

Dear Hilary,

Your goodie box arrived today & is much appreciated by all here. Did you bake the cookies yourself? You have hidden talents. Thanks from all.

Sorry I hadn't answered your letter of Aug. 15 previously, but the last few weeks in the states was rather an unsettled time. I finally took the boys to Illinois, where they are staying with Linda Jani & her husband & daughter. Linda is a nutritionist who worked in Kontum in 68-69 before she was married. Her husband is a PhD in special education teaching at Western Illinois University -- he is Indian, but lived most of his life in E. Africa & Britain before going to the U.S. The combination of inter-racial family and someone who knows & loves the Montagnards seems to be just right for the boys. Det has started first grade & is doing well in spite of some degree of language barrier. He sends me his school papers frequently -- maybe he or Linda does some preliminary screening, but all the ones I get seem to be marked good or very good, sometimes replete with stars.

I got back to Viet Nam Sept. 10, and up to Kontum on the 15th -- transportation is not too swift these days, and still demands helicopter after pleiku. Things have been extraordinarily quiet here. It is easy to forget that the NVA control everything an average of 7 km. outside the town -- the furthest government outpost is at 9 km. on the Dak To road. We've had no incoming at all since I got back, nor for several weeks before that. Even outgoing was relatively sparse until yesterday & today -- it seems the ARVN are having a bit of NVA trouble about 5 km. north of Kontum right now. The old Kon Gu village site seems to be the center of the thing -- & this is just 5 km. north on the Dak To road. Yesterday all day & this morning the F-4's were bombing there too.

Anyway, things had been so quiet that I had to keep reminding myself that our days here are certainly numbered, and that long-range plans are simply not in the cards. With this in mind, I am having Sr. Gabrielle continue to see in-patients & outpatients, only seeing those she wants me to see, plus a bit of spot-checking, and am training Sr. Françoise to do likewise -- they have the ward split between them. The OPD is heavy enough I have to help there with the general run of patients also, in order to keep it from running on forever, but both Gabrielle & Françoise see patients there too. I am trying to find about an hour every day to spend with them discussing some theoretical considerations that hopefully will improve their skills. As I see the situation right now, we cannot be assured of even a few months here -- though, on the other hand, things might drag on for even a year or two. I have told all the Montagnard staff this. Hopefully, when we foreigners have to leave again, they will be better prepared to carry on as long as the VC-NVA will let them. How long that will be is anyone's guess, but will certainly not be long after the communists have established firm control, judging by experiences wherever else they have taken over -- only the state provides medical care, education, etc.

If you are still interested in coming back, we would certainly be delighted to have you, although the tour might be a short one. I think some intensive teaching for the nursing staff is the best thing we can offer them at this time. Barbara & Rita have been helping with some of the general work of the ward, plus sorting supplies & stuff when they have time -- but with the understanding that the Montagnards are the responsible ones for the nursing care. Neither one seems to be much interested in teaching, however. Barbara will be leaving for the U.S. with Tom & Dich next week, leaving only Rita. Susan is presently sick with hepatitis, having become so while she was in Saigon with Sr. Marie Therese, attempting to get papers to take her out of country. I strongly disapprove of the whole project, as do Sr. Marie Renee and the Bishop. Sr. Marie Therese (I shouldn't call her that any more, but don't know her given name) has left the convent in order to go to the states with Susan. Anyway, if and when Susan gets the paper work on M. Therese (which is very doubtful in my mind), she will leave Kontum -- she has told me that taking M. Therese out was her only reason for returning to Kontum.

re your MS., there are a number of relatively minor changes that should be made simply for the sake of accuracy -- details as to spelling Bahnar terms, factual data about the hospital, etc. However, I couldn't possibly give them to you without an MS. I could mark. So, if you have a new version now, please do send it along & I will point out such things as the above. As for any "general tone" or specific incidents you wish to recount, I feel those things are entirely up to you -- it's your story, as you saw things here. My own stresses if I were ever to write of Kontum would be quite different -- but that's entirely irrelevant. As far as the recounting of the night of the New Years' party last January, I couldn't possibly tell you what I might have said, much less what word or words I italicized -- by that time I'd had enough of the jar that I might have had difficulty giving you my right name. So, presuming you were in much better shape, tell it like it was.

I hope you're having some better luck by now finding a publisher. I should think almost anything about Viet Nam these days is getting to be a bit of a drag on the market -- there's been so much tripe written already. And my general impression while I was in the U.S. was that people would rather avoid the whole subject of Viet Nam -- everyone's tired of it. But, anyway, good luck.

As you may have heard, we moved everyone back to Kontum from Pleiku a week ago Monday. We had the reverse of the move down -- then, many people, almost no supplies. Coming back, much fewer people, many more supplies which had been scrounged in Pleiku. Supplies in general continue to be a real problem, though, since there is no regular air traffic into Kontum, for lack of any air traffic ~~control~~ controllers at the airfield. The Americans went home, and the Vietnamese have not seen fit to replace them. Pilots are understandably loath to land with no ground control. We did get the move from Pleiku accomplished by C-130's, but with many gripes from the pilots re ARVN trucks running up & down the runway. Harry Hartwig, formerly supply chief at 67th BVAC is working for us now, and does some runs to Pleiku by road to get gas, kerosene, and whatever else he can pick up. However, supplies from USAID just haven't been arriving -- we hope to break the bottleneck soon & at least get Air America to bring them to Pleiku, from where we can probably arrange helicopter transport. The Pleiku road is intermittently "open". It was pretty good for about 2 weeks, but has now been closed for 3 days -- firstly, because of ambush & rockets, then because a bypass for a knocked-out bridge got too muddy for anything to get through it. Even Bill Rose, the intrepid traveler by road, had to come up by chopper today -- he tried to drive up yesterday but couldn't get through the bypass, which is nearly to Kontum, by the way.

Our new house is delightful, though the mosquitoes are dreadful -- much worse than they ever were at the former one. We are gradually getting some screens in. We rattle a bit in it with so many rooms, but we seem to have found some sort of use for all of them. The electric wiring, though, has to be seen to be believed. For example, in the library, if you plug the lamp into the outlet, the overhead light comes on, albeit its switch is off, but the lamp doesn't work. We called the Vietnamese "electrician" to fix this -- so far he has managed a magnificent compromise. Now, when you plug in the lamp, you get a dim glow from the lamp and an equally dim one from the overhead light.

The Barbara-Tom romance seems to be very much on, and they plan on getting married in a couple of months after they reach the states -- probably in Seattle, where they plan to live. I am glad they are going to wait a couple of months after arriving stateside, since I do think any marriage based only on a Kontum acquaintanceship is on very shaky grounds.

As you undoubtedly read, the 4 French priests were released. Sr. Helene from Kon Hring, and 2 of the Montagnard nuns from Dak To were released with them, leaving 15 Vietnamese & Montagnard nuns from Kon Hring, Dak To, and Dinh Binh still prisoners. All 4 of the priests were scheduled to go back to France for 6 months R&R, but Fr. Dujon is fighting it. He has returned to Kontum from Saigon & is busy telling his superiors there is too much work for him to do here to return to France. I think that, secretly, he is afraid that if he leaves for 6 months he would never be able to get back into Kontum. He lost 18 kilos while a prisoner -- about twice as much in 3 months this time as in his last experience as a prisoner in 65 when he was held for 6 months. We have about 23,000 Montagnard refugees in Kontum at present. There have been no large recent arrivals, but small groups keep straggling in daily -- a good

many of them end up being hospitalized, chiefly with falcip malaria and malnutrition, though a fair amount of TB among them as well. Their experiences hiding out in the jungle since the end of April have really been something -- it's a wonder as many of them survived as did, with a diet of roots & leaves, essentially no shelter, and no medical care of any kind.

Our falcip malaria rate is fantastic right now -- in the past week, we have had 4 cerebral malarias alone, plus all the others with Hct's down to 10 or 12, etc. We have been nudging American military to try to get some spraying done, but it seems it's mostly talk and not much action. This week, a big USAID malaria control man came in for all of 15 mins. & wanted all the data on which camps the cases lived in, how long they'd been living in Kontum, etc. By the time they finish investigating, we won't have a serious problem anymore, since the dry season, cold weather, and fewer mosquitoes should be here soon. As usual, the province "public health" is proving more of an obstruction than a help -- they have not noticed any increased malaria!

Well, all for now. Send the Ms along if you'd like ~~me~~ to do as mentioned above. Send yourself along if you'd like a fantastic experience in intensive teaching -- probably a short term one. KHF will take care of fares.

I'll be going to the US at Xmas. I promised the boys I would come to visit them, and promised KHF that I would spend roughly 3 weeks in January on the fund-raising circuit. So, I will be gone roughly a month. Dr. Edric Baker will be coming back up here the end of November. This is probably a bit better than having no doctor at all. However, I've just had word there is also a woman doctor with quite an impressive background who would like to come for 5 to 6 months & will probably be arriving the first of december, so things should be well covered in my absence.

Sincerely,

Pat

PS - Am enclosing Rd bill of
"gasoline" from Saigon, for road
to use in service. It also
has latest version of map.