

#21

4 July
Chu Lai

Dear Family --

Independence Day, no less. I'm afraid that the festivities around here are rather thin. We have a 50 gun salute, courtesy of Division Artillery, and the Acting Adjutant General reading the names of the 50 States and when they came into the Union. Oh, frabjous day! There is also a celebration put on by the USO, with free food, music, sky-diving, etc, etc, however -- we've been given a direct order to stay away from it, since there may be a peace rally nearby -- and made to sign an acknowledgement of having been ordered to stay away from the rally (note the fine distinction between the orders, to avoid embarrassment for the AG in case it reaches the newspapers). I must admit that a "combat zone" is a questionable local for a peace rally (although undoubtedly the most appropriate) -- still, I am rather annoyed at the manner in which headquarters has intervened. Oh well, I am a "good soldier."

About the only fireworks this July 4 has had was last night on guard, when the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Viet Nam, see?) camp across QL 1 (the national highway) from my bunker decided to open up on nothing. I suppose they get bored, too -- although if any of us tried that we'd probably get court-martialed for violating the Rules of Engagement. Anyway, they managed to put on quite a display, incidentally burning up a few hundred thousand dollars worth of American-supplied ammunition. After that, I managed to get a beautiful night's sleep (not during my shift, of course) -- since someone had actually left a mattress on top of my bunker.

What else, we're having the annual IG (Inspector General) inspection tomorrow through the 9th, which should be a lot of fun. People are scurrying to get their first haircuts in months. At least the place is beginning to get clean.

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Both packages, food and books, arrived. I am eying the Trollope somewhat hesitantly -- under these circumstances it seems rather long, to say the least, but I'd like to get into it. Two of us tried making dinner again last night, although along somewhat more conventional lines.

Other odds and ends: I acquired a reading lamp and a poncho liner (a very light-weight waterproof quilt about the size of a blanket), willed to me by one of our people who just derosed. Both are welcome additions to my room, which looks more habitable with time. (I can't think of anything else, so I guess I'll define the above as the 'odds and ends.' The acquisition of odd pieces to the end of making the room more habitable?)

I love you all very much.

A handwritten signature, possibly "Tob", written in dark ink.