

May 27

Another day on the little mountain overlooking An Hoa. ... {all about family and us}

May 28

Right now I'm sitting here enjoying a cigar and a cup of coffee while we have some Viet Nam boys fill sand bags for us. These boys come from a village 3000 meters from here. We pay them with our c-rations. They seem to love our C-rations. I really don't know why because I'm so sick of them after 4 months of them. They consist of twelve meals, ham and eggs, pork slices, beef slices, beef in spice sauce, ham slices, beef potatoes and gray, beans and meat balls, beans and wieners, chicken boned, chicken and noodles, turkey loaf and spaghetti. They have crackers and either peanut butter or jam. Also they have can fruit and a piece of candy. They sound better than they are. A couple of meals I can not even eat unless I'm out of food for a day or so. Right now all I eat is can soup, candy and a lot of coffee.

Up here there are only 28 people and they send enough water for 100 so I was able to take a bath in the morning and one in the evening. That is the most water my body has seen in a long time. In the last three days I've been living in a swimming suit trying to get a tan. I am sure that my waist up is darker than it has ever been in my whole life. I don't know about my little growth under my nose. I do not really want to cut it off but it is not growing as good as I want it. For someone who is almost 22, I sure do not look it....

May 29

After I wrote yesterday I got real lazy and did nothing at all for the rest of the day.

Its ten o'clock today and I just got up ½ hour ago. I receive a package from mother that had cheese and mix drinks in it so I'm having cheese and screw driver for breakfast....

Later that day I write, one thing which I like about Nam is right now I'm nude writing this and we all usually walk around with little on. I wish we could do this back at the states...

May 30 [diary]

Where on a little hill outside An Hoa. Been here for 6 days now. Its even better than An Hoa-- real secure. We go to An Hoa tomorrow, but I'm in no hurry. Pat and I are getting along real well now. I see her in less than 90 days in Hawaii. Tomorrow will be four months. It's been a hard four months but they were good to me. I expect the next two months to go fast.

[This was my last entry in the diary. I do not know what date in July I was rotated out of the field to the 2nd Battalion 5th Marines BAS. I hope that when I include

notes from my letter to Pat that I am able to fill in some of the holes during this time.

My rotation out of the field was a story in itself. Normally one would rotate sometime after 6 months in the field, once a replacement came in. It could take up to seven months depending if a corpsmen in the field was injured or killed and how many new replacement came in to the county.

I had laboratory experience in 29 Palms and the BAS needed someone to replace the laboratory technician at the BAS. The Chief at the BAS offered me the laboratory position and early rotation. I accepted. I believe I rotated one or two corpsmen early and after 5 months and almost four weeks in the field. So I assume that it was late in June or early July. One of the corpsmen that I bumped from rotation was later stationed with me at 1st Marine Division Hospital. His name was Dan, and we became friends. When rotated I was sent to 1st Hospital Company, 1st Marine Division for laboratory training in Malaria testing and stool testing. It lasted one week and it was here where I noted that life would be easier at Da Nang. In September I went on R&R to Hawaii to meet Pat and my parents. On my last day at the BAS prior to my R&R, I requested rotation to 1st Marine Division Hospital, Da Nang].

May 30

Today is our last day up here on our hill. Things have been real good for us the past six days. We go back to An Hoa tomorrow. The Marines will be around the perimeter of An Hoa at night but I do not know what I will be doing.

June 2

It's the second day of a new month which means I'm a month closer till I get out of this place. The past two days I've worked on my college course. There are 16 units and I'm almost done with the first unit. Tomorrow I'll finish it plus do my reading on the second one.

I spend all of my time at the BAS. If I'm not studying, I'm BSing with the other corpsmen. At night I'm either doing three things; on the lines with my men, at the command post as the corpsmen or I get to stay back and rest in the company area. Tonight I'm command bunker as corpsman.

I should be able to go to Da Nang to buy my movie camera this week. As for war news there is none. We're back at the rear and there is no word when we go back out to the bush. There are rumors of July 15 but I really don't expect to be here that long. If I was I would feel very lucky.

Some general came and said we're the best Battalion in the First Marine Division. I hear we're all heroes all over Da Nang area. I really don't know why we are so great; all

we did was get our asses kicked in Arizona territory. We are all up for a Presidential Unit Citation. Plus if I haven't told you before I was put in for a Bronze Star for gallantry. I really don't think I feel like I really deserve it because the day which I was suppose to be a hero all it was, was I was scared to do anything else. I'll tell you more about that in Hawaii.

June 4

It's got to be a short letter but I'll make it nice. I got a letter from Chuck and you which really made me happy. Things are the same over here. I finished my first unit and started the second. Tonight I go on line with the Marines but its real safe. I'm enjoying this stay real well and I have no idea when it will be over....

June 5

I'm at the BAS studying. I come here every day to study, but I'm tired and will start a letter to you.

The past seven days here back at the rear it rains every day. Last night I had to sleep out in it. It made my night miserable but its better then the bush. Tonight I stay at the Command Post. I'll be able to watch a little TV.

Some news which I've been holding from you. Because we worked so hard in the Arizona the big wheels are sending each company to Da Nang for three days of R&R. Fox Company is going this Sunday which is June 8. Because I'm still with the company I get to go. So I have a little good times coming up. We'll be able to swim all day in the ocean and its real safe in Da Nang. They are going to have food for us, pop and beer. We only get beer once in a great while here where we are at. Plus we have a chance to buy state-side food, hamburgers and banana splits etc. There may be a USO show, etc. It should be a good time. I hope to get out of the R&R center if possible and try to see friends in Da Nang.

Now for the latest rumors. We're supposed to be here until about July 15th. Then it's back out to the bush. I'm working on getting out of our company. There is a small chance lets say about a 25% right now. It depends on how many new corpsmen we get here from the states from now till the 15th. Right now I'm number 11 on the list to come out. So if I get real lucky I will never see action again.

I am awaiting the results of the E5 test which I took the 21st of April. If I pass I will be the senior corpsmen for our company. That means I won't have any patrols or ambushes to go on at all. If I am senior corpsmen, things in the bush would be about 75% better.

Now another rumor. The 5th Marines which I'm part of is to be moved out of the An Hoa area. Where we are going? To Da Nang I hear. What for? Nobody knows. Why? No one knows. But the 5th has been in Viet Nam longer than any Marine unit. There is talk

if Nixon sends any troops home the 5th would be the first to go. What would that mean to me. Very little, as I would be transferred to Da Nang to some administrative job, but much safer. Chances for this, I would say 50/50, its only rumors.

PS I have to get this haircut today. I think I'll get it cut short so I won't have to get one until R&R.

June 6

[letter all about us]

8 June

I'm on R&R in country. I feel good and I should have a lot of fun and rest from the war. But that is not the reason I'm writing.

I'm writing because I love you very much. Thank you for the letter about the Army darling, no more talk about it any more. I am very proud of what you said and I'm sure with you as my wife, we will make it ok.

June 11

Dear Darling

Just a small note to tell you that I'm living and thinking of you.

We are back from Da Nang and we are still at An Hoa for line at night. Da Nang was good rest and although it doesn't look like the states it almost was as safe as the states. I was not able to buy a movie camera because there was none to buy in Da Nang. I did see Da Nang.

We received 13 new corpsmen at the 2/5 BAS which means these corpsmen will be replacing the corpsmen in the field. I'm getting to be number 6 to get out of the bush after this replacement cycle. So now I'm getting short. But not short enough.

June 13

Right now our company is at Liberty Bridge. It is between An Hoa and Da Nang and it is about as safe as An Hoa. We got here yesterday. We should be here about 2 weeks.

It is real good duty for me because now I'm senior corpsmen and only has to go on company movements. No more ambushes or patrols everyday. My job is to order supplies and I'm head over all the corpsmen in the company. It still is not completely safe and I will be glad with I get out of the bush completely.

I am gaining more weight. This easy life in the rear is helping out. I do less over here than I do on a weekend with you. The only thing that keeps me in shape is that I do a lot of walking and here there is a river that I spend at least 2 hours.

Right now there are three more corpsmen ahead of me to get out of the bush. I expect to get out July 15.

July 5

When I wrote my last letter I said I was not going to write until I got some type of answers from you before I would write again. I miss writing and I must give you at least a few lines.

Five days ago we went for a three day operation in the Arizona. We saw some more action but none of us were hurt. It was hard but a good operation. The day we got back we figured we'd go to An Hoa for classes but they again surprised us and we are again out in the bush, but not Arizona territory. We are roaming around the same place as we did the first month over here.

Yesterday was July 4 and right now its 3 PM on July 5, but at home it is midnight on July 4. I'm sure you are having some good time right now. Last year I remember we went to Burbank to some type of fireworks, but can not remember what we did the rest of the day.

I'm not sure I told you but I'm senior corpsmen for the company. I travel with the Captain and I have no patrols or ambushes. Thing are better for me. Within the next 30 days I should be out of the bush. I am getting to feel real good about all of this, but I'm scared also. Will be glad the day I'm out of the bush. I would have never thought last February that it would go this fast. I remember what I had six months.

Soon I will be thinking about R&R but before I think about it too much, I'm waiting for an answer to my letter. I haven't had much mail lately, but neither has the rest of the company.

July 6 [added 9.28.09]

KIA: LT Albert Duward Bensen

Before moving to Senior Corpsmen, I was in Lt Bensen's Platoon corpsmen. On this day we had just med-a-vac someone for heat exhaustion or some minor medical problem. We were in an opening on some type of trail or path. A line mine was activated, and Lt Bensen and I believe our Kit Carson scout were hit. The Captain asked me to assist. Lt Bensen had a serious leg injury and I believe he was an All American runner in college. Where the last med-e-vac helicopter came within minutes, it took over an hour for the chopper to arrive. In the mean time three of us corpsmen, could not get an IV started due to his injuries and shock [not helped by no IV.] The right procedure would be a cut down, but none

of us had the training or experience. This was one of three times that I wished that I was a doctor rather than a corpsmen.

July 7

Dear Pat

What can I say. What I tried so hard to do was in vain. I did not want you to think that I was picking you apart but trying to show just how much I really need you. As you know I am not too much with words when it comes to a letter. I'd hate to lose you because of poor expression. You must realize that being over here is pure hell on a person's mind; and it plays hell with one's mood. That letter found me in one of those moods.

Pat I do not want to end things, but on the other hand your note seem so short and blunt, that you make me feel that you wanted to end things without even trying to iron out the problem.

So I'll leave it up to you Pat, do you want to end it or what? God knows, I do not.

July 20

Dear Pat

I was very glad and relieve when I seen and read your letter. I wanted so much to write this past week but I had to wait until I received that letter.

About your picture. I must say I've been very proud of you, I've shown almost the whole company of 150 men your picture. You had some good things said about you. The picture was one of the most true to life pictures I have ever seen of you. You are beautiful in the one with the pink outfit. You look like a queen.

Now some news. My replacement will be out in about 13 days for sure. Maybe even sooner. I'll be going to An Hoa and working in either medical records or laboratory. No matter where, the work will be safe or at least safer than in the past.

About the past, It is hard to tell you what we have done the past two months. We have been in the bush about ½ the time and at Liberty Bridge in the rear the other half.

Some bad news, the day after tomorrow we're going on a new operation in the mountains. I have no idea what is up there and I'm a little scared, but like I said before in less than 14 days I should be out.

About R&R now. I'm put in for Hawaii in September, any dates. I found out that Hawaii is primarily for married men and they have first choice. We will see what happens.....

I did some spending of money. I bought myself a real nice radio, a movie camera and a watch. I still have your watch but water got in it and it has stop working. Maybe I be able to fix it back in the states.

Dear Pat

Today is the day we're suppose to go to the mountains but at this time it does not look like we will be going today. I can't say I'm unhappy about the situation because yesterday I talked to the Chief and he said that today or tomorrow my replacement would be out in the field to replace me.

I also found out that I'll be working in the laboratory back at the BAS and that I'll be going to Da Nang for a few days for classes in laboratory. I did not really want the job at first but it's a challenge to me. It will also broaden my knowledge. It is an easy job once I learn it. I will have time to myself which if I use properly, could put to good use.

Last week was a good week for me. First I found \$23 dollars. I played cards twice and made another \$55. Another doc and I went to Da Nang where we picked up \$208 more dollars which is a real long story. Out of these dollars I bought a \$34 radio and split the rest of the \$208 with the other corpsmen which was \$87. I had the First Sgt put \$110 in the safe for me before the last operation and a man owes me \$60 from a month past. Boy for money it was a good month. I've been buying cokes and etc for all my friends. I bought a watch which cost over \$100 in the states, movie film for my camera. I'm had one big spending spree. It was fun after six months. When we get to Hawaii we'll have another one.

[The trip to Da Nang was very interesting. The other corpsmen and I officially went AWOL to do the trip. Only the other corpsmen in the Company knew where we where. We went to pick up some hard liquor from my poker winnings for the company corpsmen. We hitch-hiked. We were picked up just out of Liberty Bridge by this South Viet Nam officer and his driver in their jeep. From the story from the officer, he had \$208 American scrip currency and was to pick up his American friend "up the road" and his American friend was to buy a radio for the officer's commanding officer. The money was his commanding officer's.]

The road between An Hoa and Da Nang is infamous traveling through Liberty Bridge seven miles from An Hoa and maybe about 20 miles from Da Nang. The actual road has to be mine swept each day. Not a week goes by where one of the transport trucks is not blown up because they drive on the "shoulder" of the road which were not swept. I knew little about the lands between Liberty Bridge and Da Nang, regarding if there were bad guys there.

The first thing that happened was that the South Viet Nam officer's jeep left the main road. We knew that this could be dangerous, as there were stories of American soldier being captured by the NVA or Viet Cong. The South Viet Nam driver and his officer were sitting in the front seat of the jeep and the other corpsmen and I were in the back

seat. When we left the main road, we both looked at each other sensing danger. Up the road about 1000 meters we stopped at a small village and the officer left the jeep to go into one of the buildings. I looked at the other corpsmen and the M-16 that he was carrying and my pistol too tell him that we had to at least try to do something if anything happen. What was bad was neither he nor I had ammunition for our weapons. Nothing happen and the officer returned to the jeep and we later return to the main road to Da Nang.

The second thing that happen was when we got to the location were the South Viet Nam officers American friend was to be, he was told by other soldiers that his friend was pull for a tour in the bush two days ago and would not return for at least a week. The South Viet Nam officer spoke to his driver and we continued to Da Nang. When we got to the outskirts of the city they stopped. He told us the story of his commanding officers money and that his mission was to buy at the American PX a four band Japanese radio with the money he had. He asked us if we would do this for him. As a point of good will between the US and South Viet Nam relations I told him that I would. Each American had a ration card when we enter the County, which was not much use in the bush. The ration card only had one radio on it, but I knew that men routine lost there ration card in the bush and it would be replaced. I saw no reason why not to use my ration card to buy him the radio for his commanding officer.

We drove on to "four corners" and the Air Force PX which was close by. After we parked, I left the jeep to buy the radio, movie camera, and booze and the other corpsmen stayed with the jeep with the South Viet Nam soldiers. On my way out, a MP stop me and asked if I had written permission to be traveling with the South Viet Nam soldiers. I did not and so when I got to the jeep, I told the other corpsmen to get out of the jeep and the South Viet Nam soldier that we could not leave with them. I could not give them the radio or the American money scrip since they were not legally to have it. I did tell them, quietly as the MP was near by, that I would meet them at "four corners" not more than three city blocks away. The other corpsmen and I walked to four corners, with the radio, movie camera and booze and waited and waited. After 30 minutes we realized that the South Viet Nam officer did not understand the directions.

We were now AWOL in Da Nang, essentially lost because we did not know directions and it was now late afternoon and he had to get back to Liberty Bridge. I do not remember the details of the next two – four hours, but I do know we had a problem finding any ride that ended up going towards Liberty Bridge. Ultimately, we did get a ride to a small American outpost closer to Liberty Bridge, maybe 5-7 miles away. By the time we got to this outpost it was dusk and I was sure that we would not get back to Liberty Bridge that night. This meant that officially we were going to be AWOL and more than likely found out. However as luck had it someone from that post had to delivery something to Liberty Bridge that night and we got a ride with him. We arrived after dark, which in Viet Nam was a dangerous period to be out from your lines. Even getting inside of Liberty Bridge lines was somewhat dangerous.

The end of the story was that all my corpsmen and I got drunk that night from the booze we bought. I do not know what happen to the South Viet Nam officer. I am sure that he must have got in trouble for losing his commanding officer's \$208 and not having a radio. I brought the radio home from Viet Nam and used it for years. As for the watch, the next day, I went to the small local PX, a trailer, and they had this Omega watch on sale for half price. I brought it.

I always felt bad about this story as my role was from a South Viet Nam – US relations that backfired.]

In the Rear in the Battalion Aid Station

July 25

In my last letter I'd hope I would be back at the rear at An Hoa. Well darling, that is were I am. I got back yesterday and still don't realize I'll never have to go back to the bush.

Today I took over the laboratory at the BAS. I really had some big problems today because I was never very good at it [drawing blood mainly], but I am learning. Tomorrow I go the Da Nang for classes for a couple of days. I hope to get a little rest. I have a lot to learn there and after it's over I'll take a couple of days of R&R.

The rear is nice. Showers twice a day, a bed, even though it is not like a bed at home, but it is a bed and more important, I have it every night. Cold things to drink and hot meals. It is all a dream right now. I'm not one bit settle down here at all.

I have a question for you, but don't jump to conclusion because it is just a question I'd like to hear your answer. The question is -- what would you think or fell if I'd stay over here an extra six months. I'm not off the edge or dreaming. I just like to know a truthful answer.

Now that my nerves have settled down I'm able to think more about you. I'm a little scared I won't even know what to do when I'm with you. You will have to teach me all the ropes. I'm sure the world changed a lot since I left. The six months seem to go fast but the individual days went slow.

Aug 2

A few words to let you know I'm still here on this earth. I thought about you a lot this past week.....

Earlier this morning I wrote a small note to you expressing forgiveness for not writing the past week. Now I will tell you what I did.

Two days ago I got back from Da Nang where I spent five days. Three of those days I went to laboratory school where I learn a few more test for laboratory work at An Hoa. The rest of the time I spent on a kind of R&R. Da Nang is really great; you even forget there is a war going on. I saw some old movies at 1st Medical Battalion and there is a theater which is air conditioned where I seen three more movies. I ate a lot, drank a little and relax from the past six months. If you're interested I did not spend any time with a girl or women. There are so few American girls there and I have no time for Viet Nam women because of the diseases.

I did a lot of thinking about you in those five days. It was the first time since I've been over here where I wasn't tensed up about the war. I really never missed you or wanted to be with you as much as the past week.

Getting back to the past week, the past two days I had to go to driving school where I went for a government driving license. I'm going to be stand-by driver for the BAS ambulance. I did not want the job, but I do not mind it.

In Da Nang I thought about writing but every night I went to the club and that shoot that idea.....

Aug 4

Its 3:30 AM. I'm not up because of my health. The power is off at the BAS which means we have no fans to keep the heat down and air movement to keep off those pesky little bugs off of my body. This was so bad, that it only woke me up at 2:30. On my way to get a drink of water I stubbed my toe the same one I broke in the field which I never got fix. So I suppose it's broken again or at least it feels like it is broken. About ½ hour ago I took 2 darvon 65, those same pink and grey pills I gave you for your monthly period. We they should of knocked me out by now, but my toe still hurts, I am sweating, there are all kinds of pesky bugs flying around me, and I can not sleep....

I am getting into a rut. I planned on quitting smoking which I have not even attempted. I do not do enough studying as I wished I did although I do some. My body is getting to be the same old body it use to be. I was planning to work out a little back here because I really felt healthy in the field. Well maybe I did not really change that much after all, sill the bad old habits. I'm so lazy I do not even go to chow. I just eat odds and ends and drink a lot of pop. This afternoon I got sick of myself and I'm going to try from here on in.....

Aug 5

I have to make this short because in 40 minutes I'm going on a med cap which is when medical personnel go to a village and treat the citizens. I do not really want to go but what could I say.....

Aug 5

I can't say much for myself. I'm drunk and don't really care. That is the story of my life; I've haven't cared in my life. But one thing I love you and very much need you...

Cont't Aug 6

Last night I got drunk. Well you can see from the writing, I was way out and this morning I am paying for it. The chief had to get me up this morning and I still do not feel like doing much.

Aug 7

Well I finally have some news to write about. It happens only one or twice a month where something happens over here that involves my life. The news is that 2/5 is moving out of An Hoa complex to Hill 65 which is another complex. I really don't know if it is good news or bad news. One thing it will involve two or three hard weeks of work and discomfort. I personally believe it will be safer than An Hoa because it is closer to Da Nang [which is like the states but looks like a slum area worst then Watts].

I must say that I surprised myself. It's been three days now since I had a cigarette. It's worst now then every before when I quit for any length of time. I sure want to quit.

Now all I have to do is study more and start working out. I weighed about 165 when I left the field and now weigh 173. That tan I had all peeled off after a week out of the bush and 15 showers. I found out that I had dirt tanned into my skin and after the dirt came off so did the tan. Now I have to get another tan before Hawaii.

I bought another camera; it's about ½ the size of a pack of cigarettes. It was to cost [px price] \$55 but was on sale for \$24 because it takes special film. I can carry it around all the time.....

Aug 8

Well we're all packing up our little home. We should move now in about three days. This isn't any fun at all but it does make time go fast.

This morning I had to go on a small patrol around An Hoa. All we did is check the wire around our perimeter to see if any was cut from the night before. All that happen was that I got my feet wet from the paddies.

Last night I watch my first skin flick; two of them where in color and three in black and white. If you are curious they show everything and use a lot of close up lenses. Considering that I have not seen any women for over 6 months they were interesting but they did not relieve the tension. Also yesterday I started jogging and lifting weights. I know I will never continue by myself but my room mate have been doing this for some time now, so I have someone to keep me on the program. I have also started to take

vitamin pills. I still do not eat well here. I have only eaten two meals in the chow hall except the time in Da Nang. I do eat around the BAS when ever we get our hands on. Usually egg sandwiches or hot dogs, sounds like the old diet of my girl. Do you eat more now?

Aug 9

I don't have much news today at all. Right now I'm listening to Mr Nixon address the public. As much as I don't like him personally, he's been doing a good job the past four months in office.

Today I have duty at the BAS. It is not much at all except I will not be able to play volleyball, which we play everyday. Also I will not be able to see the movie tonight and we have Dr. Z, and it's a good movie.....

Aug 9

I'm sitting here on the duty desk listening to the top 30 songs back in the world. I just got rid of a patient. He went to 1st Medical Battalion in Da Nang. He came in with a 104 temperature and after a malaria smear test which yours truly personally ran, we found out he's down with malaria. It seem very strong lately, Malaria. In the past three days we've had six cases.

I received a letter and you had many questions. First about the laboratory. I took the job because they needed someone with lab experience and it was an out of the bush opportunity. I did some lab work at 29 Palms but never like this. I went to a three day school and now that I know a little of what I'm doing, I like it much more. To me I have one of the best jobs at the BAS. I'm my own boss and no one can tell me how to do my job because I'm the only one who knows it except the doctors. I like it also because it has become a challenge. But to answer another question, I could not do lab work all the time because after so much of the microscope, I go bug eyed.

About the moon venture, yes I knew all about it. I did not see them on TV but listen on the radio. I don't think we are as excited as everyone else over there. Yes we all listened but to us right now the world is a small place, it covers Viet Nam and that is all. We all have too many thoughts to worry or to get excited over. But I am proud of the US and I've already seen it has made a big impact on the world for our good. I wish someday after this I could maybe see the moon.

About Ted Kennedy, I love the Kennedy's so much I hate to even think about that situation. Like all men he is not unfaultable. I'm sure it will not help my man for President. I sure hope he does make President some day.....

About extending over here, I was just curious about your thoughts on it. I'm NOT going to extend. I have now less than 180 days left over here. I'm serious about us and hope

things work out on R&R and after this place. We can finally start planning something. I'm very happy about you....

Aug 11

Another day here at An Hoa. It was a quite day. I never had much lab work to do and most of my time was spent lying around. I am watching TV. We have one station and most programs are about 3 months old....

Aug 12

I'm sitting in my lab right now doing nothing. It looks like another slow day over here. I really do not mind because my mind isn't working right today.

I have no news. We're still in An Hoa and don't even have the slightest idea of when we are moving. Right now I don't even know if we are moving for sure, but it all points that way. ...

I stop the letter earlier today. I have some more news now. We got rocketed today. It landed 75-100 yards from the BAS. It scared the shit out of me. I believe this might be the start of a new offensive. I hope it does not pertain to me much. I knew this slowed down was too much.....

Aug 13

Dear Pat

Not in the best of mood today. I've got a sore throat and a head cold. With the heat over here it's hard to figure how I got that.

Things are OK today here, so far, but there must be some new offensive starting because the last two nights we've been rocketed and also yesterday. Today is not over so I expect more rockets today. I just hope no one gets hurt including me. The rear is nice, but those rockets have to go.

There still isn't any word about us moving to Hill 65 when or if. I like to get out of An Hoa right now.

Aug 16

I'd like to be able to write a book today but I'm not ever sure I'll get a note off. I'm working lab but for the next three days I'm also driving the jeep. This means anytime any one wants to go anywhere they call on me. I've been busy all day.

A man was shot in our 2/5 area and I had to make an ambulance run with the jeep at night. I drove like a maniac to get to him but the man died. I knew him well as he was in the bush all my six months and was with the 3rd platoon.

Michael Lee Lewis

Yesterday was a good day because I found out that I've got my R&R in Hawaii for the 12th to 19th of September. So now we can really start planning.

Aug 17

Today is Sunday and Sundays are usually good days and this has been. We are in An Hoa and I got four letters from you and one from my parents. It is a good day.

....but it does remind me of something that happen to me yesterday. My back was run over by a jeep. Yes a jeep and I'm sore. No nothing broken just bruised. It is a long story but I'm sure not as interesting as yours. ...

Aug 18

Dear Pat

I just finished my study for the college course the past three hours. My mind is mixed up right now.

Last night we got hit by rockets and for some time I could not sleep. I seriously thought about putting in a request to work at 1st Medical Battalion in Da Nang. It would be much safer there and maybe I could get some sleep. It's a matter of leaving all my friends here at An Hoa. Plus I would spend more money up there. It's up to me only I can decide. If I do, I'll wait until after September.

Today was back to normal, and I am not doing much at all except writing....

19 August 1969

Dear Pat

Was up a couple of hours last night and I'm tired today plus not in the best of moods.

An Hoa is being hit by rockets the past week and last night the lines were hit hard. We had stray rounds around the BAS and it's impossible to sleep under those conditions. Something to do about some big Viet Nam hero's birthday. Tonight is to be the worst. Well enough of that.

I've been busy a little more than usual in laboratory today. Also I have duty tonight. But tomorrow will be a new day and maybe it will look better all-round.

Since the bad mood I haven't and wouldn't take any pictures so you're going to have to wait till better times. I have received mail from you the past three mail calls now. I like it much more this way. I can see what a complete ass I've been the past two months. I don't know how I'll make it up to you. The letter I received yesterday was funny but very nice. It's the one after you received the one when I was drunk. I haven't gotten like that since then.

In your letter you said we are becoming strangers. I can't really agree darling. We aren't able to share ones lives very well right now because of distance. But I still remember what you are like, how you act, the funny things you do, and why I'm drawn to you as I am. I don't really think I could ever forget you. No time holds us a part, but I'll never be a stranger to you.

I wish I was in more of a good mood Pat. I hate writing grim letters. I miss you Pat. I remember the good of you. I wish I could be with you darling. Sleep warm tonight.

Aug 20

Dear Pat

I'm sure this won't be a very long letter but I wanted to write and let you know I love you very much.

Last night amounted to nothing, not a single shot was heard. It sure made me feel better today; I hope this new offensive is over for us.....

Aug 21

Dear Pat

Another day has passed in the year of hell; hell, like hell. At least I'm a day closer till seeing you. Today was a slow day, had some lab work, but spent most of my time reading Hawaii. I finished the book today, that's 937 pages in three days.

I put in a dream sheet this week. I asked for duty in Washington DC area. Neither of us has seen the east coast and I have 10 months left when I get back. I want you with me as my partner and if we think we're ready for marriage. I hope to share these times as husband and wife....

Aug 22

I hope I now live life in my ideals. I'm still so damn sure of my ideas. No one except God Almighty could prove me wrong. I'm still going to be hard to live with but now maybe I'll accept other people's ways of living.....

Aug 23

Dear Pat

Today was a busy day. Had a lot of lab work – we seem to be getting a lot of Malaria the past week. I spent about two hours cleaning up my room also, boy did it need it.

One thing interesting is that we had VC at the perimeter again tonight. There was a fire fight or so. Maybe more though the night.

Aug 24

Today is Sunday and I'm watching football on TV. I do enjoy watching football. I hope you like to watch it. During the game I spent most of the time talking to a guy from Canada. He is from Montreal and is spending two years with the Marines and plans on going back to Canada. He is much more intelligent than most of the Marines I know, and we had a great time talking during the game.

Naturally he reminded me of you and that I want to see Canada with you. Most Canadians I meet over here plan on going back to Canada after their tour with the Marines. I wonder why?

Aug 25

I received your letter confirming that you are going to Hawaii the 11th. I'm very glad.

The past days are getting busier and busier all the time in my lab. I have little time during the day for myself and at night lately I'm very tired. I sure my writing has been affected by this.

....By the way it's been now almost two years. That's a long time love for both of us. I never went with anyone that long before. I pray that it will be a lifetime.

Aug 28

Dear Pat

Sorry I haven't written the past two days but there has been a change. I moved to Hill 65 with the doctor. Hill 65 is just a little smaller compound than An Hoa. It is much safer. The rear BAS is still at An Hoa but should be up here soon. It is nice up here, the place is beautiful. I have movies of the place to show after I get home for good. I hope to have over 2000 feet of film once I get home.

The reason why I moved out to 65 is to set my lab up there. The reason why is I have been doing lab work from 0730 to 2000 each day. There is one hell of a lot of Malaria here. Tonight during this letter, about two hours, we had 4 emergencies. They were all

Viet Nam people. We saved two lives and the other two were in good shape. I enjoy my job during this a lot because we [doctor and corpsmen] save some lives.

Aug 30

Well darling the whole BAS is moving to Hill 65. It is a complete mess....

Sept 2

Dear Darling

I can only say it has been misfortunate that we had to move at this time. I've been busy fixing up lab and with emotional stress that has been on me it has been impossible to write. Everyone at the BAS has dissent and we are at each other throats. It's more than moving it is certain new people creating this discontent. I'm thinking about going to Da Nang to work.

Six more days I go to An Hoa to pick up the money and in 10 days I go to Da Nang for Hawaii. This will be the first time in seven months where I'll really be safe and with my loved ones. It seems so impossible now. There were so many days out in field where I did not know if I would ever see you again or not. Plus there was always the excitement of seeing you in Hawaii. All these things are getting to me. I can not wait.....

Sept 4

It is getting closer all the time and I'm afraid now that I might get sick before R&R but at this time I'm healthy. I am running the laboratory and pharmacy. I like my work again because I work in a corner of sick call in a little room I built. I can be by myself and think when I have time. Lately I have not had much time even to sleep. I hate moving and how it disrupts a person life. But now I kind of like this place. It is safer then An Hoa and here I live in a bunker which would stop bullets but not bombs.

Sept 5

Dear Darling

I'm sure you won't get this letter before you leave but I'd like to have some letters waiting for you when you get back.

Last night I played hearts with some of the people around here. I went to bed way to late. Actually I have a week of sleep to catch up on before I leave the 11th.

During the day here I live in sick call and in the laboratory. I fill about 20-40 prescriptions each day but my lab work has gone down. Malaria seem like it died out. I hope so. I keep worrying the past two weeks that I would come down with some disease and would not be able to go on R&R but everything seems ok.

I never finished this last night. It is the 6th now and last night we got hit, some small amount considering what happen in An Hoa. Even Da Nang had action last night. We're the only ones that did not take much action. Plus we get to stand on our hill and watch the war go by. Actually I lost a lot of sleep and we expect the same to happen tonight. I just hope they bypass this place again.

Its now the 7th about 5 PM and tomorrow is my last working day. Today I saw a USO show. They had a band from Austria and go-go dancers, and a strip show. I can not explain what that show did to me. It makes waiting for R&R and getting out of Viet Nam that much more important. I can not wait until Feb 3, 1970 comes.

Pat I can't wait until I can be with you for ever. This war helps me out with many things but one thing it really helps me with is to settle down. I want marriage and a life now.

It's another day and tomorrow I leave for An Hoa. I am real excited.

R&R in Hawaii September 12-19, 1969

Sept 20

Dear Darling

I only wish I could convey all my thoughts, emotions and desires in this letter. The past six days were the happiest of my life. The trip back was the most depressed of my life. It is hard to explain my feelings but I felt like my life was out of my body. I did not feel near that bad the first time I came over. When you were with me the last few minutes I had a real heavy heart but it never come out so much as after I left and thought about not seeing you for some time...

I'm back. I realize I must put you out of my mind and think about coming home again to you. I do love you. About R&R what can I say. I had a great time being with you and only wish it lasted longer. I am so glad that things worked out the way they did.

I plan on writing every day. I hope I get stationed in Da Nang soon because as of yet I haven't got orders.....

Sept 21

Dear Darling

I'm back at the BAS now and things really have not changed much. I did some Lab and give out some pills. Exciting!! I thought about you a lot and I felt R&R is over now for sure I unpacked my suitcase.

I haven't had any word if I'm going to Da Nang but I hope I do soon. I spent most of the day BSing with friends. Fox Company is out in the field and I talked a lot to them about you and Hawaii. It was nice seeing them and after talking to them I'm used to being back. It seems like I never left except my thoughts about you. It is too bad we can not do it again.

Sept 22

Dear Darling

I'm getting into the routine of things now but still have many thoughts about you. ... But at least I'm used to Nam again. If I did not have the memories I've never known that I went to Hawaii. My mind is in a better and more comfortable disposition.....

Sept 24

Since I bought a tape recorder yesterday I've been taping on it. This letter will not be very long. But I will still write everyday..... About 120 days now....

Sept 26

I'm sorry I have not written the past two days but with packing up and the running around I did, well it made me to lazy to write. You must wonder packing up for what. Well my request went through and today or tomorrow I'm moving to Da Nang. I did not get exactly what I asked for but I'll be working at 1st Medical Battalion. It is the same place that I learned lab work two months ago. I'm glad for us that this happen because it is so safe in Da Nang. Plus I sure it will be more comfortable, but a person will have to work harder.....

LIFE in Da Nang

Sept 28

As you can see from the address I'm at 1st Medical Battalion. I arrived here yesterday and after running around for half a day I got settle here. I'm in Charley "C" Company which means "C" Company office takes care of my paperwork. As for anything else, I have no job as of yet, but tomorrow at 8 AM I will find out what I will be doing the next 4 months. There is a 50/50 chance that I will be working on the wards. But I have never worked on the wards.

As for living it is like stateside barracks. The barracks are two decks and I live on the bottom deck. I will have a bed, yes a real bed, but for right now I'm living on a cot. We have a Vietnamese house mouse, as we call them, or cleaning lady as you would say back in the states. She cleans the barracks, washes our clothes, makes our bed and acts as our mother. You know how American men need their mothers.

As for this place, you have to have clean clothes, shine shoes and starched hats everyday. The first thing they told me was to get a haircut, so I got a hair cut [my side burns, the ones that I am growing stayed].

All working areas have fans and some have air conditioning. We have showers inside the building which is unusual for Viet Nam, and flush toilets which I used only 6 times since I been in Nam for the past 8 months.

As for me, I like it. It is a new place and new faces and maybe more friends. We have an indoor movie every night at our club which sells beer and soda. It looks like a state side bar which I like. It is much safer here and I am already getting fatter then before, but I will worry about weight when I get home.....

Sept 29

Dear Darling

Yesterday I told you about 1st Medical Battalion today I'll tell you a little about my new job. I work on Ward K, yes I do ward work at the hospital. Kind of a nurse, except I only give one person back rubs and that is you. It is a malaria ward which means most of our patients either have malaria or are running a fever similar to those who have malaria. This is the first time in my naval career that I have ever worked on a ward. Although ward work is not usually the best work to have, since it's all new to me, it is interesting in a sense or in other words, I like it right now. But I'll have to see how it goes.

I work from 3 PM to 11 PM. That gives me all morning to spend time at Freedom Hill and China Beach which are two R&R centers. Freedom hill has an air conditioned movie theater and China Beach has the beach. But since I work till 11 PM I can not spend any time at our club as it closes at 9:30. Tomorrow I'll see a movie then read a little at the R&R Red Cross center, maybe have a hot dog for lunch and come to work at 2:45. Maybe the next day I will sleep all morning.

I mailed the tape recorder today and will start sending tapes real soon.....

Sept 30

It is the last day of the month and like all other last days of the past eight months; it makes me feel one month closer till I'm with you again. Although 12 days ago we were in each other arms it seems like years since I seen you. Maybe it is because I miss you so or/and I am sure it is because of not hearing from you for all that time.

I'm at work right now. It is 7:30 PM and everything is caught up till about 9:30. I have no idea how long I will be working on the wards. I mentioned to my company that I worked medical records and they want me to work there. I heard a rumor that I will start

work there Monday. Whatever happens, it will be ok because I put my hands in God. I'm sure he will do whatever is best for me.

As for what I am doing. I dream a lot about coming home. I look around our shopping center at Freedom Hill, which is only a mile or so from 1st Medical Battalion. Today I look in a movie but tomorrow I'll sleep all day because I'm very tired from today. I must say most of my day is spent day dreaming but it passes over here so well and I feel so good.....

Oct 1

This will be a short letter as I'm on the ward right now. It is a quite night. It seems that Malaria cases are now becoming far and in between.

There is always something else to talk about and tonight it is rain. The past 24 hours it has rained. I think that the monsoon season is here or at least around the corner. Because of the rain I stayed in all day. Tomorrow I plan on going to Freedom Hill to see a movie. It is an adventure type movie but I forget the name. I will shop around a little for us. I worry and I am going screwy thinking about mail.

Oct 2

To get the first thing off of my mind, no mail today. I'm sure it will catch up with me soon. The only good thing about not getting mail the past two weeks is when it comes in it will be in abundance.

At present I am working on the ward. Today I went to the movie Hannibal Brooks. It was a good adventure type movie.....

How is school? By the time next semester starts I will be home. Although I don't think much about going home right now, it come up in my thoughts and they all include you....

Oct 3

Dear Darling

Not much to write about tonight. I spend my day at the Red Cross Center where I just read magazines and books. The one thing I accomplished was to get the address of the Division of Student Financial Aid at Washington DC. Tonight I wrote a letter to find out what other aid I can get besides VA benefits from the service. I figure any extra cash could always help. Soon I will write to a few colleges for information about registration. I am not sure right now what colleges I'll write but I'm sure of one thing, I'm writing to ones in Wisconsin and California. Although I was always sure that I want to go to a California school, right now I am not so sure. I have a year to make up my mind.

As I said in the beginning of the letter I have little to write about. I still have not received any mail since I've come back from Hawaii, not even from my parents. Because of that I am sure it is because of the latest move here to 1st Med Bn. I am still looking though hopefully. I feel a little uneasy about not writing my parents since I have been back to Nam. Maybe after this letter tonight I will write.

Tomorrow I will see another movie. Oh I bought a movie projector to day. It is the first thing since I have been back. I'm looking forward to get the pamphlets back on the china. The sooner I order the sooner I'll be able to sent it home and find out how much money I will have for other things. There is so much more I would like to buy.

As for other news there is none. I'm a little ahead of myself but the 16th of this month I will be advanced to Hospital Corpsmen Second Class Petty Officer. It is the same as a Sgt in the Marine Corps. It will be about \$50 raise a month and then in December I will get another \$25 raise because it will be three years in the Navy.

No they where not wasted years. I look at it this way. If I never joined the Navy and ask for boot camp at California, I would have never met you. It is hard to picture myself not knowing you or loving you. The past three years taught me a lot. The Navy did not have much to do about that, just the people I have met and the places and things I have done while in the Navy. It has been a good life up until now. That is if you like someone owning your life [Navy]. Yes I will also be glad to get out....

Oct 5

We are real busy tonight. I really do not have the time to write much.

Oct 7

First and most important, the happiness news of the month, I received two letters today from you. I must say that although I mentioned in some of my latest letters that I wondered about you, in back of my mine I knew it was the fault of the US Post Office. I wondered. I am not use to trusting anyone but within time I'll trust you.....

But now the news. I do not work on the ward any more. I received my office job at the company office, which I will tell you about tomorrow. I do have more responsibilities now than before and more work.

As for leaving nursing service, well I never worked as a nurse before. It really was not nearly as hard as I thought it would be, but I let fate run my life once in a while and fate got me the office job. As I said I never worked wards before 1st Med, but I like it. I know the people of nursing service enjoyed or liked my work. I really got along with the patients well. More than that, I was sorry to go and when I see the ones who were in my ward they ask why I don't work there. Now I work form 8 till 4 PM. I don't get to go to Freedom Hill as often but I have the club at night. My job includes both health records which I did at 29 Palms, plus service records is a new field for me and very

interesting. I really enjoy working at 1st Med Bn. altogether. I've met some nice people and the work is clean.

One of these days I'll take more pictures but I must say one thing, it is hard finding a sunny day. The monsoon season started about a week ago and it rains 75% of the time.

8 October 21, 2004

Mail call goes in one hour and today I'm sure I have mail. I have seen it there but they have some rule about not giving it out before mail call. It will feel so nice getting mail two days in a row.

Right now its 12:30 and I'm on lunch break. I work form 8-11, then from 1-4 PM. That is my day if I have all my work done. There are 55 men in our company and I take care of their health records and service records. I have one man over me right now and he is showing me how to take care of service records. I am my own boss which you know how much I like. The job takes a lot of typing but now instead of having forms to go by, I have to make my own letters. So I have to watch my spelling, English and so on and correct it. I'm sure you'll like that. The job requires more brain work and more work.

But in turn I get more respect for my job and I have more respect for myself. Not that I did not take my ward work seriously. I'm real busy right now because we get our records inspected by the government on the 11th of this month which is in 8 days. If nothing else it will pass my time until I get home to you and how I wish that time passes by fast,

I'm thinking about going on another R&R the first part of December. The only thing wrong is that I only have \$150 to spend. I'd like to see a Far Eastern County besides Viet Nam. I hear Bannock or Hong Kong are real cheap.

Oct 9

How is my beautiful girl today? It has been a real hectic day as they have moved up my inspection to two days from now and I have to work hard and long to be ready. I am actually getting along real well. I hope I do well in the inspection for good face.

Other then that, that's the news of the day. Real exciting day. Last night was spent watching a movie at our club and drinking beer. I usually don't drink much beer if any, but last night I had a ½ dozen. The movie was weird, like most things over here—it passes time and how I wish it pass as fast. Tonight it will be the same except no beer.

I am sitting here trying to think of more news to write about but there is not any. My world is very small over here – work, movie, sleep and dream. Dreaming is my world now and it is made up of nothing but Pat.

Oct 10

It is 10:30 PM and about the first chance all day to write. I do love you a lot to stay up after my bedtime to write. That last statement was to show you I love you but it was a poor choice of words.

I was real busy at the office today. I was frustratingly busy at the office, so many things piled on me at once I almost blew my cool. But sometime soon things will slow down. The only time I had for myself was to watch a Haley Mills movie because she reminded me of you. Not only do you look like her but in this movie you act like her. It made me sad and lonely. I think I felt worst tonight then when I left from Hawaii. I've even grown to love you since leaving Hawaii.

I receive more mail, Sept 26 and Oct 3. Regarding your questions. First about orders to Washington DC. Answer no matter where the order are, you will be with me. I don't care if we are married or not.

Oct 11

....We do have fresh vegetable and they have salads. Now for a question, what do you mean John is getting his foot amputated. I did not realize it was that bad.

Tonight we have a USO show to see. It's a band from Austria. The bands from Austria are usually real good. Tomorrow I hope to get off part of the day. That is one thing bad about my job. I never get any days off. Because at this time my job is nerve whacking I could use a day off.

Oct 12

I remember one letter where I said I received no mail, well today I will start by saying I received four letters, including a letter from my mother...

I am really looking forward in seeing Tonia. I remember leaving home the last time, looking at Tonia knowing she really did not know where I was going and thinking that if I died over here she never really would know her older brother. I think I was feeling sorry for myself, but I do remember I was scared that last week in America. The only thing that kept me going was you and even we had our bad times the last day. Other then that the whole family is well and doing ok and life goes on...

Oct 14

We have inspection tomorrow. Its 7:30 PM and we worked hard all day and still have 2 hours left.

I am getting almost caught up now at the office. Although I do not work overtime any more it was worth it.

Oct 15

Again it is 6:30 and I'm just getting out of the office. Today we had the inspection and everything came out ok, not great, but just ok. From now on I'll know how to get ready for inspections.....

Oct 16

....

I'm still real busy at the office. I can't figure it out. My boss just keeps piling up work on me. I am getting a little disappointed about my job. I do not mind work but I don't enjoy working like a horse. Plus, I'd like to be caught up once in a while. But instead I just keep pecking away at my typewriter. I just made up my mind I'd work my 8 hours a day and no more overtime, it doesn't pay. As for anything else, that about all. It seems to me the last two weeks was all I did is work.....

Oct 18

Today I'm not feeling my best, it seems like I have a small case of the flu....

Besides a few odds and ends I'm all caught up at the office. Tomorrow is Sunday and I hope to get off a couple of hours. That is one thing which I do not like about my job, I work seven days a week and never have time for myself....

Oct 19

....

Oct 20

Tonight I have duty and it give's me a real good chance to write a letter to you and my parents. I really had a bad day. I was so busy and I did not know if I was coming or going. Just when I think I am caught up, I receive two more tons of paperwork. I suppose I am talking to the wrong person if I want someone to feel sorry for me, as you have the same problem. It sure doesn't agree with my personality because I'd rather be caught up each day. Plus I am the type of guy who likes running around at work and lately I've been tied down to my desk.....

Oct 23

It's almost noontime and I have almost caught up with all my work for today so I'll start my letter to you. I have to get a haircut this afternoon for an inspection Saturday; some stupid General is coming here to look at us. Sometimes I think they think we are all monkeys and the service is a zoo, and we are the officer's favorite pastime for recreation.

Oct 27 ... a two digit midget. [less than 100 days]

Oct 30 I bought two pair of Rx glasses.

Nov 11

Today is Veterans Day and what a day this might be. First thing we were waked up at 6:30 AM this morning by rockets. They did not hit our compound but it did wake everyone up. It is the second time the past week that we were broke out of our barracks because of incoming, but neither incident involved 1st Med Bn. Safe so far. There is talk around that there is a big attach in store for Da Nang. I hope not....

Nov 14

I really don't know what is wrong with me but for the past three days I've been depressed. Usually I do not get depressed more than 1 day at a time, then only once in a great while. I believe this county is getting to me. If not for the danger I'd go back to the field. At lease time goes fast there.

It is sure not your fault that I'm in bad mood. I received three letters and a voice tape from you. Maybe the tapes will cheer me up. I am anxious to hear it. I won't be able to until latter today.

It is the same problem you have, boredom. I am getting sick of working and sleeping and that's all I do. Maybe I will find some new interest it would helped. But I like to spend my free time thinking of you.

I have no good news or information about orders. Maybe that is what really bugging me down. I am sure the past 280 days in this God forsaken country has not help. I do not hate Viet Nam but it would be more enjoyable if you were here with me. At least we would have each other to keep the other warm at night during the monsoon season....

Nov 15

A small note to let you know that you are on my mind and I miss you something awful.

I got my new boss for Dec or Jan because Phil is leaving county. He should be an OK guy. That is if you like guys.

Tonight is a USO show which I plan on seeing and tomorrow Sunday I have off.....

Nov 20

I must say I wish I could have written the past four days but I have been working my little buttocks off. We have been interior decorating the office at work. Or should I say I

have been. I was to get help from 4 other people but only two helped. I have been miserable the past two days. I had to work over time each day to get it finish for tomorrow which is inspection. Now that we are done I have to get caught up on this week.

I am still waiting for orders. I'm getting real depressed about that whole situation.

Dec 18

I am sorry for that short note last night but I was on duty when I wrote it and last night was unusually busy. More over we have a nut on the loose in the hospital, a major surgery to set up and 2 drunken Marines starting trouble in my barracks. I was up till midnight just running around.

Now about Pensacola, I have trouble spelling it. First thing I was not expecting orders at all to Florida. I sure do not mind going there, it is both south and east and I've not been to either. Florida is another sunshine state and that is interesting. It has 50-60,000 people, one college, Western Florida and 4 junior colleges. It is on the gulf coast and good weather. My Chief in the office just came from there. He said housing is from \$60 - \$200 or in other words not bad on the pocket book

Now about Ellyson Field it is a training base for helicopter pilots. It is a small base; about 20-35 corpsmen and duty should be good. It is located on the outskirts of Pensacola. I am looking forward to coming home and seeing new county.

As about anything else I'm just keeping busy, I have about 40 days or so and now since I have my orders in I am a little anxious about it all. One bad thing is that I am getting lazy and in bad moods. I'm sorry but after 11 months over here I am just sick of letters, writing and responsibilities I realize this is not the right thing but I have just gotten fed up.

I feel along and I feel that I will have this feeling until I get home. The only thing now that counts is my job and even that is hard to keep to. I believe I have shortitis.

Dec 22

I received four real nice letters from the Willson family, two from your mother and two from you.

As for your letters well let me first say something about myself. The past two months I have been real busy at work but I've been enjoying myself. I like my work, but it has been tenuous and with the other problems that I had well it got me down, way down. Plus it seems that the last two weeks, the whole year's problems that I keep out of my mind came down on me. I have become very hard and depressed about the past year. I still do not know what it is all about, but it has made an imprint on my life. I have seen things that are gross and that the normal person does not see. I have been scared and

begged for my life from God and been lucky enough with God's help to stay alive. I'm now getting short and this had all been building up and now I must learn to live with it or if I can, live it down.

I can't say I'm sorry for my statements and actions of the past month but I'm not myself now. I have very little love right now for anything. I do not believe this will remain with me, I know I'll learn to live it down, I have to. But in the mean time you have been hurt. I wish you could have read between those lines. I know I've tried to explain this but I still don't know I can even explain it to myself.....

Four months ago things were like a dream for me. I made it through the bush. I had everything going for me, my parents, you and school. I forgot about the war. I was ready for marriage and in a warm mood. I never realize that I changed and I have changed a lot. I have gotten hard, I feel my age. I do not want to be hard. I want to be warm, to love, I can't right now.....

Christmas 1969

Christmas Viet Nam humbug!! Yesterday you might say I started my Christmas. We drove around Da Nang city in a jeep singing Christmas carols, four of us. We also had a professional steam bath and message at a bath house. It was my first one over here.

Last night about 12 of us sat in our barracks and drank and generally BS. There must have been a lot of BS in the air because I went to bed at 4:30 AM. I have a half day of work today, a lot of black coffee. I am thinking of going to the Bob Hope show at Freedom Hill about 1 mile from here, but don't know if I will go. I can hear it on the radio live.

Dec 26

Christmas is over and 1969 is almost over. I have been looking forward to 1970 for eleven months and now it is almost here. Christmas was OK for being over here. Drank a little too much but what was I to do. Today I packed my articles that I am shipping home. I am starting to feel short now. I know it is because 1969 is almost over. I am finding myself in both a better sprits and back to my old idealistic self. It is nice to feel this way again. I know you picture for Christmas had a lot to do with it.

Jan 2, 1970

Happy New Year Pat!! This is the year that I have been dreaming of – get out of Viet Nam, my last year of service and my first year that I don't have any lead weight on my shoulder

I only made one New Year promise – no more drinking. Yesterday I nursed the worst hangover of my life. That was the reason for not writing. Less than 30 days now....

Jan 3

Well today was my last Battalion inspection and I received an "outstanding" personally and my squad a "great" and overall the company won first place out of the five companies. I know this is not right but I know we got those marks because of me. I'm the one who gets all my fellow corpsmen to look good. I am real proud of myself and my performance.

Time is still moving at the same pace as two months ago and I am becoming a little bit anxious about everything. One thing in which I'm anxious about is you and what will happen in California.

Jan 8

Been busy the past two days but it keeps my mind off of coming home, passes time.

Not much news. DaNang is expected to be hit hard both this month and next. My mind keeps telling me they are celebrating my leaving. I only wish they celebrate it after I leave. Makes life exciting.

Jan 10

Today is Saturday. Got today off. Hooray for sex. Not too busy today. The past three nights the VC have let us sleep. I really enjoy a good night sleep but the soothsayers expect another night like five nights ago.

I just weighed myself. I hope you like fat boys, I weigh 180 pounds. That is 15 pounds over one year ago...

Jan 15

The past three days have been busy days. It all started when a man named John Haise reported into the company three days ago. He is my replacement. Sounds groovy but since then I find it more work to break him in than if I did the work myself. He is from Wisconsin, a bright brawny boy with two years of college. He reminds me of Dean, he is about the same size [loves football] and he has some of Dean's traits. I find him fun being around but a lot of work....

Jan 19

I've just stepped out of the office to get some peace and quiet to write this letter. I'm over in the barracks. Dennis Kuptic, a real good friend of mine from 2/5 is also writing a letter. He and I have spent a lot of time together since about May of last year. He is a hot Italian, womanizer, but a lot of fun.

Not much going on lately, just passing time now. I got no desk to work from in the office so I spend little time there. Saturday I went out to the Hospital ship to pick up a white sailor hat and proper rank insignia. It was the first time I've ever been on a ship. It was fun especially for Viet Nam. Plan on going back the 21st.....

Jan 22

I feel like I should have been writing the past three days but then I had so little to write about and no mood to write.

I received my flight date and much to my surprise it is later than I thought. The flight date is Jan 28. After spending 3-5 days in Okinawa, I should be home 1-2 Feb.....

On the local scene I've not been working. Fed up to my ears of work and I'm real lazy. Yesterday I spent the day on the Hospital Ship, Sanctuary just passing time. I'll again do the same or get sun for a tan.

A real good friend left today for the states. [I believe Dennis Kuptic.] Its funny I'd hated to see him go, but glad to see he made it. I know he felt the same way. It is not right, the way they push us together and after we become friends we separate and never again see each other. I know that I will not see these people but sometimes wish I could see all good friends I've made in the service.

But life must go on and looking forward to seeing a good friend of mine from Glendale who I long for more than anyone.

Jan 24, 1970

Dear Pat

Time is getting closer. I'm doing less and there is so little to write about. Today I did not even get up until 10:30, the latest that I ever remember sleeping in Nam. Lying around a lot today, the sun is out and so am I.

I have been dreaming about our trip to Canada [during leave]. Figured what we can do and etc. It should be fun. I like to first fly to Vegas for a night to see Hair, Vegas and there is no time like now. I want to see Hair with you. Hope you have as much fun with me as you did when you first saw it. You're going to have to instruct me how to act after this past year. Thinking about it your going to have to watch me a lot so I do not do anything wrong. You're a good teacher.

I'm looking forward to seeing both your mother and father. I hope I am an improvement in their eyes. But it really does not make any difference unless I am an improvement in your eyes. I am looking forward to our long and over due discussion on all aspects of life.

Well that's about all. I've told you about my dreams of Canada, about missing you and looking forward to being with you. Time is almost down to hours now. By the time you receive this I should be out of Nam. Things are looking up. Sleep warm my darling.

Jan 28. Left Viet Nam for Okinawa.

Epilogue

After 4-5 days in Okinawa, I flew back to Los Angeles California. I meet Pat in Glendale on February 2. I proposed to her the first night home, and we got married in Duncan BC, Canada on February 21, 1970. Our honeymoon night was in the Oak Bay Inn at Victoria, BC and we spend a few days, our honeymoon, at Little Splash, South Pender, BC at a cabin that Pat's dad owns. We traveled across the U.S. to Wisconsin, had a post wedding reception with my family. After the Wisconsin visit, we moved to my duty station in Pensacola Florida. Prior to our trip and wedding in Canada, we did visit Vegas with John and Jeanie Thompson. John was in the Army and lost a leg in Viet Nam. Jeanie was Pat's roommate during the portion of time when both John and I were in Viet Nam.

When I wrote this from my diary and my letters to Pat while in Viet Nam, Pat and I have been married for 34 years, have a son and two beautiful daughters and two grandchildren. I stayed in the US Navy Reserves during three years attending University of Wisconsin – LaCrosse. I graduated in December 1973 with a BS in Economics and Political Science. I was Commissioned as an Ensign in the US Navy while attending Georgia State University in 1975 and graduated with a Masters in Hospital Administration in June 1977. I served as a Medical Service Corps officer in the US Navy from Dec 1975 to January 1992, retiring as a Lieutenant Commander. Since then have worked at Lummi Nation as a Health Planner, Deputy Health Executive.

September 2004

The narrative was updated in 2009 after joining Fox 2/5 Association. I now have four grandchildren and semi-retired as a health care administrator living on the Peninsula of western Washington. September 2009