

## Tony Vic's Letters to Home

Anthony Vicinanza (Tony Vic to his buddies) served with C 2/5 in 1967. He recently found a large number of letters he had written back home. Reading these letters is reading how most of us felt during our tour.

February 16, 1967

The sun getting up and it's 7:00 a.m. This is my first day here in Viet Nam and I'm at a processing station awaiting orders to be shipped to a regular unit. I should be here about 3 days. We flew in last night and it was a long trip. From the airstrip we rode through the town of "Bien Hoa". From what I could see, the people live in huts and in the dirt. The conditions are very poor. The bus got us to the camp and we filled out some forms, were given sheets and a place to sleep. The sanitary conditions seem pretty bad here. Lots of water to drink but not much for washing up. The night was cool but I do not know how the day feels yet. We had chow and it was good and now I have chance to write.

I sent home all the money that I had. The money we need here is changed to something called "Piasters" or something like that. There is no American green money used here. It seems like there is ration on how much you can spend but I have to learn all the ropes.

You can send over that special knife I have and I'll let you know about the pistol.

It's now 10:15 a.m. the sun is up and it's 95 degrees. I was put on a detail with about 30 other guys to put up tents. Turns out it was only one big tent and we are off for while with nothing to do.

The air is very busy, it has been for the last two hours. Helicopters and airplanes are always present, flying from one place to another. I was walking around the area and found a Ronson lighter and a Papermate ball-point pen in the road. What a deal.

It's almost 11:00 a.m. and I don't have a clue on what is coming up for the rest of the day. I'm in a tent, enjoying the breeze. It sure is warm.

I guess I'll write some more people on my list.

Love

Anthony

February 17, 1967

Well it's 3:30 P.M. and I'm getting ready to take a shower. Tonight I will be shipped out to the 1st Air Cav. Division. My address is going to change so don't send any mail until I find out what it is. Any letters that get sent to the processing station will probably find me down the road.

I have heard that the First Cav unit I am going to join up with has seen a lot of action. They are a great unit and I was kind of hoping that I would be sent with them. I hope getting assigned to them is a good sign.

We just finished having a concert from the army band and it sure was nice. A few of us went to the beer hall and there was a band there just like the Beatles. Most of the guys are taking it easy.

I guess if you can get a small box together and you can add some cracker jacks and small items to eat in there along with my knife. Lots of guys get packages from home and that is fun. No chocolate or anything that will melt in the heat. I'll see what I can use as time goes by.

Talk to you soon.

February 18, 1967

Hello:

It's 1:15 in the afternoon and I am sitting up in the central highlands of Viet Nam. Check your Map. We flew up last night in a cargo plane from Bien Hoa. The weather here is cloudy and cool. I am at the 1st Cavalry replacement station.

I have made arrangements to keep \$20.00 a month and sent the rest home.

I have been promoted to P.F.C. and now I am "really" making the big bucks.

Sometime this afternoon we will be shipped out to our regular field unit. By this time tomorrow I should be out hunting for the Viet Cong. I hear that this 1st Cav unit is pretty tough bunch and loves to look for trouble.

I will probably have a permanent mailing address by tomorrow when I get settled in. I'll let you know.

Last night as we lay in our tents, we could hear the sound of the war being fought outside in the distance. Explosions and large artillery gun fire. I guess we are a lot closer to the enemy than before. The position of the camp is about 325 miles north of the city of "Saigon". Check your map at home.

No chance to call home for some time to come. I am just one of those guys who make up the numbers in a war. I am sure you can read about the First Cavalry in the newspapers at home. I understand that after 6 months of this stuff I get an actual 2 week vacation. We cannot go to the U.S. but do have some choices. This is called "Rest & Recuperation" Or R&R. We can go to Hawaii, Japan, Singapore, Australia and a couple of more that I forgot. Hawaii sounds good right about now.

We have a pet monkey here that is the cutest thing going. He is tied to a ladder with a long piece of twine. Today he was fighting with a dog who tried to get up the ladder and the monkey kept fooling with him and the dog got mad and walked away. All the guys had good laugh.

As I sit on my cot I am being visited by a little puppy dog. Don't worry I won't send him home.

Back to that monkey. If you hold out your arm, he will walk up and sit on your shoulder. Then he says something to you and moves on to someone else.

Not much else to say. I'll be happy to get your mail once I get my address to you. The food is real good up here, better than ever. I am attempting to grow a mustache but I haven't shaved under my nose for 3 days and I still see nothing. What a joke.

There are a lot of guys here from Ft. Jackson with me and that is great. These are some of the best guys. If I can stay with this team we will all come back home safe.

I sure miss New York. Wish I was back in Brooklyn playing with the band and sleeping till

4:00. We all are in this together all the guys feel the same.

Hey, just about 355 days to go in this rat hole.

The sun is out strong now and it is really warm. There does not seem to any humidity at all which is nice. One big problem is the mosquitoes. They are really bad at night. We have nets to sleep under but they get at you anyway. Out the door is tall grass and trees then a road, more trees dotted throughout the fields. Nice countryside.

Well, away I go for now.

Get a box ready and I'll write again tomorrow if I can.

love

Anthony

February 21, 1967

Hi Mom. How is the mail service? I have sent letters so be on the lookout. I have my address and I'll write it in. I have returned from a three day training course which was hell. Tomorrow I go out by helicopter to join the company. They are working in an area called "Bong Son", check your maps. It's about 60 miles north of our base camp. "An Khe". That is my location now. An Khe is the main base for the 1st Cav in this territory.

In the morning we move out and I am told I will be out in the field for 6 months. I do not know how often I will be able to write but I will when I can. I don't know what to expect and the time factor is unpredictable.

The weather is very very hot. I guess summer is coming and the days will get warmer. You can forget the pistol and when you send goody boxes please make them small. There is a lot of stuff that I have to carry. It seems that I have to watch the weight that I have to load on my body when we move around.

Feeling fine but a bit tired. Darkness is falling and I'm sitting here in the grass writing. In my shuffling around I lost my address list of all the friends back home so give them my address if they call in.

I am going over to the E.M. club to have few beers with the gang. I have a few bucks which I inherited from a card game and I am set for a while. In the field I won't be spending it so I'll save.

Going to go for now and I'll write when time allows. Take care and pray. I received communion and I am on track. Don't worry, time is flying.

Hey, here is my latest address:

P.F.C. Anthony J Vicinanza US // // // // //  
Co. C, 2nd Bn 5th Cav 1st Cav Div. (air)  
APO San Francisco Calif. 96490

WRITE.....

February 25, 1967

Hi Folks:

You can't picture the situation. Yesterday (Feb.24th) I joined up with the company 9:00 a.m.. I was flown out by helicopter to their position. We are set up on the beach along the South China Sea. I was sent with four other men. My platoon now has 31 men and the word is "we need more". We met a bunch of the guys and they all seem to be a great. We had a day off and just had to keep an eye out for the V.C.

At 4:30 a group of guys came back from a patrol with a leader who looks like Pinky Lee. I don't know who he is but he says, "O.K. everybody. Let's Go" and 5 minutes later I found myself swimming in the South China Sea. Seems that the whole gang goes swimming every afternoon. We have air mattresses to float on and the waves are big. We are all bareass and having a great time. After about 2 hours in the water the choppers came with food and supplies. Hot chow was Turkey, potatoes, peas and kool aid. They also brought cigarettes, candy gum, pipe tobacco and more.

The night was very quiet and we all took turns doing guard. This morning we got up at 6:00 a.m., packed up and walked about 2 miles to our artillery position. There, we ate again and got another helicopter and flew a few more miles to a huge picnic. This is where I am now. The entire Company is "Standing Down", (resting) We are by a fresh water lake and there is ball

playing, records, swimming, food, beer, soda. What a party. I won \$34.00 in a card game and I'll send it home. The money is "piasters" but I'll convert through a money order.

Tomorrow we will make our first air assault. I guess that is why the party. I don't know what to expect but I am asking questions. These seasoned guys have done this before and I just have to follow the lead.

So far don't load up the boxes. They seem to provide most of what we need. Pray for us.

Love

Anthony

March 2, 1967

Hello Gang:

It's really a nice day today. Time is 2:55 in the afternoon. We are still in the Central highlands at this time near a deserted village. We got in here yesterday afternoon to set up a road block / ambush situation. There is small market area and the citizens go past us, over a small bridge and do their shopping and go back. I have a fox hole dug and I guess we will spend a night or two.

A small patrol went out to look the area over at dusk. I have not been on one of these patrols yet. I guess I'm too green and have to get more experience. I have to agree with that. After darkness fell we could hear small arms fire in the direction of the patrol. I was a little nervous. The radio said that they had contact with a V.C. The firing continued for while then there was a small explosion. About 1 hour all of the guys made it back O.K. and said that they got a "Gook" and would check it out at first light.

Last night at about 1:00 a.m. one of the perimeter trip flares went off and 2 enemy were spotted coming down the path towards our position. I was sleeping and was shocked to being awake by Norman's Ford's machine gun. He had them in sight. I was on my air mattress and and I bet I spun around three or four times before I had weapon in hand and was facing in the direction of the flare and the action. More riflemen were shooting but I had no clue on what, where or who..... The incident was over in just a few seconds. The bodies that were coming

down the trail cut out fast and went back into the darkness. A lieutenant and one of the Sergeants checked the trail out and found blood stains and said that we will follow them in the morning. This morning we went out with 25 man patrol and followed the blood stains from the camp. The person or persons were bleeding real bad. The blood trail was very heavy. I was sure that they were up ahead, dead. We got into a area of huts and there the blood trail just vanished. We found no one. We came across the black pants all shot up and bloody. They must have stopped to patch him up or were taken away on a cart or something. There was no trace of any of them.

When we got back to camp another patrol was bringing back the guy killed from last night. He blew himself up with a hand grenade and what a mess he was. We buried him here and got ready to leave this place.

About that air assault the other day. It went beautifully and it was very exciting. We got 5 V.C. and secured the area. That night we set up on a mountain for 2 days. We checked out small villages on search and destroy missions. We took 10 suspected V.C. and sent them to the rear for interrogation.

Things here in Vietnam are O.K. so far. I asked someone the date today and was shaken to hear that is was March 2d. Time is flying by. We have all we need here. I have 10 pack of cigarettes. Nobody smokes Camels or Luckies and they give them to me for the filters. The food is great. We eat 2 meals a day out of cans and 2 meals are sent out with the helicopters. Hot and good.

After the searching of a village last week, we made another air assault to this area. We had no enemy contact at all. If I make 23 more air assaults I will earn a US Air Medal. That would be nice.

Coming up, I don't know. Things change here from day to day. We move around quite a bit.

Time for me to go and when time allows I'll chop a few more lines. So long for now and keep well.

Tony

March 9, 1967

Hi Mom & Dad.

Received all your mail yesterday. It sure was a happy day for me. We are working in the Bong Son plains area doing nothing but observing. It's been raining for the past 2 days and it's bad traveling. We have been doing a lot of flying in the choppers and that is fun.

New request on the box contents. How about: cookies, cracker jacks, pepperoni and canned fruit. We have plenty of smokes. It's 7:10 p.m. and getting dark fast. We are dug in and I have my little tent set up.

Did you guys ever get that film developed?

Yes, I try to keep a look out for the booby traps.

I'm going to stop now and I'll pick up tomorrow when it is light.

March 10, 1967

It's 7:00 a.m. and I have been up for about a 1/2 hour. We just had a test fire of all the weapons. We all line up at the edge of the hill and everybody shoots their weapons for one minute. I have my M-16 but don't like it. I would think that all that arms noise would scare off the enemy. It sure sounded impressive.

I hear that we will be getting chow soon and that we will be moving out of here. The weather has cleared up and I hope Mr. Sun pops out for a while. Seems like a fairly easy day ahead. We are 20 miles north of L.Z. Uplift. An L.Z. is a "landing zone" for helicopters and is a sort of field base camp. Much smaller than An Khe, our main base. Troops can stop over here and get supplies and occasionally a brief rest. The security is pretty good. Our job today is to move to the base of a mountain and set up a check point in the road.

Things are quiet for now. A few scary moments have been experienced. Why tell you guys of all the bad things one sees in a war. We have seen bad stuff but they will fade away in my mind. Time is still flying by. Day by Day goes and the time gets shorter. Don't worry about a thing. I'll worry for all of us.

I'll let you know when we go to different areas so that you can see them on your map. I usually don't know where we are going or the names of these places. No one tells you, "Oh, we will be going to such and such near this place". It's always "SADDLE UP", and off you go to the blind. What a Army.

So long for now and keep that scrabble game hot. Write when you can and send along some sheets of writing paper. This way I will always have something to write on.

O.K. away I go to chow and gone for the day.

Love

Anthony

March 13, 1967

Hi,

Well, I got your package and the stuff was great. Keep those Oreos and pepperoni coming and a few more cans of that fruit. We have spent the last couple of days in contact here in the Bong Son plains and in the hills. We eliminated the enemy but had many casualties. Two of my pals got wounded and one was K.I.A. On the 11th I had my first big encounter. We were out in the low lands early in the day and it was beautiful. We were just lounging around. We were getting word that a unit was getting hit heavy and that they were in need of more men. The word finally came down to "saddle up" and that we were going to help these guys out. I had no idea of where or what. We generally never know much. Maybe that's a good thing. The choppers came and in we went. I had no clue (as usual) to what was happening. As we rose up into the air I wondered, how long before we get there, what do I do when I get there, what is the scene. Is it Chaos or snipers. I asked my friend Richard Rowell what do we do. He told me to get out of the chopper as soon as it hit the ground. Get out as soon as I could.

The whole company seemed to be up in the air. All around me were choppers full of G.I.'s. maybe 15 or 20 choppers. It was very impressive and exciting. The word was that the huey gun ships were going in first to blast the area and give us cover as we got off the choppers. Again I was told to "get the fuck out as fast as you could". I remember I was a bit dry mouthed. Far out in the distance I saw the hills ahead with a large plume of smoke rising up. The birds were right there, just like that. The lead hueys were letting go with rockets and machine gun fire. There was one section of the hill being blasted to hell. Then the sensation came of the helicopter dropping quick like a yo yo on a string. GO! GO! GO! I heard....as I hit the door I saw immediately that I had to jump down several feet and that the chopper could not possibly have landed on the rocks. I saw a man waving me down frantically and just like that. I

was flying out of the bird. I hit the ground And rolled toward a rock and the ground man said. "Down the hill. move down the hill". I rose up and saw in front of me the incline down. Off the left and right I saw huge rocks with GIs already in position behind them. From the scene I could tell that all the action was to my left. I hit the hill and I could hear actually feel the bullets around me. They were so close. I looked ahead for a place to go to. "I need one of those rocks" my mind screamed. but no rock was close enough and I went down behind a large bush fearing that I would not make the distance to the other guys. I lay there looking down the hill and all these guys were sitting down and shooting now and then from around the boulders that protected them. The Gun ships were blasting away and I was curled up by the bush. As the time went by I was getting cramped up and stretched out to regain the feeling in my legs. The Top of the bush was blown away and I said. "Shit, this guy has me in his sights but is just at the wrong angle for him to see me. I was froze more than ever. I kept looking down at the guys on that hill who were relaxed because they were out of the line of fire. What a bad break for me. I don't know how long I was there. The hueys were back with another salvo of fireworks for the hill. As they hit someone came running by and said lets go. down. I got up. pointed my m-16 to the left and sprayed a magazine. assuming I was giving my self cover along with the chopper support. and took off running like hell. As I neared the bottom of the hill my boot gets caught in between the rocks and I fall like a broken twig. I'm O.K. I say to myself, keep down. My knee is ripped open but not bad. Just like that, guys are walking around. There is sniper fire from the rocks but we hear that there are guy up there cleaning out the "Gooks". I think Sgt. Edmands gives me a smoke and asks if I was all right. Then a war magazine guy takes my picture and I got up. We made our way down into the trench and saw where the enemy had attacked from. I did not see any bodies but I remember seeing a helmet of a G.I. all bloody and the name of De Marco or Di Mico . Dafranco some thing similar and that the guy was from Queens.

Later on we patrolled the hills throwing grenades into spaces in the rocks where someone may have hid. Late that afternoon we were standing high atop a hill calming down when one of the R.T.O's gets hit from a sniper. I was 10 feet away. He fell and we opened his shirt and saw one a tiny hole where the bullet went in. No exit wound. No Blood He was hit in the stomach. Probably a carbine round. All I remembered was cans of bug spray and put them in a circle, filled them with insect repellent and lit them up so that the chopper could see us and pick the kid up. It worked and I heard that he survived. What a day. I learned that Richard had got shot coming out of the bird.

The sun is out and it hot and very bright. Everyone is waiting for new clothes. The choppers will bring them soon. I am sending a map that I came across. You can find more places and see where I have been.

The boxes are great. Fruit in the can, cookies, and writing paper. We get candy and cigarettes so no need for that stuff. Thanks for everything and I'll be seeing you soon.

Love

Anthony

March 21, 1967

Hello Everyone in Brooklyn:

Well hold the phone. Some news. Least of all, I got a new pen, so I'll be writing like crazy. The big story is that I am out of the field for a few weeks. Why? Well, I have two infected ears and I will have to stay back till they heal up. I flew in from the field late yesterday. After the jets made their run my ears were very painful. I saw the medic and, boom. I'm out.

I went from the field to L.Z. English and I am now at An Khe, the main base and tomorrow I will be sent southeast to hospital at Qui Nhon. When I get there I will see the ear specialists. I'm in a great mood. I cannot hear very well but this the best break since I got in the Army. I picked up some cigars and I am ready to rest.

Tonight I will hit the base bar for a few scotches. The drinks are only 25 cents, how about that. Might as well relax when I can.

Yes, I have been getting all you mail and boxes. I share them with the guys and they love them also. Now the mail will has to follow me as I move around but it always catches up. The weather is warm. Have you been looking for any stories on the 1st Cav? Maybe those pictures will show up state side. Keep looking.

Now here is the new thing happening. Pre-sweetened koolade. Yeah, the guys mix it with the canteen water and what a difference. So, if you can, slip one or two into your letters. A lot of the guys are getting it shipped in and it's the greatest. Any flavor will do.

Away I go again to return again so I can go away again. I sound like a nut but I'm a bit nuts anyway. So long and keep writing, it does the soul good to hear from home.

Soon enough I will be with you so that we talk about news face to face.

Goodbye

Love

Anthony

March 26, 1967

Hello everyone. Today I arrived in Qui Nhon. I am in the hospital and it the nicest place going: Cokes, food, t.v., movies, clean beds, girls, hot showers anytime. **THE WORKS!!!** I do not know how long I will be here but I hope I can stay a while. Things are fine and I feel fairly good. Got your letter last night and it is always great to hear from you.

The weather is warm but the ward is nice and cool. Only one other guy here with me . He is in for stomach x-rays. At least I have someone to talk to. It must be a slow week. I am going to change my linen and get a shower and a shave. I'll write again tomorrow and let you know what is going on. The mail will find me. Bye for now.

Love, Anthony

March 28, 1967 - 3:00 p.m

Here we are again. It's a beautiful day here in Qui Nhon. Yes, I'm still in the hospital taking it easy. This morning I went to see the ear doctor and he looked at my situation. He stuck a vacuum tube in my ears and removed lots of goo. Yellow/green crap that had been setting up a home base in my head. The pain in my ears is now going away and my hearing is back on track. I have to go back and see him in the morning. In a way I am a bit sorry because he will see things are getting better and probably say that I am ready to get to the field. Well it's been nice here but all good things must come to a end. I just count it as 4 or 5 more days less to spend in Viet Nam and that is quite a bit if you ask me.

I had a x-ray today and played monopoly with some guys down the ward. Across the road is a nightclub. Last night they had a band playing. On my way back from the movie I stopped to

watch them. I could not go in because I had hospital clothes on, but the walls are made out of wire screen and from out side it was just as good as being inside. They were pretty good. My band would do great here. It's a long drive though. Ha -Ha

I took a walk with one of the other guys to pick up a few thing for the ward and ran into a old buddy of mine who is in some of those pictures I sent home. He's got asthma and is complaining about being here at the hospital complex. Maybe he will get to stay out of the field, who knows. We went through A.I.T. training in Ft. Jackson together and it was nice to see him.

Well it's time to come to another close. I'll write again tomorrow if I can. There is another movie on tonight and of course I will be there. So long for now.

Love

Anthony

March 30, 1967

Hi everyone:

It's 4:30 p.m. and I am still here in the hospital. The ears are feeling fine and just about all better. Yesterday I noticed a big black and blue pimple on my left foot. Well, I showed it to the Doc and he said I had a infection. So I go down to the emergency room and they lay me out and stick needles in the infection. They clean it out and I am hopping around and I get to spend another week goofing off.

Went to the movie last night and saw Audie Murphy in a western called "Apache Rifles". What a bore, weak show. I do not know what is on tonight but I will hop over there with my crutches and sit. Hey, it's not costing anything.

You remember that club I told you about. Well last night they had a new show. Two women and a man. All their music came from a huge tape recorder. They had a very dirty act. Filthy jokes and they did a strip. They had on bikinis under the lavish gowns. I watched a bit and hopped back to the ward and hit the sack.

I just got back from the U.S.O. The red cross girls came around earlier asking if any one wanted to go. The gang here in the ward said "hey, lets get out of here for a few laughs". I heard that they had musical instruments there and I might be able to get some drums and play with some other musicians. We were taken by bus to the U.S.O. and there was a guy on piano and another on guitar and another with a trumpet. No Drummer, no drums. I went to the front desk and asked if any drums were available. "Sorry" he says, we have a new set and it's not put together yet. It's still packed in the cartons. I told him that I'm a pro and would be glad put them together for him. He said no and that he would have to wait for someone from the company to come and assemble them. I was annoyed and went to a officer in charge. She grabbed me and with a smile said "oh Yes! please help us out".

So be it. I set up the drums, which were beautiful. The job took all of 15 minutes. Then I got the guys to carry them over to where the other cats were set up and we played for 2 hours. It was a gas. I got lots off chances to solo and everyone liked us very much. Sore foot and all I played but what the hell, it was great.

Now I am back and waiting for chow. Close to 5:00 and the movie goes on in two hours. A wonderful day today and no complaints.

I haven't got any mail for the last 5 days and it will probably be all held up for me at base camp. What can I say. Things are just fine. I cut this joke out the paper. Please hold on to it for me. I think it's funny.

Away I go. Do not worry. I am gaining my weight back here at the hospital. I lost a bit out in the field. Bye, Bye for now.

Love, as always.

Tony (the kid)

Updated December 21, 2004