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July 23
Chu Lai

Dear Family -

I seem to be falling rather behind in writing to you. I'm not sure that it's the number of things I have to do - or the humidity, which is making everyone lethargic. Very little is really happening - at least, nothing noteworthy enough to remember in time to write.

Anyway, my birthday came and went. I had my scheduled half-day off then, and spent it up at the photolab (such as it is) developing a couple of rolls of film, some of which I printed and sent to you. (Did you get them?) Your packages arrived, the books and the odds-and-ends. The rubber band airplanes were a particular hit, and are still in service - although a little dilapidated. Sham's bone was well received, but I'm afraid he's either hidden it or had it taken away by a bigger dog after a few days. So instead, he sharpens his teeth on the mouse (he was petrified by it at first, and would take a huge leap backward when it passed by his feet or circled around him. When it slowed down, he'd sneak up on it very carefully.) Now that it's been worn down a bit and more familiar, he's a bit less leary of it, and will sit chewing on it with great concentration.

The frisbee has yet to be tried out, for lack of time - but was especially welcome. As soon as I have time, we'll take it out around dusk when there aren't too many trucks around. The cassettes are a delightful selection, though I've only played four of them. Inasmuch as I only get to play the thing on my days off, I think I am quite well-supplied for some time to come.

Did I mention that I'd finally finished the Trollope? All nine-million pages? Next I'll have to start on The Justice Diamonds, which is supposed to be especially fine. However, in the meantime, I'm content with Margery Allingham and Mr. Campion. I will fill out Lois's questionnaire shortly, but I do have a bit of a backlog - and I think a wise compromise between what I'd like and what I can probably accomplish would be to send off books at a rate of about two or three at a time. I'll try to sit down and think of some particular titles that I'd like. Off-hand, in re Trollope - if it's in paperback (I imagine that Penguin series will have it sooner or later) I'd like The Way We Live Now.

How does one combat boredom and lack of time to do anything really interesting? (The new Adjutant General doesn't like to see his men reading during slack-time; it looks unprofessional.) Well, for one thing, I have the only set, as far as I know, of art nouveau regulation and orders folders.

Not much else new. I heard from Alan, who seems quite contentedly married. I suppose that if I know anyone truly suited for domesticity, it is Alan - although it seems rather mundane at this point.

Also, thank the Mooneys for their fruitcake, it was very good - and devoured in an evening (even though the number of fruitcake lovers around here is strictly limited). The brownies arrived in excellent condition, but they deteriorate rapidly around here, so they should be sent in limited quantities at any one time - one or two pans at a time, perhaps.

That's about it. I love you all very much.

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Mail + packages from Vietnam are being held up several days in San Francisco to allow them to be inspected for drugs. So don't worry if there is a delay in my writing.