

#39

Chu Lai
7 Oct

Dear Family -

I've already begun my packing; & shipped out a carton of books this morning and have another packed and ready to go. It seems that the middle-of-November prediction for being home is quite accurate. I can't be sure of the exact date, since I have to get from Chu Lai to either Cam Ranh or Da Nang (depending on where they decide to ship us), from there to Seattle (more outprocessing there); and home. The first 2 steps will probably be the longest, inasmuch as the weather conditions sometimes thoroughly disrupt flight plans - but it shouldn't be too long, and the estimate is "at the latest."

I'm enclosing a portrait (mechanical drawing would better describe it) of my friend the Submarine-shaped insect, in lieu of anything more exciting. He looks rather like a grasshopper, but without the jackknife legs - and does a bit of flying from time to time. Any word on what he is?

Incidentally - it wasn't Hama-san

who ripped off our tobato's claws, but another hootch maid. Momma-san feels quite protective about the hootch - if someone leaves an article of value lying around in the open, she'll hide it and give him a lecture before returning it. Momma-san's business ethics may seem a little shady at times (especially in dealing with the Army perse), but by her own lights she's quite honorable - and certainly treats us well.

I must admit that I shocked her today - when I told her that I didn't have any baby-san - and at age 23. No-one could convince her that in the US it's considered number ten to have children before marriage (a dubious statement, anyway) - apparently, she considers it an example of shocking waste. After that accusation, I might sympathize with a feminist.

8 Oct

The typhoon we were supposed to receive very obligingly decided to turn away and ignore us - rather fortunate; I think the fringes of it were quite

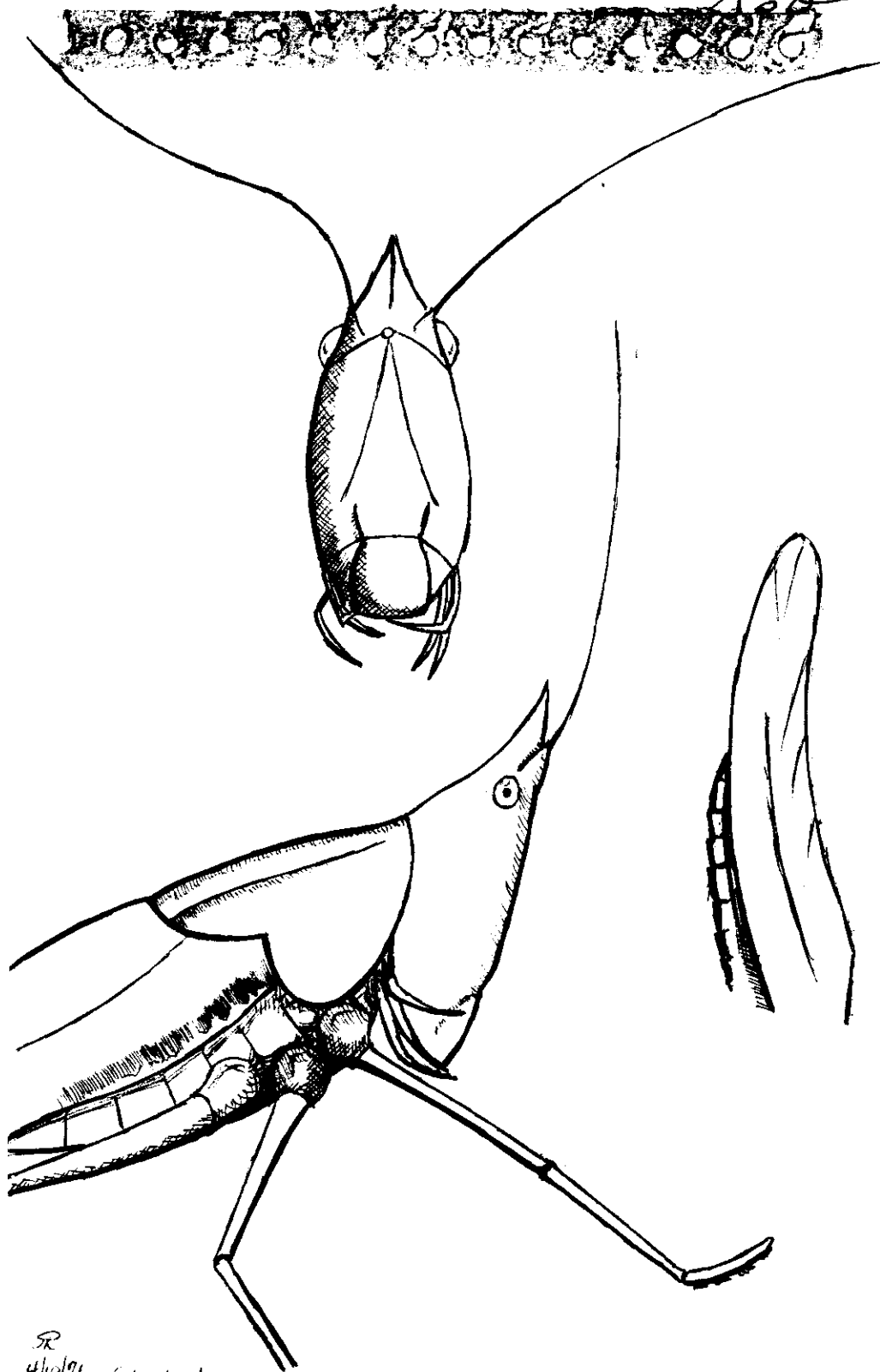
enough. The China Sea is still feeling it, though, and this noon I walked around the cliffs behind hqs and watched the waves - ~~the most impressive I've seen~~ since I've been here. The coast on the east of Chu Lai is a slight concavity, and the very shallow area thus formed - the Gulf of Quat - causes the breakers to form very far out. From my position I could watch them, not head on, but from the diagonal - row after row of them, already curling over. The whole scene was quite misty, and for all the world like a Chinese water-color. The difference from (say) a Turner wouldn't be one of perception as much as physical reality. When the waves finally hit the rocks at the bottom of Discom point, they throw their foam about 25 feet in the air.

Earlier, this morning, it seems that one of the helicopter companies from 16th Group made its move north. Around 10am we rushed outside to see a formation of 15 Chinooks pass by, quite low. A Chinook isn't at all a small chopper, but a large, cargo-carrying ship lifted two great rotors fore and aft. Rather

impressive.

I'll be home soon.

Love,
Rob



R
4/10/91 Chukwani