

H. J. S. to C. A. S.
Saturday, January 29, 1972

(Received Saturday, Feb. 5)

Dear father:

Mainly just to put your mind at ease on a subject which must be troubling you though you've been nobly restrained in letters; we will be evacuating to Nha Trang February 7. I didn't want to say much about this until it was settled but after to-day's general staff meeting at which the Montagnards made no bones about wanting us out for Tet, I think we will all be going with the possible exceptions of Pat, Tom, and Henning. Just what will happen here is anyone's guess, but scuttlebutt has it that the Viet Cong will be making a serious effort not just to attack but to take the town: They say they will leave the Montagnards alone but the immediate future looks grim. As far as our position goes, we are certainly in no danger until after the seventh, although Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) is tightening up, which means mail is slow both ways. If you don't hear from me at Tet, for heaven's sake don't assume there's trouble: I plan to spend a glorious week lolling on the beach at Nha Trang (Indeed Sue and I have even thought of going on to Bangkok!) and any lapse of communications will only be due to the decreased number of mail planes.

And that seems to be really all I can say about this business: I'm not up to a discourse on military logistics or to the encomiums that are certainly due to the staff, especially the Montagnard staff. Det, at his worst, has an infuriating way of saying, half weeping, in his soft little voice, "Don't want!" which just about sums up my feelings: Don't want. We all hope the fact that the V.C. have so publicly announced that they are headed for Kontum is a bluff, but I'm afraid it's more likely to be a double bluff. I only hope there's something left for us to go back to after Tet.

The air strikes and bombing raids are all further north: We sometimes hear the B-52s going over but the ~~ex~~ actual bombing is too far away to hear. Still, it's a terrible business.

I do hope this gets to you before word of real trouble here. Do remember that I'll be out of it. If I could send a wire I would, but unfortunately the only way to communicate is via the mail. Now (Sunday morning) off to work.

Much love,

Phil.