there's nothing to be done immediately in the office and I decide to write to my family rather than just sit around with my arms folded. I put a sheet of paper in the typewriter and begin typing madly; I look busy (and appearance is what concerns most people around here) and am not given some invented project to do, which might interfere with my actual work later on. This is a minor form of shamming, and one which everyone from Private to Colonel practices every day simply as a means of self-defense. A more major form of sham-time is found in the practice of assigning someone who's been working hard to some task with a grandiose name but no responsibilities. That way he gets some rest and isn't penalized for it. My trip to Saigon almost verges on this; although I did perform a function, I was selected as a sort of reward - a chance to get out of Chu Lai and air my brain out. Shamming is an accepted institution in the army - even a general gets his sham-time. Therefore ... the name "Sham".

Your food package arrived the other day and is being rapidly consumed. However, it arrived a little too late for a supper chez nous in the hootch that three of us cooked up from anything that was available. I pass the recipe on to my Mother and Sister:

Take one can of REFRIED BEANS and add to a pot, Add one can of BEEF RAVIOLI and mix the two thoroughly. Heat and add an envelope of ONION SOUP MIX. Season with TABASCO SAUCE and add KETCHUP to give it a little healthier color. Heat until mixture begins to pulsate slowly. Serve with CORNED BEEF and BEEFARONI. Go see a movie to take your mind off your digestion.

I love all of you very much.

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