

#28

August 19

Chai Lai

Dear Family -

I'm not sure I should write this. I've been out of the office for a while, but I'll try writing as soon as I get the time - although that may not be for a while, inasmuch as work is still quite heavy. Did I mention to you that I'm now, at least nominally, running the Medevac Section? It's quite a mess that I've inherited (the junior NCO who was running it was transferred to the night shift for that reason), and requires a bit of effort to disentangle it. However, it's somewhat of a boost for morale (although the bulk in it is the large amount of work and the lack of personnel), and reinforces my belief that the Army is at this point in its history, at least in Vietnam, being run by junior enlisted men. Eg. the Adjutant General and other members of what might be called "upper middle management" [field grade officers, Maj, LTC, Col] really don't have very much idea of how the branches under their command operate (a problem not only here, but in Saigon, as a recent series of incidents brought out). Add that to the fact that I'm (pat on the back) older, better educated, and have more experience with the office than my new Officer-in-Charge, and you can see how my thesis arose. Oh well. Anyway, the OIC is really a nice guy, and I'd hate to see him embarrassed, which could very well happen considering lack of support at higher levels - so one continues, covers, etc.

However, I really shouldn't complain - and I wouldn't want you to think of it as particularly serious. It's basically an illustration of my point. While people are agonizing over what's happening to the Army (as well they might), generally in terms new personnel, new programs, etc. - I wonder if part of the problem [lack of spirit or purpose, insecurity, and so forth] may originate in precisely the sector of the Army which complains about what the younger soldiers have done to it - i.e. the above-mentioned middle management. Most of them entered the Army during the period of Korea and immediately following, and the bulk of their experience before Vietnam fell in the fifties and early sixties, in a rather moribund, peacetime army - and they are simply not equipped to understand ~~to~~ understand the demands made on them by shifting requirements in wartime, or the requirements made of them by the "reformers" in the Department of Defense, much less both simultaneously. The point is demonstrated day after day, in dropped comments and actions. It's rather pathetic, but especially sad when one considers that the next decade's general officers will come from among these people.

I suppose that it's rather absurd to be sitting here turning day-to-day experience into an outline for an essay - however, it makes it ~~interesting~~ almost enjoyable, interesting at any rate. All this comes, I suppose, from reading Holborn's essay on "Moltke and Schlieffen" on guard (between shifts) with a red-filter flashlight and a poncho over my head - an effect that has to be experienced to be believed. [N.b., one of the people in my bunker brought along three boxes of Crackerjacks (!), and we very carefully rooted through them in search of the prizes, which, I am glad to report, are still as annoying as they always were.] (Disconcerting may be the better word.)

and possibly one that is less than completely valid - but I think had a point. Article, anyone?

We are losing the man who runs the photo lab here, so it looks as though I won't be able to do my own work and will have to resort to the PX for developing and printing. I hope I'll be able to get on more roll of my own in though, either tonight or tomorrow.

Got Lois's two letters, which were lying on my table this morning when I came in from guard (very muddy), and read them over a sinfully late breakfast - 6:45. It's nice to know that a portion of "The World" is still civilized, something I've begun to doubt from reading the papers. What else? Well, obviously (no less) that I love you all very much, that I do miss you, and that I'll be home rather soon (think about that Christmas drop). It's a pity that that drop for leaving the Army doesn't apply. (I came in in August, about 1 month and 5 days (too late), but who knows, it might be a precedent. Whatever - I'll be home soon.

Love,