

**Tour of Duty in Vietnam
1969
Memories of Dale Nachreiner**

The following narrative were the taken directly from the diary I kept during my tour with the Marines in the field and excerpts from my letters home to my girl friend, now my wife. They dates of the tour were from February 2, 1969 through February 2, 1970.

Bold = diary

Regular = letters to Pat

[enclosed italicized] editorial comments in 2004

Okinawa

February 2, 1969 [Okinawa] [diary]

My first page. Up the last 41 hours with a flight from California to Camp Bulter Okinawa Japan. I look like I'm going in country [Viet Nam] in the next five days. Miss Pat a lot.

February 3 [Okinawa] [diary]

Things are looking better here, or at least I'm in a better mood. Nice what a little sleep will do. Met a guy from Vancouver Canada. Pat is on my mind as her mother who is now living in Vancouver BC.

Dear Darling

The last 36 hours have been a bore. We muster 3 times a day, 7:30, 12:30 and 3:30 so that they can get track of us and to see if anyone goes over the hill. The rest of the time is ours, but we must stay on base. 24 of the last 36 hours I've slept. Right now it's raining in Okinawa.

About Okinawa its real hilly county, very green and it's between 55-65 degrees. It actually looks a lot like southern Wisconsin. The only thing different over here is its people, their dwellings and habits [culture]. Yesterday we had 3 Okinawa women washing clothes in our barracks. You know how guys are. There we were most of us with only under shorts and some who where taking showers in the nude, well it did not bother those women at all.

I put an address on the envelope that mail will get to me but it is not my full address. I do not know where I'm going. There is talk we might be leaving in the next two days but not for sure.

Right now is 4 PM here Tuesday, but you should be just going to bed, its 11 PM Monday night there. I hope you are having sweet dreams right now. I miss you a lot. Think about you often. I swear if I live through the next 12 months we will get married. I love you very much Pat, sleep warm.

February 4 [Okinawa] [diary]

I'm being bored here; wish we had something to do. I'm a little scared about Republic of Viet Nam (RVN). Be glad to be with Pat.

February 5, 1969 [Okinawa] [diary]

I am on my way to RVN. Glad to get out of this wet cold place. Actually looking forward to finding out what it all looks like, but apathetic about some of it.

Dear Darling

I'm at the Okinawa airport waiting for my flight to Viet Nam. The first two days it was real nice here, but the last two it's been raining and cold. Right now I'm actually cold; it has been a sun of a gun trying to keep warm.

About going to Viet Nam. I would not have had to go so soon, although I was to go for sure, but I volunteered for this flight. I was getting sick of this rotten island. The most time I could save without volunteering would be 2 or 3 days.

Two days ago a civilian jetliner was shot down taking troops over. Right now that is the only thing that scares me. I'll be glad to finally find out where I'm going to be. Right now I don't know.

Well darling I going to close. Baby, I love you very much. Be a good girl. I'll try to get my field address to you as soon as possible. Sleep warm darling.

In Country

February 6 [diary]

I'm in country. It's a weird place. Viet Nam is very beautiful county side. Green large rolling hills, valleys and dales, but dusty, dirty, and has some type of odor to it. *(Looking back it must have been the burning of the 55 gallon drums, cut in half and used in the latrines. They were burned out with diesel fuel each day in the rear areas. Regarding my word 'weird.' Not sure what I meant by it. It may have been the 3rd world atmosphere, as this was my first time outside of the U.S.)*

I reported to 1st Marine Division. I am going to 2/5, that is 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines. All second class petty officers were assigned to mortar companies or to

the rear and third class petty officers and below were assigned to a Marine field company. *[I missed the last testing cycle when on leave. It would have been better for me if I had picked up the next rank.]*

I met three guys from my hospital corps school company. Paul Rashuer was one. He will be near me. He has been here now 6 months. I felt good seeing someone I knew. But after the things he told me I wonder if I'll ever see my loved ones again. *[Paul and I had played hearts a lot in hospital corps school. He was bigger, if not a little overweight then. I was shocked to see him as he had lost a lot of weight. He was just got over Malaria and was recently discharged from the hospital. That is why he was so thin.]* If not *[ever see my loved ones]*, I want them all including Pat to know that I loved them a lot. I am tired as I have been up for over 40 hours. Too lazy to write, should write Mom and Dad, also Pat. Maybe tomorrow.

February 7 [diary]

With my first helicopter ride, I arrived at my command at 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines. I am assigned to the rear Battle Aid Station, where all corpsmen and doctors are assigned. After talking to the people here, I find out that I'll be in the field for six months. These guys are really great, and with their help I truly believe I'll make it.

I still think about not ever seeing Pat or the family. I miss Pat so much.

February 8 [diary]

I am in indoctrination here at the rear to Viet Nam culture, how to handle myself in the field and some preventative medicine. Most of it is senseless so far but some of it will help. I'm beginning to see the respect the title "corpsmen" has over here. They really respect us. I only hope I'm able to live up to the good name we have. Again the guys in the BAS are great. I'm being accepted now by them. I hope my personality doesn't disagree with them. Things here are easier now, but they will change. Right now I hear firing in the distance.

Dear Darling

Well I'm in Viet Nam now. It's like another world. The country is a beautiful green with rolling hills and mountains and large valleys. Its people are weird, they are not as poverty stricken as I thought but they are sorry. *[My first experience in a foreign country, along with Okinawa but we were not able to go off base in Okinawa.]* Oh, I forgot it's very dusty here. I don't think there is a clean body in Viet Nam, some have not bathed in 3-4 months, which is not a lie. Most of them are not able to bathe.

Now for some information. I'm about 15 miles from Da Nang at An Hoa. I am with the 2nd Battalion 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division. For the next 5 days I'm being

indoctrinated to the county and a few Marine things. Then I will get a company and go to the field for six months. That means darling that I am going to need your prayers. Don't worry about me, I'll pray too. I'm not sure but things here seem to be slow right now. But there is some talk about a big offensive. But that is just talk among enlisted men.

I was going to keep some things from both you and the family but I think you should know what's going on. Pat I love the outfit I'm with, they all help me out a lot, with their help I think I'll come out real well. After the next five days I really don't know when I'll be able to write. I might be able to write in the bush. I will try as much as I'm able Pat. I love you very much Pat. Actually since I've been here you are the only one that's on my mind. Be a good girl. Sleep warm.

February 9 [diary]

Classes again today. Things around here are fun. I hate to see this come to an end. I got into a deep discussion tonight. While over here I should stay away from those.

Dear Darling

Time is getting short until I go to the field. It is too bad because life is great where I am. I get up about 6:30 AM, at 7:45 I go to classes until 11:15 and then from 12:45 till 3:45. Afterwards a group of us play volleyball for about 90 minutes. I take a shower, then usually I am tired. I try to write and I think I am the first one to bed. It is an easy life.

I go to classes each day which informs us about this area and a review of things which the Marines have learned. As a corpsman I should not really be there because none of this pertains to me, but its battalion rule that ALL personal have to attend.

February 10 [diary]

Tomorrow is my last day of classes. Tonight I listen to war stories all night, some of them are funny. The only thing I should of written Pat and the folks a letter. I love you Pat.

Dear Darling

Because I listened to war stories all last night I never got around to write either you or my parents. I wanted to send you love each day so I'm writing only a note.

This note only wants to say one thing—I love you very much and miss you twice that. I hope you feel the same and remember me the next 12 months.

Right now that's the only thing I'm thinking about. I hope my dreams come true. Again Pat, I love you very much. Sleep warm darling.

February 11 [diary]

My last day of classes. Also my last day at the BAS. I'm assigned to Fox Company. They, like the rest of 2/5 are about 17 miles SE of An Hoa. I'm scared, because tomorrow, no matter if I am ready or not, I might be killed. I really can't believe that I might be shot at tomorrow, that is what scares me tonight. I am going to write Pat, my folks and maybe Chuck. I hope the next six months are fruitful for me. I hope to live, I pray to God I do.

Dear Darling

My school is over tomorrow and I go to the war and field. I was assigned to Fox Company and I'm happy with it. All I want now is for the next six months to go by.

I hope I make a good corpsman. The guys in the BAS have helped me out so much. Because of them I'm in a better spirits about the field then I expected. The last eight hours I've thought about you a lot. Been thinking about when I get out of the service. I know it's a little ahead of me but that's what I thought about today.

I just got done writing my parents. I hope if you have time you would write them a little letter. I just remember I never told them to notify you in case of anything. I did write your name on some type of paper saying you to be notified but I can't remember what it was. Well if it seems a long time between letters please give my parents a call or write them. The next letter I write to them if I remember I'll say something, but it's hard to write about things that involve me getting hurt or dying. I shouldn't even mention it to you. But you are the only person I trust with my thoughts. Also if anything happens I would like to have you know over anyone.

Well off that subject. Things may get a little tight the next six months in the line of writing. I hope to be able to write at least twice a week but I have no idea of what is ahead of me.

I love you Pat. Just keep remembering that. Right now I need you the most and there are so many miles separating us. Sleep warm darling.

February 12 [diary]

I have arrived at my company area. Boy, when they call this the bush they mean the bush. There is brush all over head, then trees and then taller trees. They call it triple canopy. I had to cut myself in here.

I feel like an outsider right now. I'm a little wary of going out on an ambush or patrol. I hope these people help me the first few times out. I love you Pat, you to family.

Third platoon Fox Company had a free day. I lay around a lot. There is talk were moving tomorrow, don't know where. I got to know the guys better today. They are good guys. [Fox Company had about 140 people in it. That is about 35 people per platoon and 15 people per squad. I am the corpsman for 3rd platoon. There are about 10 people in the Command Post, including mortars.]

February 13

I really don't know where to start this off. So I'll tell you what I am doing right now. I'm with Fox Company 3rd Platoon. There are 39 men in this section [platoon] of the company. We have two corpsmen, Dan and me. There are three Platoons in a company, all together about 130 men. We are on this hill in the middle of nowhere about 15 miles from An Hoa, 27 miles from Da Nang.

The company goes on patrols and ambushes at night. All I've done is stand radio watch. But tomorrow I go out.

There isn't much else to say. This is like boy scouts; air mattresses; blanket; sleeping on the ground; cooking your own meal; dirty bodies; no place for natural body functions; etc.

That's about all I can say except I love you and miss you. Sleep warm darling.

February 14 [diary]

First ambush, first death - Moore. I was sick with nausea. I feel shitty about it. I am scared after seeing this.

[At night the company sends squads out to intercede enemy movement prior to the enemy reaching the company parameter. Our platoon sent a squad. As the corpsman, I was to go for support. We were to go out over 300 feet or yards from the parameter. In triple canopy it is real dark at night. You cannot even see your hand in front of your face. The squad leader told the men at the parameter we were only going to go out 75-100 feet.

What I remember is that when we reached the site to set up the ambush, I was told to bed down near the radio operator and squad leader. It was already dark, as we took off too late. I just sat down next to a tree log and leaned back to sleep. I knew that sometime during the night I would be on watch. I keep my flak jacket and helmet on and buttoned up. However, all around me I heard others taking off the flak jackets and noise as they opened up C-ration cans for a snack. I felt scared and concerned over the noise of these fellow members of the squad.

About 10-15 minutes after we arrived at the site, in the darkness, there were shots. One of the members of the squad was hit, Moore. Although I did not hear it, one of the squad members [Shipley] stated that he heard something,

challenged the direction of the noise and took two shots. He hit Moore, not more than 15-20 feet from where he was. I was about 15-20 feet away in a different direction. Moore made noise and I was summoned for support "Corpsmen up" or "One-six up". I was very surprised how close he was to where I was lying. Found out later that all the squad was in a small semi-circle. Somehow, Shipley must not have known where Moore was. We found out later that Moore, must have settle in late and Shipley challenged the noise. [During my tenure with the company in the field, Shipley proved himself to be real jumpy. I have always wondered if there was ever a challenge that night. I once later in the field, I had to slap Shipley when he went off the deep end during a pressured moment.]

When I reached Moore, I felt the warm blood on his back and with a pen light flashlight saw two bullet entry wounds at his chest. One of the bullets stayed in, and being off centered tumbled inside him. One of his shoulders was like mush. He had a sucking chest wound and I knew one of his lungs was collapsed. He took a last gasping breath within the first 30 seconds after I arrived. I was taught that you seal the wound and turn the wounded to the side to prevent fluids to gather in the bad lung and still have the good lung to use. However his entry wound was in the middle of the chest, and I did not know which side, if any to turn to the ground. I did start mouth to mouth. Because we were so close to the front line of the company they sent a group to protect the site and another corpsman to assist. We continued mouth to mouth and close heart resuscitation for what seemed like over an hour prior to stopping. I was an administrative corpsman prior to my Viet Nam tour and this death did not help my confidence as a corpsman or, I felt, the platoon confidence in me.]

KIA: His name was Lawrence Hamilton Moore (added 9/28/09)

February 14

Dear Darling

I don't have time to write a long letter, we're moving out today to a different position. I just want to write to say I love you.

We get cigarettes in the C-rations but usually odd kinds. Well I got Kent. I think of all the Kent cigarettes we have shared. It helps keep me closer to you. Again I love you. Sleep warm darling. I am in good health.

February 15

Dear Darling

Pat, this war is a bastard. Last night I went on an ambush [14th]. It was night ambush and I was emotionally tired, hungry and thirsty. Plus it was my first ambush. Well to make a horrid story short, a man was killed. It happen accidentally, one of our own men

shot him. I was with him within 45 seconds after it happened, but I could not save him. He was hit in the chest and lungs. A man about 20 years old died while, I, not a doctor, tried to save him. I'm sick and scared now. Death is so easy to come by over here. Baby, I'm praying 24 hours a day. I hope you are praying for me the same. I'm so scared all the time my stomach is like a roll of knots.

I can't understand death nor can I understand this war. Right now I would give all the money in the world to be with you. I love you very much and would love to be with you. I will be glad when I get some mail. I will be glad to hear from you. If it sounds like I'm very lonely, I am.

I was just looking at your ring or should I say our ring. It's the only thing material I have to remind me of you. I look at it at least 50 times a day. Well I'm closing now.

February 16 [diary]

We just got water today after two days without. Carried 20-30 pounds of gear and canteens all day, down and then up this mountain. I was very dry. A couple of times I wish I would have been injured then continue going. I never knew water was worth so much. Live with ants, leaches and all kinds of insects. Never clean, can't really believe I live this lifestyle. *[Must have moved back to the rear later that day.]*

February 17 [diary]

We are back at the rear, drinking warm beer, after a shower and clean clothes. Feel like a million dollars. I know we are going someplace where it is hot, but I don't care right now. Over here you live minutes at a time. I miss Pat a lot. Haven't had time to write anyone the last three days. Going to write tomorrow.

February 18 [diary]

Back at the rear. Hear we are going where it is hot. I'm hope I come out of this O.K. Saw a movie tonight. Easy day.

Dearest Darling

It has been some time since I was able to write. I don't know what to say about the last four days. A man got killed which I wrote you about but never had the time to finish it or mail it. We were out of water for two days. It doesn't sound that bad, but it was hell. At the time I wish I would get heat exhaustion so I would be sent back to the rear and be able to drink and sleep. We also did a large amount of walking. That is the funny thing about this place. You love small things so much more. Like something to sleep on besides the ground. Anything cold because everything is luke-warm. Hot food, enough

rest and not living with the insects. Boy talking about insects there is everything from ants to leaches over here. They are usually three times as large as we usually see.

These are the small things which I am not used to. But then there is being away from loved ones, people like you. A person doesn't get much time to think of home but when you do is the time it eats at your heart. I miss so many things back in our world I don't know how I'll be able to make the next 12 months.

But the big thing lately is being scared. A person first few months over here they are scared 24 hours a day. After a few months, I am told, you just get use to being scared and being shot at.

Right now we're back at An Hoa. We came back yesterday afternoon. I had my first shower after seven days. Only once during that time did I have a chance to shave and also wash my hands and face. I didn't really know what dirt is until I got here. I live in one set of clothes for the full time 24 hours a day, sweating all day.

Its nice being here at the rear but I will only be here for 2-3 days. I understand we're going to some hot spot. But one never knows were he is going with these people. You never get the word until you get there so I really don't know what's happening.

I know you have written since I left but I haven't received any mail yet. Boy a person sure can get lonely over here. It will be nice to hear from the world.

I hope you understand but there will be times when I just won't be able to write. I wish I could write everyday just to tell you I was OK. IF I get a chance I will. Writing seems to make me feel closer to you.

Boy that's my only wish now Pat being closer to you. You know it seems a hell of a long time since we have been with each other. It seems much longer that the 18 days that it has been. I really can't believe its only 18 days. I miss you and my family so much worse than just 18 days. It almost seems like 2-3 months. Maybe it will be better after I start receiving some mail if these people ever get it to me.

Darling, I hope you are OK. It would be so nice if I could come back just to make sure things are good for you, to take care of you, to make sure you receive all the things you need.

Well now the questions. How is life? What great predicament have you gotten into lately? I know there must have been some. How are your parents? How is the new semester at school? How where your grades? Anything new with you that would be interesting for me to hear? How is your car? That seems to be all the questions I have except one, do you miss me?

I love you very much. Like you said a person really never knows what a person has until a person is away from it for some time. I not only miss the world but wish I was

with you to have someone to talk to that cares. Someone who knows me....who understands me. Someone who wants me to seek out things I want and helps me seek them out. I miss you one hell of a lot.

Pat do sleep warm,

February 19 [diary]

At the rear.

Dearest Darling

I'm still back at the rear which is great. Last night we had an outdoor movie. The name of it was "BLUE" and it was a western. I would never go to it stateside but it was nice seeing a movie. First movie since seeing "Heart of the Lonely Hunter" with you. That seems so long ago. I hope we stay together in heart for the next 12 months and about two years or less from now, we will be married. That and wanting to be a teacher are the only two things which kept me really going.

There is not much to tell you about here. There all kinds of rumors going around to where we are going next. Its looks like no matter where it is, it will be hotter than our last mission. But its looks good for us. I really know now that I'm coming back for sure. They just don't have any reason to kill me. I'm innocent, harmless and too lovable..... right darling?

This is a short letter only because there isn't much to write about darling. I miss you a lot Pat. Please just keep me in your mind the next 12 months. I'm going to try my hardest to make it with you. After this place I'll all most do anything for you. This place gives a person a back bone no matter if a person wants it or not.

Sleep warm Pat, I'm always thinking of you.

PS I reread this and it looks like I'm getting scared about losing you. If I am it isn't because I don't trust you it's just because this rotten place hasn't got me my mail. I don't know what I'm going to do until I get my mail, I'm lonely.

February 20 [diary]

I got a letter from Pat. Feel great about it. Love her so much. At the rear.

Dearest Darling

Tomorrow we go back out to fight the war. After 5 days of this secure life, I'm a little scared about going out. We have a good idea where we are going. I'm not allow to write it now but maybe after I get there. One thing for certain, it will be 180 degrees

change from where we were last. Plus more fighting. But at least now I know what's coming off.

Pat this is an embarrassing question but I'm not sure when your birthday is? I think March 31 [actually its March 30] but like I said I'm not sure. We'll be 22 years old this year. That doesn't seem possible I still feel 18 years old. 22 seems so old to me it just can't be right to be 22 and not have anything to my name.

Yesterday All I did was lay around all day. A person takes all the rest he can get over here but the heat over here makes sleeping hard. It is about 90 degrees now. In three months it will be up to 120 degrees. I'm not really used to it even after 29 Palms.

I hope to be able to write tomorrow. If I don't I don't know when I'll be able to write again. As soon as I can I will. Again I ran out of things to say except I think of you often. Sleep warm Pat.

February 21, 1969 [diary]

We moved out today. I can see I have to pray to stay alive. We were out here for 10 minutes and 2 people got hit by booby traps, but not in our company. We're secured tonight. I think I'm scared but not like 10 days ago.

Dear Darling

Last night you made me a happy man. I received my first letter from you. It was after mail call and I still didn't think I would get mail for another week. I have already read it three times, it brighten my day up 100%. I even dreamed about you last night and I usually don't remember my dreams. Last night I dreamed we were married and I was still in service but I was in the states.

Things changed and we are still at the rear which is OK. It gives me time to write my loved ones and to get to know the men in our platoon. I believe I told you once before but I'm in 3rd Platoon, Fox Company 2nd Battalion 5th Marines, First Marine Division. In 3rd Platoon there are 38 Marines, one officer, Lt Horn and two corpsmen, Dan and myself. In the company there are about 140 men, 5 officers and seven corpsmen.

The only people you really know well are people in your platoon. The platoon is split into A & B. I'm the corpsmen for Bravo Squad 3rd Platoon. Well that is what Fox Company is all about.

I really don't get along with Dan the other corpsmen. Not as well as with other people. He is good and we both respect each other. I do have six guys that I hang around with a lot, especially with a guy from Texas, Jerry Smith. Its funny not only do you know their names but everyone discusses their states. I kept talking about California and I'd rather be associated with California over Wisconsin. Most of these people do not dig

California people especially its younger generation; it's mostly because young California people seem to be against the war.

I personally don't know why we are here. I still wish I was home and every one here was there with me. But there are a lot of people, Marines over here who you wouldn't talk against US being in the war. There are also a lot, about 40% who would kill any slant eyed person they saw, women, children, anyone. They just hate these people. They really don't help the states out when it comes to politics [international relations] but they seem all to be the best fighting men [most macho] over here. I can't understand some of the Marines with this hate as some of them come from real good families. Nor do I question it.

Last time I wrote about weather was 90 degrees, but yesterday it was 101 with 86% humidity. I take about 10 salt tablets every day.

You asked about mosquitoes here. Lots more then any other place I've been. Malaria is a big disease over here. Two months ago 60% of this company came down with it. Also other inflections are a big thing here. Every scratch can get badly infected. Some so bad a person has to be hospitalized for weeks. It is not usual, only if a person does not take care of themselves.

About bars, women and USO – there is none nor is there a chance for any the next six months. There are only two major cities in this county that we would consider a city. Da Nang is one of them about 17 miles away. We do get beer but it's warm to hot and we have no ice here at all. I just had my first glass of milk after 15 days [reconstituted from powder] yesterday. We do get ice cream once in a while. Food here is for survival not for comfort or taste, but I expected that. There is no USO here but in Da Nang.

About sending me anything, I rather you send me things when you want. I need nothing because I carry everything I take which weights me down to exhaustion. If you send it, I'll just pass it around that day to my friends. That is what everyone does. I could use some already mix hard drinks, but don't every send more than two at one time because every pound extra is too much.

Well darling I must have answered all of your questions from your letter. I do want pictures of you and I will send you film of me. I can't get film developed over here. I have been keeping my dairy up to date and there isn't much else to say about this place now.

About missing you, well I could write pages of the times I wish I was with you in your arms, home and the miles between us seem to make me miss you even more. I appreciate you a thousand times as much as I do when I'm with you. I really don't think I love you more than I do now. Being over here gives me the time to remember all those times together even the times when we weren't happy with each other but I would still love to be just with you, than to be away. I did, and still appreciate all the minutes I've spent with you. I never ever remember being as happy with a person as I am with you

when you are happy. I never remember being as down hearted as I was when you are sad.

What else can I say in this letter except one thing which I haven't ever at all – I do love you – sleep warm Pat.

PS Keep up the good prayers, they are working.

February 22 [diary]

Thank God Almighty I made another day. We had 6 people killed and 4 injured by our own air strike. I knew them all. I know one thing; I'm going to come out of this alive because of God. I made a promise today and I'm going to keep it – that is, if I live I'll teach peace and love, and the right things to do to as many as I can. I also will do right. I love you family, and Pat.

[We were in the Fnuc Luc Six area some distance from An Hoa. Fox Company was part of a major movement of 2/5 with many companies in participation. Fox Company had a forward air observer with us. It was early in the afternoon after movement all day. I heard and saw an air strike that was too close to our forward lines. I knew that the forward air observer was trying to make contact to let them know that they were dropping ordinance too close to the American forward line. The next thing I knew a plane made another pass and I visually saw in the air four bombs. Naturally I hit the ground, which I remember was poxed by earlier bomb craters. I learned later they were 500 pound bombs. The bombs hit in front of me just over the knoll from where I, the platoon lieutenant, radioman, and forward observer were located. The outcome was the six dead and four injured all from our platoon and mainly from the squad to which was my primary assignment. Many of the dead could not be found as the ordinances that they were carrying in the packs blew. I remember strands of flesh in the trees and the smell of death, now within two weeks, my second experience. I remember that one of the Marines injured I had to give morphine because he had an opened leg fixture.

There was a picture taken of me that evening that I still have. I remember the sick feeling that I had, causing me to be just very weak. I have only been assigned to Fox Company for ten days, and seven dead in my squad, all from friendly forces.]

**KIA: Victor Modesto Jouvert (added 9.28.09)
Daniel W. Margrave II
Richard Pollard
Allen Thomas
Michael Allen Voss
Rhena Charles Webster**

February 23 [diary]

Found part of Voss's body today. It was one of his legs in his boot and the only reason we knew it was him was that I recognized the scuff marks of his combat boots. Unable to find any of Webster's body. I felt sick with grief.

February 26 [diary]

Dean's Birthday.

February 27 [diary]

Been on the run the last 5 days; swamps, desert, hills. I can't believe the moving we did. One of our men, Shepard, lost both legs. At least he is going home and is still alive. I am still scared and pray 24 hours a day. I really don't understand this war at all right now, but I'm going too kept going. I will be glad to get out of this fighting. A lot of people get hurt and killed for useless reasons.

Dearest Darling

This will be just a small note to tell you that I'm still alive and well. More important I love you very much.

We've been on the move for the last five days with only rest in darkness. We will be moving again in 45 minutes but I wanted to write you the last four days. I have a lot to tell you now but it will have to wait until I get back to An Hoa.

Things are going as well as possible. I don't know what to write about the war. I just think I'll forget about it until I see you at home. And it will be home for us. Whatever we have we're going to make it home. I love you very much Pat. I have already notice you changed in writing. Neither you are letting yourselves come out more in letters, or you have changed in the last month. Again darling I miss you. Please forgive my writing habits, blame the Marine Corps. Sleep warm.

February 28 [diary]

New position tonight. Many bobby traps around us. We lost 2 men by them, three injured. Here you don't care if you get shoot at, but you watch where you walk. I pray to God at least 10 times a day. If it wasn't for him I wouldn't be alive right now. I keep reminding myself of the promise I made to him. Also I'm going to marry Pat right after I get home, that is my promise to myself. If we stay here today I'm writing letters. I just pray now I get home safe. I'm surer of myself now than ever.

**KIA James Patrick Carney Jr. (names added 9.28.09)
John Henry Erbes**

Dearest Darling

I'm going to try to write a good long letter if these people let me.

The past seven days we've been on the move, about 6 different places within a 5 mile radius. Right now we are within 3 miles from An Hoa. We haven't seen the action most experience around An Hoa but we have lost a lot of people because of bobby traps. That is the big thing over here. To stay alive you must watch where you walk. That is about enough about the war.

As for me well I'm doing better now as ever. My eating habits have come back and also my nature, which makes me feel better. My stomach is always in knots but that normal for over here. I don't believe I lost weight or look different. Right now I'm just dirty. It's been eight days since I've bathed or changed clothes. You don't carry clean clothes because of the weight and space. We are usually low on water so no bathing. Once I washed my hands and face that was yesterday morning when I shaved for the first time in seven days. Oh that reminds me I growing a mustache, just to see what it will look like. I'll cut it off before I come home to you.

For the next days I really don't know what going on. I hope things over here slow down. Some of us need a rest for morale reasons. I've been worked too hard.

It's funny about these guys. You become family to them even better than family. The only one that maybe does not like me is the other corpsmen but I am the new guy so I understand.

I am going to send my letters to your old address until about the 8th of March. About your letters, I've received three of them now. It's not because they are lost but mail over here takes time because at first you have so many addresses. They have to keep forwarding them to different addresses. The last three mail calls I've had mail from you and darling its great to get mail from you. First because I'm lonely for home, the USA and second because you do sound so different now in your letters.

About me changing, well one thing has change; I'm 300% more sure of myself now. I'm sure that I have the right ideas and after being over here, I'm going to make sure I follow those ideas. That the promise I made to God to help me keep me alive, that I would follow my ideas more closely and that I would for sure be a teacher of social sciences and be a good one. That about all the change I've felt. Except I love simple things that people take for granted; life, security, water, clean clothes and body, loved ones. There are so many things which we took for granted. Like a cold drink. I haven't had one for over 10 days. At home if the water was warm I usually dump it out. And sometimes we don't even have water so if we come on any water, no matter how dirty, you drink it.

My diary is going to help me out a lot after I come home. It's got all the things I've seen and felt in it. It will remind me my whole life what good is. Also of promises I've made. About that promise it's such a small thing in return for life. I have already seen to many

lives of young men shattered. I'll never forget those but just hope there was good reason for it and say a small prayer.

I don't think my views of religion have change but I realize that God is life no matter how you look at it. He is the only reason now that lets me write this letter to you now. I just respect and love him more now, just like a person loves life.

Well I better write to my parents. My mother has been in the hospital but I don't know why. I missed or never got two letters that they sent earlier. Say hi to everyone for me. Bill should be coming back to LA soon then things should be better for you.

I miss California and its different people. I miss a little girl there more than I've ever missed anything before – even those days without water when I thought I was going to die. But someday I'll be back with her. And then, as in the movies, we will live happy thereafter. Sleep warm Pat.

March 1 [diary]

The last two days have been laxed. The VC has been hitting An Hoa the past 7 days. We're looking for them, but have not made contact. I hope we get to stay here longer. I need to write a few letters and square away my equipment. I can't see any change in my personality for the past month. Only 5 more months here in the bush.

March 1

Dearest Darling

I just am writing a small not to remind you that I love you and that I'll be thinking of you today. In 45 minutes we will be going on a patrol around this area I'm in now. The Company which I'm in will be moving later this afternoon the way the word is now. I have no idea again where we are going.

I hope you have a good day. Be a good girl for me and have sweet dreams tonight. I miss you much Pat, but we'll be together soon forever. Sleep warm darling.

March 2

I've just got done writing your brother and my parents; and now for the most important letter of them all, the one to you.

The last two days we've been taking it easy out in the field and today it seems so far will be the same. As for the war, well I rather not talk about it. I'm going to talk about my plans in this letter.....

[I write about college, trip to Europe, cars, and last 10 months in Navy after Viet Nam]

Well that is enough of plans for this letter. I miss you a lot when I think of this. Eleven months darling then we will be together. Sleep warm. I love you.

March 3

Dearest Darling

Yesterday afternoon some of Fox Company moved positions. It was our group and our job is to set up ambushes on Liberty Road between An Hoa and Da Nang. So all day we should have it easy. It is time to write letters and take it easy. At least that's what I like to do.

Right now I don't know what going on over here. We hear all kinds of rumors but I can't figure any of them out. I know some day soon over here something is bound to happen. I just hope it's away from me. Well enough of war.

How is everything at home? I still haven't got your new address. I hope you have someone help you move into your new apartment. Maybe the guy who works at the OJ stand? At least for once he would come in handy in my eyes. How is school treating you? I hope your studying like you said. I don't want to find out that you drop some of your classes. You better be going to San Diego State or Cal State when I come back. You should be done with Glendale very soon. I hope it's this semester.

I have been trying to write to your parents the past two weeks. I just don't know what to say to them. I wish you would say at least "hi" for me the next time you write to them. Maybe I'll write them soon, if I figure out what to say.

What kind of news do you have from the states? What have you been doing with yourself? How is your Sprite working? Most of all how are your money problems? I have only spent \$1 the past month. It looks like that's about all I will be able to spend for the next five months. Well I am going to stop now and eat. Finish this later.

Well I'm done eating. It was one of three hot meals I've had since being in the bush. They bring it to our position. We had steak, beans and bread. It wasn't much but much better than the C rations. That is food out of a can. Someday when I have all kinds of time I'll tell you about C rations.

So darling next February I hope you are there waiting for me. If the Navy helps out and we both want, a year from June we could be married. I would like that very much Pat. Please take care of yourself darling. I think of you constantly. Sleep warm baby as I sleep warm thinking of you.

March 4 [diary]

Got back mail from Pat today. Another easy day. Wrote Pat a letter. I hope we'll be able to get married. I'm planning on it. I hope the next months are as easy as the others.

March 5 [diary]

I'm going on an ambush tonight. I'm a little leery of them considering what happened during the first one. We moved back to FL#6. If the war stays the way it has been for the past seven days it will be a short tour. Life has been easy, but I'm scared that something is up. Sammy Davis is singing on the radio, "I got to be free." I'm sure that my ideas of life will not change. People are stuck with my idealism, and so am I. I love you Pat.

March 6 [diary]

Another ambush, got some stray rounds over our head. Scared the hell out of me. The rest of the day was easy. Went to Mass and received communion. Took a load off my shoulders. I thought about Pat a lot today and also my family.

Dearest Darling

Most people aren't up yet so it's a good time to write you. I dreamt about you last night. And that is besides thinking of you the other parts of the day. Over here the only good thoughts are of you.

Time sure goes slow over here. I am just looking forward to when I get out of the bush but then there is another six months before I see you. That is a long time. I hope my heart won't break of not having you in that time. But after these eleven months baby we'll always be together.

Be a good girl Pat, don't take any wooden nickels. I pray that everything is ok at home with you. I'll be able to be with you in about 11 months from today. Sleep warm Pat. I love you.

Dearest Darling

This will be the second letter today. I received four letters from you. They were welcome but the one with the poem was very good. It made me proud of you. So proud that I let all my friends read it. Most of them couldn't believe you wrote it and it surprised me also. I know you wrote it by some of the things you said in it. You don't realize how true that little poem is. A person feels about this war exactly as that, or at least I do.

Now about your letters. I think they have caught up. I don't think it will make much difference between 6-10 stamps because they all have come even the one with the pictures. I'm keeping two of the pictures and sending the rest back. I kept the pictures

and poem in my diary which also contains my family picture. It's my most cherish possession I have over here except our ring.

That ring, you don't realize the dreams I have when I look at it. Over here it's my replacement for you. I love you that ring as much as I love my life. I would cry if I ever lost it. I don't think there is anything I own or have had in this world of ours that I would trade for it.

Well baby we are moving again tomorrow. It's a new area and that means possible trouble. I just pray that things keep working out for me the next five months.

About R&R, well honey I'll be thinking of it as soon as I get out of this place, that is the bush. I hope we will be able to see each other but that is a long ways off. I don't even want to think about it, until I get out of here. If I do, I'll start counting days.

Sleep warm honey.

March 7 [diary]

We changed positions [locations]. It was easier than expected. I hope it continues this way. I pray that I stay alive and I am able to reunite with Pat and my family.

Dearest Darling

A note to tell you I'm OK and alive. We moved to another position which wasn't as bad as I thought it would be.

I have to sign off now darling or it won't go in today's mail run. I love you Pat, you're on my mind 24 hours a day. Be a good girl and sleep warm.

March 8, 1969

Dearest Darling

I just got done washing up a little, haven't had a bath since 20 Feb., cleaning my pistol and chowing down on some applesauce, chicken & noodles soup and a can of candy—my dinner. We had mail call and I got a package from my parents – long johns which I don't need now but will come in handy about 9 months from now, and film for my camera. I don't have my camera in the field. I have to wait to take pictures when I get back to the rear which is not in sight right now. I got a letter from Mary Jo which was nice, but most important, I got another letter from my darling little girl friend, you.

You sounded depressed in the letter. I'm sorry I wish I could help you out. You didn't mention anything in particular but I know when you are depressed. I hope there is a time in our lives that neither of us ever get depressed with life and we always feel good.

I think I better start thinking about R&R. The last three letters from you mentioned something about it. It looks like August I'll be out of the field for sure and able to take R&R then or later. I mentioned to my parents that you wanted to go to Hawaii, maybe they can come too, but the chances are about 25%. I don't think you would mind, considering it would keep things safe.

Sleep warm. I do think of you always.

March 9 [diary]

We went on patrol today to a village. I really felt sorry for the people. There was a very petty girl about 10 years old. It is a shame that she can't have the same chance that an American girl does. One thing that I did see was that there were no young men or old men in the village. I know what that means. I don't feel good tonight.

March 10 [diary]

We moved late this afternoon. Boy what a walk through the paddies and across a stream. The stream was chest high and about 20 feet across. We got to our position about 8 PM. That is dark. I went out on an ambush and never sleep a wink. I was cold, wet and scared. I didn't think we would make it through the night but God again was on my side.

Dear Darling

It's been two days since I wrote last so I'll drop you a few lines. We are at the same position were at the last time I wrote. We're surrounded by villages and yesterday and this morning we patrolled on of these villages.

I wouldn't describe the village because it would take to long. We can talk about it when we are together or I can answer your questions. Yesterday we went into the villages and all there were there was women and children. It is a usual sight because the men are on the VC side. Now about the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army {NVA}. The VC is southern people who are fighting against the south government. They are supplied by the north. They usually have very little training and we don't worry too much about getting killed by their bullets because they don't shoot to well. But they are the ones who set the booby traps, which we have run into. One of my men lost two legs by one. Also we have had some men killed by them.

Now the NVA are professional soldiers. I hope we never run into them. They're almost as good as the Marines. They really have their shit together. We have reports that they are somewhere near us but I've never heard any reports about any of our units coming into contact with them. They don't have bobby traps and usually the VC would not put

any out in the region where the NVA are staying. They are the ones that kill the village people if they help the Americans.

Well that's my report about the war and its people. There is talk that the south will take more and more of the war over; so far it's not true. But I do hope in time it happens since the US has to let the south win the war anyhow. I expect in the next 10 days we will be going back to the rear for five days. Boy I hope so because it's been 19 days since I've showered. I really need a bath.

Oh I know something that you can send. Desenex ointment for my feet. I walk in water a lot and to keep them in condition I've got to put it on everyday. I wear my socks and shoes 24 hours a day usually only change socks when they are wet. I do have two pairs of socks. Some life, at least I'm still living. Thank God for that.

Well that is your roaming reporter from Viet Nam. I hope my editor still loves me. I know I still love her. Be glad to be with you darling, until then, sleep warm.

March 11 [diary]

Same place; went on patrol, it was a useless patrol, no reason for it. One of my men was killed by a bobby trap. He was just a kid who didn't realize the seriousness of the war. We did get in a hot meal and I got some sleep tonight. I think about Pat now more than ever. I hope I get a chance to write her today and that I get mail.

KIA: John Edward Shiraka (added 9.28.09)

March 12 [diary]

We stayed on the hill outside of An Hoa today. It was our day off, 3rd platoon. I wrote letters and just rested. We received some live fire, but it was only harassment. I have been with Fox Company now for one month.

Dear Darling

Been on the move the past two days. We are about 500 yards out of An Hoa right now, just far enough so we don't get to go in. Nothing much has happened but I lost another man by a bobby trap. I hope nothing happens here. I know they are expecting something.

I have no news about anything except I have a sore hamstring muscle. I played cards so far today. We are getting mail in now. Well I got my mail and the Lord was good to me as I got a letter from you. I was glad to get it because I've been lonely.

March 13 [diary]

Another off day. Wrote Pat and Mom & Dad. About 8 PM one of our ambushes hit a booby trap. I had to go 500 yards to assist them. We had sniper fire on the way over. Homer was hit, leg wound, nothing serious. Third heart, lucky guy, he is going back to the states. I sure felt good after I got back to the hill. I never got hit and no one was hurt seriously. I prayed all the way out there. I really felt like I did a good job.

Dear Darling

I got your letter that drops me a line of kisses. I was surprise at it but miss your long letters. But I realize sometimes it's hard to write. I appreciate that letter 1000000 more than no letter at all.

We are at the same position as yesterday. More than likely here tomorrow. We have a patrol. Things are getting hairy around here. I just think things are going to good for us. I just hope that I am over thinking things.

Baby, lately I've haven't had much to write about or let's say I've nothing to say about this place or war. There is so much I'd like to say. Much you just rather forget about. Plus you get so sick when you keep thinking about this place. Some days that we rest we just talk about things at home. You think and talk about it so much, plus the idea of not having to worry about war at that moment, you even forget you're over here at that time.

I'm already looking forward to going on R&R no matter where it is.

Now about your picture. I'd like a small one but please water proof it. Everything over here gets wet all the time.....

About a very important thing. I just reread some of your letters and one thing which I want you to know, that is – Am I still me. My favorite idea is freedom and the idea of being me. I've seen things here that would make you sick, but has made me that much stronger in my feelings. I'm still sure of my thoughts but still don't have the backbone to carry them out. But in time maybe I will. I still want all my dreams you know of now even more than before. The only difference is that I love life more and understand it owes you nothing and you owe it everything. God is life. There is not anything more I can say for that. God is life.

Sleep warm Pat.

March 14 [diary]

Went on patrol today. Got back at 10:30 [that was early for a patrol]. Laid around the rest of the day. Lt Horn [3rd Platoon leader] birthday. I hope the next two days are good for our company.

Darling

My last sheet of paper so this will be a short letter

Last night we sent an ambush out 500 yards. One of the Marines tripped a booby mine and they called back for a corpsman. I was sent. It was dark and we ran through rice paddies. When we reached there I found the man had shrapnel wounds of the legs, plus he was a good friend. I patched him up. He will be in good shape in about three months. It was the third time he was hit so he will be sent back state side. When I returned I really felt good because anything could have happened out there. Well that is my war story for today.

Now since I wrote yesterday I'm going to make this short. I'm thinking of you baby, take care. Sleep warm.

March 15 [diary]

Hot meal today. Spend all day writing Pat, it was a nice day. The VC didn't hit An Hoa. Met a guy from Warsaw WI. [This is Tet period in Viet Nam and usually a high combat period]

Dear Darling

It's been about four days since I got a letter from you, so I really don't know what to write.

We are still right outside of An Hoa. Today is the day the North Viet Nam Army is to take An Hoa over. We're here to make sure it doesn't happen. I hope the word about them taking An Hoa over is just a rumor because I am not looking forward to that kind of battle. For us right now, things are good. We're getting in hot chow right now so that means one more hot meal. We have been out now for 23 days. We should be going into An Hoa in about a week or less but that is not for sure. I hope so because it would mean showers and I could get my camera.

Yesterday I wrote Dean a letter. I found out from Barb that he isn't trying too hard at school. I really chewed him out. I sure hope he stays in because I hope and pray that he never has to come over here.

Right now I'm in a lonely mood. I sure miss hearing from you. I hope our mail clerk gets busy and gets my mail out here to me. It's been six days since I've heard from my parents. Between you and them its all the mail I get. Well it's been a month and a half now out here, only 4 ½ more to do in the bush then I'll be able to see the world for at least five days.

Well, I just got done eating – beef, potatoes, gravy carrots and a cold coke. It was the first cold drink I've had for 23 days. Boy it tasted good. The meal was also good. That's one thing over here when you get a hot meal its usually real good.

Oh one thing which I do more than ever seen me do before is smoke. I bet I smoke a pack and one half a day. After the bush I'm going to try to stop completely. My teeth are so stain now, it's really bad. I very seldom get to brush them our here, mostly because we never have enough water.

.....All I know for sure about you is that you make me feel alive. You love to keep going no matter what. I also know now that you need something stable. I always could not figure out why with older men who you never liked. Maybe now I know. They gave you comfort, security and usually respect. A young man really doesn't know how to give respect. Not only because they are in there rebellion years, but also because they never have respect themselves and do not realize what it means to a person. I hope now after this I am able to make you feel secure.

From the time I get back from Viet Nam until I get out of college and on my own feet, I'll have to watch what I do if I want to get certain things for us. I'm going to have to find out what you want also. Then we're going to have to watch ourselves and if we are lucky and work hard we could be happy people. I never know how much a person had to give if he wants to keep something until I met you. Even over here it's the same if you want to stay alive. You have to be really on your toes, but over here it is something different, its life or death.

I am sure you know what I want but since I'm writing this letter to make the day go by, I'll write my thoughts down. Right now most of all I want to live. After seeing 12 people die I realize that I'm selfish and I might be asking for a lot. This is the first time in my life I've felt I wanted to really do something for mankind. I just hope it's not too late.

.....Well there is a lot of dreams. They are only dreams right now but it is a start for me to think about, to work on and to live for. If it was not for you, my parents and dreams, I do not know if I would survive this.

March 16 [diary]

Easy day, still on the hill, hope we stay here for 4 months. No letters from Pat or my parents.

Dear Darling

Last night and today it's been raining and I've gotten wet a couple of times.

Today we had a patrol for only about three hours. I wrote my parents and now is the time to write you. It is starting to rain again so I may have to cut this short. A couple of helicopters came in now and almost blew over our tent. We made tents in the field out

of ponchos and we sleep on air mattress. We have an insulated blanket which is real light to carry and we use at night to cover up. Its not bad living and it is better than some people had in other wars.

We eat all meals out of tin cans usually 3 meals a day. The C-rations do fill the gap for food. Sometimes we get little goodies like soup, large cans of fruit, etc.

That is our eating and sleeping habits of the bush. We usually play cards, write letters, BS with people, and just lay around. That is what we do in our spare time. I hope to get some college course because lately I've become bored with some things, even writing. I realize that other people love to get as much as I do. I do read a little but I've run out of books to read. If you want to, send me a good book to read.

Well that's about all for today. If it is sunny tomorrow and I have time, I will write you a large letter. Sleep warm darling.

March 17 [diary]

A small patrol and then I went on an ambush. I was up all night. It was the first time since I have been out that I thought maybe I wouldn't get back to my lines. I did get back and that is good. No letter from Pat.

Dear Darling

Its just another day over here the only good thing about it is that it's a day sooner until I come home. I'm beginning to really hate this war. It's so useless.

The American, South Viet Nam and especially civilian lives that are lost. The hell of war is that people, some good, some bad, don't get to live the life they have planned. There are many dreams killed over here. I just pray to the Lord that mine won't be. I also pray everyday for all the people who are in my squad.

You can't realize how strong my ideas that I had back home have gotten over here either because of my bullheadedness or because our Lord is proving them out to me.

You think I'm big headed before about my ideas, baby sometimes now I think God is using my mouth to talk through. Oh, how I wish now that I was in College becoming a teacher. Sometimes it almost hurts to think about how long it will be until I'll be one, but someday I'll be a teacher and enjoy it a lot.

I hope we go to An Hoa soon. I need to rest my nervous body soon. I bet all these guys could use a rest. I hope our unit does not hit the action. I'm always scared about that.

I found out I won't be bored tonight. I'm going on an ambush. So I am going to cut this short.

March 18 [diary]

Easy day, but felt sick all day mostly because I never slept last night. We have these people looking for rounds for exchanged for C-Rations. Boy did they find some rounds – 2 8”, about 10 155s and about 150 105s.

March 19 [diary]

Last night on this hill. Hate to move, especially to the Bad Lands. This place is almost like home. Had a long patrol today, had some heat exhaustions? Wore me out. Its getting hot now. We hear we’ll be out another 48 days; it’s been 29 days out now.

Dear Darling

It stopped raining today and it is hot. At least it’s not cold and wet.

Last night I went on an ambush. I was so scared I never slept all night. I did some praying and good old God came through. So far this month has gone fast but not fast enough. I believe I’m going to die from nervousness. Oh, how I wish this was July. Baby we need to celebrate on R&R. I’ll be out of the bush, boy I can hardly wait.

I got a letter today from you. Again you sounded depressed. I hope it’s nothing that’s bad.

Considering the sleep I got last night I am not really doing well today. So Pat I’m sure this will be a bad letter.....

March 20 [diary]

Moved to the Bad Lands [Arizona Territory]. It was like a WW II assault with amtracks and all. We all were very tired walking with all our equipment. We had all kinds of heat exhaustion. We have seen no contact. *[I usually carry eight canteen of water. Some for me but many canteens in case of heat exhaustion. Used up all my water that day, but no medvacs for heat exhaustion.]*

Dear Pat

First thing I hope I’ll be able to write tomorrow or the next day, but don’t worry if you don’t get a letter for a few days. Now to explain why. We’re moving again. This time I don’t know what to expect. I pray that things will be ok but if not I just hope I come home alive. We’re moving to a place called the Bad Lands. It’s to be a 40 some day operation with the 28 days now that will mean 68 days out. That is enough to make me sick. We were hoping to go to An Hoa before but things didn’t work out that way.

Today we had another church service. I did do some praying but that's not new. I pray one hell of a lot over here. I hope you also pray for me, maybe with both of us sinners, god will come through. I must say that he has already.

I do want to come home to you.

March 21 [diary]

We moved further into the Bad Lands. One of my men got heat exhaustion, but I did not have to Medivac him. Got mortared tonight for the first time. Scared the hell out of me. No one got hurt and it actually livened things up. It was a long day of walking and I'm very tired. Got a letter from Pat. I'm missing getting mail from her. *[From his point forward when in the Arizona Territory we always dug fox holes for joint use when we moved from one position to another. I don't remember the time, but one time when mortared at night I was in my sleep and when the round woke me up instead of rolling into my fox hole, I crawled 360 degrees around it looking for it and then went in. When I fully woke up it was laugh among us in the fox hole.]*

March 22 [diary]

We got up early and moved to a different position. I have been drinking bad water now for two days because we have not been re-supplied. When we arrived at our new position, we got re-supplied. In addition to food rations, water and other supplies, we got one can of warm beer. Saw some RVN for the first time today, but too far off to shoot. Thought we would be mortared again tonight but it never happened. Be glad to go the rear, An Hoa, were it is safe. I think we have been out for 30 days now.

[More than once we ran out of water and had to drink the local water either out of stream, village water supplies or even once stagnant water. We had something called halzone tablets to put into the water to "purify" it. One was to put one tablet into a canteen of questionable water and wait an hour before drinking it. Often one did not wait one hour. More than once I got dysentery, sometimes real bad, but that was the facts of life. I never medivac someone for dysentery, but I did have some medication for it. It usually did not stop the shits.]

March 22

Dear Darling

I know it's been some time since I wrote but we have been on the run the past three days.

Last night we got mortared for the first time. We had no injuries but it really scared me and brought life back to the company. Where we are now there are NVA all around us.

We see them once in a while in the distance but have not run into them. I hope we get out of this place soon, if not sooner.

March 23

Dear Darling

It looks like I might have a day off today. I hope so because I need a rest, need to write some letters and clean up a little. You would not even get near me right now.

Another day, I never got to finish this yesterday. My morale is good. We got a new corpsmen with me now. I'm the big wheel for the 3rd platoon. It is no big deal, only means I have less time left in the bush then he does.....

March 25 [diary]

Had an ambush tonight. I felt better on this one than any one before, but I'll never get used to it. [Throughout my year in Viet Nam I never felt safe at night, even when in a very safe area.]

March 26

It is sunrise over here in this wonderful place of recreation. I just got back from an all night ambush. I'm in a good mood because we all made it back alive. Not that we seen anything. I hate night ambushes more than anything in the whole wide world. What we do is set in a night and we look for movement but at night you can not see. I hear funny noises out there. I usually don't get any sleep at all but last night I got about four hours sleep. We take turns on watch and I should have had 8 hours of sleep. But I kept hearing strange things and I worry about others falling asleep during their watch. These damn Marines do that all the time. Something I wonder if they have any respect for other peoples lives.

March 27 [diary]

Had a patrol today. One man with heat exhaustion. It really kicked my ass. We were to move in the foot hills and I was really scared about it, even said an act of contrition. But at 1:00 it was changed and we are going to stay here for some time. Hope we go back to An Hoa soon, but at least God has been on my side so far. I'm very thankful for that. I hope I get back to be a teacher. Had my first bath in a bomb crater.

[Interesting story about the bomb crater bath. It was a bomb crater of a 500 lb bomb, people tell me, located at the edge of a village just in the paddies. It was about 10 feet deep in the center. The water was reddish brown and has been sitting it for some time. When we came out of the water, people had to pick off

the leaches off of us. I think about 10-20 leaches per person. Even so, I felt so much cleaner then before the bath. It was 35 days out without a bath other than use of a little water for shaving.]

Dear Darling

I hope to get off four letters today so this will be short but sweet. Tomorrow I'm sure I won't be able to write because we have one hell of a walk. We are moving up in the foothills which is dangerous, too dangerous for my blood. There is some small talk that we will be going in, in two weeks. I sure hope so because I'm tired of the bush and all the running around.

I have a small patrol today but I hope that is all. The other corpsman had an ambush last night. I have been in a bad mood the past 2 days. These people are wearing down my temper. I really need a rest....

March 28 [diary]

Rested till about 3 PM. Wrote Pat, then went a 3000 meter [click] patrol and came back, packed up and moved out to join the 2nd Battalion headquarter. I had an ambush that night, but I sleep all night. I must have had 11 hours of sleep.

Dear Pat

This morning we were to move into the foothills around us and things really looked like we were going to see a little more action for my blood. But at 10 PM last night it was changed and we'll be here at least another two days. Boy I really did some praying. I really think God is looking over me. I'm still alive and very glad to be alive. I will make it up to him. I still remember that promise I made to him and will try my damndest to keep it.

Yesterday not only did I write you but I wrote my parents, Bill and Cookie, and the Ferorros. I did spell their names right on the letter but too lazy to look it up. Today we have a patrol. I hope everything goes ok. But usually I'm not very afraid during the day time.

30 March

Happy birthday darling. The past day and one half I never had time to finish this. Everything was changed on us.

Last night we were fired on again. It shocked my little body but afterwards everyone was laughing about it. It's funny sometimes what a person laughs about. I received two letters yesterday from you. It was good to receive them because you were in a warm mood.

.... I still like to dream.

Well my love that's it for today. Be a good girl and take care of yourself. God bless and sleep warm.

March 29 [diary]

Moved 3 clicks. Fox Company is Battalion Guard, or in other words provides security for Battalion headquarters. Had live fire tonight from AKs RPGs; I was a little scared, but had many laughs afterwards. I sleep in my fox hole. Got some nice letters from Pat, also a can of beer which made the day. Miss Pat a lot now. She is starting to give me security; I'm not even worried about losing her anymore. Have to see her on R&R. Things will be OK.

[When with the Battalion, there is a doctor assigned to headquarters. All of us were run down, and got infections from sores. I always had enlarged tonsils and often would get infected when young. This was occurring now so I saw the Battalion doctor hoping he would recommend surgery and in back of my mind, medivac. He did not, just have 7 day supply of antibiotics, which I could have issued to myself.]

March 30 [diary]

Pat's birthday, it will be the last birthday she has that we are not together.

April 1 [diary]

The past two days have been both fun and bad. Been out 40 days. My temper is at its peak so is everyone else's. We have been Battalion Guard the past three days, but move out tomorrow. My body is shot, really need a rest.

April 1

This will be just a short letter.

Yesterday I was so exhausted I become hypertensive. I was really bad never before in the 4 years have I let out so much steam. But I am better today.

A Marine just got back from R&R in Hawaii. He gave me the entire scoop.

After the past 40 days, the bush almost seems like home. It's funny how healthy I feel now. But also how dirty I am. I feel that you are going to have to teach me new habits when it comes to my grooming.....

April 2

We moved today, seen no VC as of yet, but one of our sister companies seen some. It's been now 41 days out. My body, soul and heart are exhausted. My temper is at its height. I do need a rest so bad. Everyone else is the same. Boy, we all are jumping down each other throats.

I had to force myself to write this. I believe you know what I mean but if you don't it's because I'm just too lazy. I've been thinking of you a lot. It seems the only sane thoughts I have any more are about you. Don't get big headed about that, but you are the only reason I survive this place.

Today is a bah day here. The sky is grey and so am I. Right now I'm waiting for our supplies to come in. I ran out of food this morning, but I am sure I'll be able to get food yet today. Yesterday I finished a sex book which reminded me that I have been deprived. That book only reminded me that I still knew what sex was.

That is about it darling for today. Be good, take care yourself for us. Sleep warm Patricia.

April 4 [diary]

Hit a bobby trap field today. Nine people hit, no KIA. Tex, Hedgecock, Brown among them. I was again lucky. God was with me. Walk 8000 meters, drinking bad water. Later that night I lost Pat's ring. I was sick. I looked for it for 20 minutes but was unable to find it. I'm exhausted after 44 days out.

[See March 6's letter to Pat about the ring. I don't know if I took the lost as a sign. I do not suggest that here. I will be interested to see what I state in my first letter after losing the ring.]

Dear Darling

There is a lover's moon over here and right now I'm on radio watch. Its 3 AM. I miss you a lot and love you more. So I figure I would drop a short line from half way around the world. Oh by the way, I'm using the moon to write by.

Right now Bobby Vinton is on the radio with an oldie but goody. I get to think about you every night during these watches. Like I said this will be short because I also have to make sure no one comes up on me or kills me and those sleeping around me. I'm in a bunch of bushes right now. I'll send along a leaf.

Be good, oh I hear Palm Springs got a little out of hand. Did you have fun? Be a good girl, I love you. Sleep warm baby.

PS Could you send a copy of April's Playboy? I haven't seen it as of yet. If it is out, also May's.

April 5 [diary]

We are going back to the rear. Walk all the way, 7000 meters but it was a good walk. Had a hot meal, bath and feel great.

April 6

At the rear, feel great.

Dear Darling

First thing I'm back at the rear. It's a long story why I'm here but I'll try to explain. We're here to stand line watch for An Hoa. Line watch means we are around its perimeter but not me. I'm safe or at least I feel safer. Actually this is a big break.

About two days ago we were on patrol and hit 3 bobby traps all around me. Nine men took shrapnel, none of them died but two of them were bad. I was lucky because I had just 2 minutes earlier before walked over the same place. Plus one of them went off 25 feet from me. God is really on my side darling. Keep your prayers coming!

I got my first haircut today since I got here. They wanted me to get another but I'm fighting them. Tomorrow I'm getting my camera and get some pictures for you. I hope you like my lip. It will be shaved off before you see me, or at least my first day in Hawaii. But at least you will get some pictures of me.

Today I got last years Christmas package from my folks. The candy was spoiled from melting and cooling but there was a small gift in it.

Now darling I have some bad news. The same day we hit those bobby traps my ring fell off of my finger and I looked for it for at least 20 minutes but couldn't find it. I had to leave the area so that day was a bad day. Oh by the way it was Good Friday that day. Funny isn't it. It was a bad day.

Well darling that is about all in this letter. I miss you much and I am sure I'll write tomorrow. I love you Pat. Take care of yourself for me. Sleep warm baby.

April 7 [diary]

At the rear. I hope we get to stay here for some time. I'm a little on the sick side, but will be ok.

Dear Darling

Our second day back at the rear.

I got Ho Chi Ming revenge because I'm on the weak, running if you know what I mean.
.....

I have I expect about 3 ½ months in the field left. Then a month at the BAS which is where all the corpsmen go when they come in from the field. In August I hope to see you and my parents. The job after that I don't know. I might stay here at the BAS in An Hoa or go work someplace in Da Nang. I hope to pick up a next rank soon. But now I really don't know when.

I am thinking about maybe staying over here an extra six months for the money. That also depends on my attitude then, what you think, how the war is going and what job I have at that time. The reason is only is money.

April 8 [diary]

At the rear was sick all day, sleep most of the time, but took time to eat good food. Even sick at the rear is greater then the bush.

April 9 [diary]

At the rear.

Dear Darling

You only got six more days to get in your income tax. What a way to start a letter. Another day over here. Back at the rear, another day closer to when I get to see you. I'm in a great mood today. I really don't know why but I really feel content.

You are going to find out in this letter that I really don't have anything to write about. Yesterday I became lazy and only wrote you and my parents today. I hope I do better. I did mention to my parents that if they ever wanted to see Hawaii that this year August I heard was the best month to go. Now about you, you better be able to get there. All you need is a round trip ticket and maybe \$25 cash at the most.

Today I'm going to look at some tailor made clothes. We both needed cloths bad that last time I was home. Now that you are fixing your wardrobe so I might as well see what its going to cost to fix mine. I'm going to wait till I get out of the bush to buy them but I must look and dream.

Talking about cars, how does Sidney work? I hope its ok because you're not supposed to have a man around to take care of it, and I hate to see you taking care of it. I just got done taking some pictures of myself for you. I'm sending the pictures with the letter and I'm sending two rolls of film. One slides of us in the field and one whole roll of beautiful

me, which are regular pictures. So now you should have enough pictures for at least until I get some more film from you or my parents.

Oh that reminds me; I might sell my camera and buy a movie camera. But I do not know. Do you think movies are better then pictures or do you like pictures more then movies? Tell me because I'll wait till you write to sell it if you and I agree and there are already two guys who want to buy it.

Well that's about all today darling. I'm going to try to write Bill, Cookie's parents, and maybe mine today yet. Be a good girl for me darling. Write soon and sleep warm.

April 10 [diary]

At the rear.

Dear Darling

I received two real nice letters from you today and a nice card. The card was cute and it made me think about all kinds of naughty things that are very close to my heart. The letters were very warm and you have seceded to draw me that much closer to you and marriage. I have a lot of trust in you right now and the nice thing about it is that I received this trust out of things which you said out of your heart, and not out of something I wanted you to say.

Well darling I want you to know that I need and want you very much. My world would fall if I ever lost you. I would have only my teaching to live for and man cannot live alone. At least Pat, you keep yourself in good health for me and I hope to keep myself alive for you. Sleep warm baby.

April 11

Dear Darling

Lucky we are still at the rear. I'm enjoying myself a lot back here. Yesterday was a big day. I already told you about buying the clothes, but I took an USAFI college corresponding course in American Government. I hope I'll be down with it by time I go on R&R. I also talked to our Chief back here at the rear and got my job after I come out of the bush. Guess what it is? The same job I had at 29 Palms, Medical Records. I asked for it because I'd be my own boss and all that, but it also has its disadvantages. It is the hardest job to do, well not the hardest but the man on it now works more hours per day than anyone else. But I wanted administration work, I got it....

April 12 [diary]

At the rear.

Went out today to help Recon. Back in the foot hills. Was more scared because it was not familiar county. I feel the paddies are my home. We meet up Recon. I got a good night's sleep.

[Recon usually goes out with 5-7 men to scout and pick up intelligence. They go in stealth. Sometimes there were about is found and because of small numbers can be overtaken by the VC fairly easy. In this case, the Recon moved for site to site with VC in chase. Fox Company was sent to meet up with them and escort them to the rear.]

April 13 [diary]

Went on a patrol today out here with Recon. Came back and moved back to An Hoa. It is good to be back.

April 14 [diary]

Spent the day at the BAS. I should be able to take the E-5 test the 21st of the month. We should be moving out tomorrow. Our sister company have been hitting the shit. I hope things cool off.

April 14

The last two days I haven't written because we went out to the field to pick up 8 men who were surrounded by VC. We went in, picked them up, patrolled the area, and last night came back with out any contact. I hope this keeps up but I know it will not. We are back at the rear but will be moving today or tomorrow.

April 15

Dear Pat

Just a note to let you know I'm alive and that I miss you very much. We should be going out today but right now we don't know if we will be going for sure because we haven't got any word. But we never really know what's going on with these people.

Well that is about all in this letter. Be a good girl. I'm still always thinking about you. Sleep warm Pat

April 16 [diary]

We out to Arizona again.

April 21 [diary]

Took the E-5 test in An Hoa.

April 25

Dear Pat

It has been some time since I've written but I was wondering what you had to say. I'm sure you don't feel as trustworthy about me as before but never did. I trust you that much after that letter.

I do miss you and I will try my damndest to make us happy. You will have to accept whatever comes our way. That is the story of life. If a person wants something bad enough he works for it. Unless God does not see fit, he will receive it if he works for.

Be a good girl and keep me informed about your life. I pray for you a lot and hope you are able to work your problems out for yourself. I am sure you can. Do write me no matter what you feel about things. I will always love you no matter what happens. It is up to you in a sense now to what does happen. Sleep warm darling.

April 27

For the past two weeks I've been taking an attitude check and as the Vietnamese say you are Number One which means the greatest. I wondered at the rear when I received that letter but no it's was just old stuff.

I want to make what we have now into something great. I plan on doing no pushing but to lay my cards on the table as they are. You make me very happy. Sometimes you do not do or say the things which I like to here. Now I am not talking about your letters of the past three months. I am sure that I do not always say or do all the things you want. I now do not plan on playing any more games nor do I want to play any.

I have dreams for the future now which are very important to me which I want to share with someone but they have to accept my dreams or future plans as I want them. Now I'm talking about my future job and get it. I want to be a teacher very much and right now there isn't anything in the world to stop me but myself. What ever happens I want my wife to stand aside of me and help make up my mind. I realize when I do marry I have to live two lives not one. That is the reason I've not been married yet. When I do get married I'll be willing and want to live two lives and I want my wife to be the same.

One thing which I want to say is that I want many things for my family and I will work hard for my family. I want to be proud for my family and I hope I'm able to make my family proud of me.

April 30

I received another three letters from you today. I felt bad that I haven't been able to write. Its 3 AM and I am on radio watch in the bush. I don't have light so if my writing is

not good it's because this moon isn't bright enough. Now about radio watch. I call the people on watch on the line [or perimeter] every 15 minutes and find out if they are secured or not. Tonight's watch is one hour and half.

We are just finishing off a sweep of the foothills of this area. We were in large movements each day and about 5 PM each night settle in for the night. That is the reason I have not been able to write. Tomorrow we move again and then set up as a blacking wall for the other companies in this group. That is what I have done the past four days. Except walk and pack one hell of a lot of stuff in my pack and walk up and down hills, large hills.

There is talk that we might be back at the rear in seven days. We have been out since the 16 of April so it will be only 15 days now. It hasn't been such a bad time out this time except we seem to go on more and longer patrols which wear us out some days.

I told you once before that I took the E-5 test which if I passed, I will find out in about 4-5 weeks. It would make me a 2nd Class Petty Officer.....

May 1 [diary]

Been back in the Bad Lands moving a lot the past two weeks. At first we where Battalion Guard, then in the hills moving all the time - bad territory. The rumors have started that we might go in. We have no visual contact but FO, 81's, 60's Artillery has been working out for us. I sense that Pat and me may be in trouble, but I will do my damnest to fix it.

May 1

Dear Pat

It looks like we might get a break today. I save your letters from the past weeks and I was about to burn them but I first reread them. We burn them because they weight to much and you don't want the VC to get our loved ones address because they write some horrible letters. Well after rereading them I find out that we both are going through the same thing.

Time away from each other is making letter writing harder. So there is only one thing to do, not worry about it, just kept writing each other because of what we have shared and hope August is good to us and accept each other as new and maybe even now as more interesting person than as before. It is impossible for you to live my life now and on second thought, I rather not have you live this life anyhow. I just need you for you right now. My biggest wish would be that you get your AA degree, make it to Hawaii, and not get yourself depressed so much.

You can not live my life. I can't live yours. You're going to have to come out of this yourself. I am sure you care about what happens to me. I too care about now you

come out of your problems. You're right about one thing; I'd like you to be proud of me someday. Just like I want to be proud of you.

Enough of this. I'm going to chose this in case we move out. I still think about you each day no matter if I don't write about it that much....

May 2

Another moon light letter. I'm on radio watch and with this full moon I can almost get off a letter. I am listening to the radio at the same time. I never did tell you that we got an American radio station over here. It's funny; during a movement some of the Marines have their radios on listing to the latest rock from the states. There are some things in this war that is not like WW II. I usually listen to it during the night. I find out what's happening in the states and I listen to the sounds of past times, sometimes.

....There is talk we are moving out of this place into a new operation soon. This is nothing new since this is my third operation – Taylor Common, Show Theater, and Mosquito Meadow. The rumor of the next operation sounds good. I fill in the facts in a letter when we get it, but it almost like being in the rear.

You asked if I think about the future a lot over here. Well the answer is yes. Like the other people over here, it's about all a person has to do to get themselves as part of the world, back home and it gives a person a desire to live attitude. I know very few people without some future plan even if it is only to buy a car. They have something besides loved ones to keep them going during this place.

Like always, I enjoy thinking about the future so maybe I do think of it a little more than the next guy.

About if I got friends over here, if some of these guys ever got killed it would break me up. We are all tight; we have to be after living with each other 24 hours a day.

May 3

Again I'm writing another moonlight letter.

Today we moved from the foothills to the paddies. I enjoy the paddies much better. But there is still something else going for us. I'm not sure when we will find out for sure.

There is not really that much for me to write. Tomorrow I have a patrol but that is daily routine now. Now to answer a question. I've been reading a lot over here. Right now I'm reading Queen Victoria. It is a very long book, somewhat boring but it is the only thing I've got. Sex novels are popular over here naturally and I just finished "what are they doing to our children" by Max Raffetey. It is about teaching although I didn't like his ideas nor do I really like him that much. I did get some good ideas out of the book.

Besides those two books, sex novels, I'm sure I read other books but just don't remember them. I could use some good books.

About what I don't know. "The Arms of Kroppe" sounds good but I'm afraid it gets to involved. I like history, social science especially political science. I hate westerns, horror stories and because of all the sex novels over here, I'm sure I don't need any of those. I'm sure you can pick out a book that I would like.

Plus I'm going to take a college course in American Government. I don't have it as of yet, in about two weeks. That is a lot, but something I like. I want to finish the course as soon as possible so to take more. I'm trying my damndest to keep my mind working and I also read any newspaper I can get my hands on.

I do get news on the radio, and we get a military newspaper about 3-4 times a week over here to keep up with the news.

May 6

It's another midnight letter. The past 24 hours have been long. Last night at 8 PM we took off for a 3 ½ mile walk. It was to change positions. We had our face painted like our clothes to cover up our white skin and everything tied down real tight because we had to make this move without being seen.

About midnight and 3 miles later. We were resting in a rice paddy field which was surrounded by hills. I see this man coming walking from this hill which I thought was strange and said something to one of the leaders. He thought it was our Lt or someone who was out of line [we were moving single file] trying to get caught up. Well this man walked down to our line in front of me about 20 feet. When he got 10 feet in front of our men who were sitting in the paddies, some of them asked him who it was. He stop and started to run. We knew then who he was and he did get shot. He had five friends who opened up on us from up on the hill. Boy this was the closest I ever want to come to death because bullets were flying everywhere around me because they were firing at the rifle flashes of the men sitting with me. The five men left their position. We got that original one and they wounded one of our men who was 10 feet from me. We got him to a hospital about one hour latter by helicopter.

About 2 AM we started to move again but since we were spotted we had to stop that mission and we moved 2 ½ miles back, where we got there at 5:30 AM. At 7:30 we moved out another ½ mile were we took some more bullets. No one got hurt. Then today we had to go back to check out the area. So it has been a long day. We walked about 12 miles and had no sleep. It was a bad day, but I'm still here and ok.

Well maybe that doesn't sound very interesting to you but it was a hell of a night. Before watch tonight I did sleep well and I am sure I will sleep after the watch.

No more news but I did receive my USAFI college course yesterday.

May 7

Its 15 minutes to 5 AM. I'm listening to the radio. This hour is the jazz hour. At 6 AM everyone is getting up for a patrol about 6:30-7:00. We moved to a different position. It really does not make any difference were we are as long as we are ok.

I read some in my American Government course. I'm sure I will enjoy the course a lot. The only problem is packing those books. They weight about 10-15 pounds. In you last letter you were displeased with me for not writing for a few days.

May 9

Another night letter but there is no moon light tonight. We have flares with us all the time and we use them at night at intervals to make sure the VC are not at our perimeter.

The last two days we have been on a big operation. I have no idea when this operation will be over with but it is a big one. We have been in contact with the enemy now for four days. If you hear of any big operation in the newspaper near An Hoa it is this one. There must be 1000 men at least on this operation.

In the past four days, two of them I did not get any sleep. If you really want to feel sorry for me, my feet are very sore. We have been lucky and have had few casualties.

**May 9 [added September 28, 2009 after reviewing Fox 2/5 website for Viet Nam]
KIA: James Albert Sanders**

May 10 KIA: Edward Atkucunas [I remember Ed, but thought his name was Ackerson. He was a friend. Just minutes before he hit the land mine, I had shared a cigarette with him and lit it. We were standing on a hill side. I was walking down off of the hill when he must of step on a bobby trap. When it happen, I still remember him in the air in more than one piece. He was dead immediately. I remember that I made the Marines mad, as I wash my hands of any assistance after checking that he was dead. I remember saying that it was a supply problem....those who are responsible in the field for those who die. They did not like my attitude. Actually, he was a friend and it was my way to cope with his death.]

May 13

For the past 8 days we have been in heavy fighting. Things right now don't look good over here. I'm in good shape and I'm still very healthy but it is only because the good Lord is with me. I have seen many things in the past week.

I hope you understand as long as we are in this operation I will not be able to write many letters. I have no idea how long this will last. I expect for at least a week or two. But whatever, it doesn't keep me from being with you in August it is just a matter of time.

All I can say about now is keep me in your prayers and love me. We will both make it through these times. I love you very much. Right now I'm very scared. It's hard for me to think about many other things besides this war. But things will slow down I'm sure and I'll be able to write more.

May 15

I'm going to try to write a long letter today to you. It's been now sometime since I've had a chance like this to write. It all started about 9 days ago. Since then we lost one man who died and about 7 from injuries. I also lost the other corpsman in my platoon. He wasn't hurt bad at all but it's the second time he got hit in a month and a half. He will be out of the bush now because he has two "hearts." Both times he was standing right near me. That is why I kept saying the Lord has been with me. I was working on some injured men that were hit by mortars and not more than ten feet away another mortar hit again. One of the injured men was hit again and so was another Marine beside me. It's not like this all the time but it has been this bad the past nine days. There was a time we had it easier.

I've been out for 30 days now. I was sure we would have been in by now but with all this contact now I do not know when we'll be in....

I miss you a lot. You have to keep going with just words because it is hard now for me to write my thoughts down with all this action...

May 17

Just a small note to say Hi and send you all my love for today.

I'm going to tell you more what has happened the past 10 days. We have been in a lot of contact with the enemy. One day we were hit by mortars which injured 32 of our men. It was real busy that day. I was working on a lot of them while mortars were hitting around me. One of them as close as 10 feet. We had 3 people killed and about 40 injured the past 10 days from our company of 60 men. We are one of four companies in 2/5 Battalion which has taken over 200 people killed or injured. One company has over 40 men killed so we are one of the lucky companies. I'm sure we will be going back to the rear soon because our company strength is low.

I really don't feel bad off myself. I'm in good health. I don't think that I lost over 5 pounds since I've been here, maybe even gained some weight.

You asked about the people. It is not a fair question where I'm at because all the people in this area, more than any other area in Viet Nam are on the side of the VC. We [the Marines] don't like them at all. I have seen Marines killed by booby traps that we believe the people in the villages knew about but did not tell us. Other times we felt that the bobby traps were discharged by someone, maybe even the villagers. I don't really think I can work with the people here in the villages much at all while with the Marines here in the bush. I don't think many Marines at all get along with or even like the people of this county. I'm going to have to meet and be with the people after August. I hope I get to Saigon someday so I get near the University down there. But until I get out of the bush I can't plan much at all.

May 19

Happy Ho Chi Minh birthday. I hope the old goat dies from VD and that's a bad attitude. We are expecting some type of offensive today or tonight. Last night An Hoa was rocketed, which has no affect on me because we are still here in the Arizona territory. You must have heard of this place some in the news lately because we are the hot stop in Viet Nam right now.

The good news is that in four days we are going back to An Hoa. We lost so many men they are taking our Battalion out of the Arizona territory. I expect to get some place a little easier than here. This was a rumor two weeks ago but after the things that happened the past week, it is official. It really does not mean that we're going to have it nice but there should be fewer battles then out here. I believe I only have about 60 days left in the bush which means a lot to me. I am glad I have got to come out here. It is rough sometimes but if I live through it, it's been worth it. I really don't believe that I have learned that much out here. I've seen a lot of blood and I think now I'm cold when it comes to seeing an injury which isn't good. Maybe this will change when I get back to the states.

I still do not believe the US is doing any good over here. This is a wasted war, wasted money, but most important there has been many American lives lost over here. I feel sorry for their loved ones but most of all these young men had ideas, dreams that they wanted to try out and I'm sorry that they were not able to live a full life to at least live out their dreams. Most of them were raised by their parents to die in a wasted war.

Then there are the Vietnamese citizens that die. I feel sorry for their children because they don't even know what it's about. There are some adults which I should feel sorry for but anyone over 15 years of age is my potential enemy. They may some day stop me from my dreams.

Don't let anyone who comes back from this place make you believe that the war is right, because anyone who is actually fighting the war, from the Captain down to the private all they really want is to come home. It is not to say that they would rather kill these people rather than to look at them. I can not say they are fighting for the ideals of our country. They are over here because our government sent them. If they die they

should be known as heroes because they die for a belief larger than if we should be fighting a war. They proved themselves as men who put their lives at stake for our country's promises. They are helping others over here. They die to protect other American boys.

Yes I'm glad to serve with the Marines. These Marines who are out in the jungle walking around looking for someone to shoot at have it worst then any group in Viet Nam. Nobody works or fights harder over here then the bush Marine. I laugh at any Army or Navy person who thinks he does. I'm glad I'm part of this because now I can always remember what bad is. I really did not know how easy I actually had it. Now that I had it bad I can appreciate good things. At least now I can enjoy myself out here in the bush. That is something that I really did not think could be possible. I'll be glad to get out because the Lord has helped me stay alive so far, but I think maybe some day my luck will end. Or maybe someday I might be careless which is easily done. I should make it now. I know what's going on and what to do in most dangerous times....

May 21

Ho birthday is over now but there is still an offensive in our area. Last night we got one North Viet Nam soldier and the night before our sister company, just 1300 feet away, got 4 NVA soldiers. So far, Ho has not had much of a birthday when it comes to 2/5. We have 2 more days and nights out here and I expect more action. We have not had any injuries the last two days.

All they have me doing is sitting on my rear. I eat all day and sleep most of the night. I am getting lazy, but I do not mind because I'm alive.

This is the first village in Arizona we have been at where the villagers are friendly to us. We gave them our C-rations that are extra or the ones that we don't like. They usually like the c-rations. More power to them because after eating them for 35 days, I'm sick of them. I just got done taking seven pictures of the kids of this area, there is one with me in it. The reason I look so bad is that I feel that bad. I have not been able to wash much lately plus after being in the bush your resistance to infections has gone down and I have sores on my face and arms.

May 22

Today will be the last day in the Arizona. It's been a sad month out here for injuries and getting into contact. Things are looking up.

I'm not in a very good mood today. The Marines are trying to make it hard on me. You know how bull headed I am and things between us are not so good. But that does not really bother me that much.....

May 23 [diary]

Came in from two months of the Arizona Territory. 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines came in to the rear because we got our asses kicked. Lost over 200 men to injuries or death. Fox Company has been lucky, only lost 3 KIA but about 40 WIA. Mostly from a major attack on May 12. Glad to be out of the bush. Hope I never have to go back. About two more months to go. Pat & I are doing real well.

[Later in the year in Viet Nam, I was written up for an award for my service in the field. I ultimately received a Navy Commendation with "V". The "V" for valor was for the May 12 action.]

May 25

Just a short letter to let you know what is going on. We got out of the Arizona May 23. We were in An Hoa overnight and yesterday we came up here on Hill 148 for an observation post. We will be up here up to a week and then we go back to An Hoa. There are only 30 people up here. The hill has never seen any fighting or any VC. It is one of the safe places in Viet Nam, almost safer than Da Nang. But we do not have any goodies up here. Until we get supplied today I am even out of water. But water and supplies are coming. We do nothing but sit here so it's not a bad place to be....

May 26

Well things are great. We are on top of this hill doing nothing, just drinking pop, smoking cigarettes and just lying around. This is the safest place I have been since I came to Viet Nam. I only wish I had some film and a camera up here because we really have a great view from here of all An Hoa valley which includes everywhere we have been the last 3 ½ months.

I think we will be up here for one week and rotate to An Hoa and let one of the other platoons come here. I just found out we go in Saturday of this week, today is Monday. It makes no difference at all to me.

I am finding out now I still do not know what I am going to do with my life after this. The only thing I'm sure of is that before the age of thirty I'll be a teacher someplace, but there are now a few other things I want to look into. One is becoming an Officer in the Army. Don't ask questions yet because I'm not doing anything until I check into it first and then we talk it over in August. I'll tell you what brought this on. I believe I'm not really fulfilling myself as an enlisted man. I believe I have as much right to be an officer as those I know who already are. Second, if I became an officer and things worked out the way I would hope, I'd retire from the service before the age of 40. The reason why I thought about it was that I heard an E-5 which I'll be soon could reenlist in the Army as an officer. I am not sure of the source of my information.

.... I like to be able to get myself into our government, teach as long as I can and raise a good family.