

VN III
SEPT 1970

Fran Duvall took me in hand and placed me in the first class cabin which was nice since there was confusion galore in the coach cabin. My seat is right in the center of stewardess activities. Since the strike prevents the showing of movies I am entertained by the stewardesses revealing their frilly edged underthings as they dart about on their little errands. -- I made my way back to the coach section and found it crowded like a sardine can. A kind stewardess used the PA system to find my companions. Dr. Zalter, about my age, appears to be Jewish, obviously somewhat anxious and not too well organized (didn't get his shots, no malaria pills). Dr. Puls, about 40, confident on the surface but looking for reassurance. Dr. Tuck, under 30, enthusiastic and just right for this situation. After dinner I set out my chess set on the seat next to me and, sure enough within 5 minutes I had an opponent. --- This has been a long flight but quite comfortable thanks to my good fortune in getting in the 1st class section. There are still some bugs in the 747 - hot water from the drinking fountains, cold from the hot water tap, etc.

In Hong Kong - Most of the sights for me were now old hat but a tour through a large public market where all the meat dealers are located was quite striking. There must have been 100 little stalls in which various animal carcasses were in stages of dissection with I'm sure every last ounce except the hide being used. It was really quite clean with profuse amounts of water used but the absence of refrigeration and the incubator-like atmosphere makes one wonder how the ultimate consumer survives.

In Saigon - It's perhaps an illusion, but it seemed to me the very air here lacks the tension of my previous visits. Certainly the streets are cleaner, there are many new signs and far less military movements both at the airfield and on the streets. They have streamlined the briefing process. -- I talked with Dr. Erben, the present field director about the Pat Smith replacement program. I fear that the problems of politics and protocol teamed up with a dearth of VPVN volunteers may be insurmountable, but am satisfied that my coming here offers the only chance of implementing this program.

I'm seated in an old C47 airplane awaiting takeoff for Nha Trang. Wonder of wonders they now have conventional seats instead of the pipe racks of yesteryear. At the airport I recognized one of the Montagnard nursing nuns from Kontum. She was accompanied by Sister Mary and they too are headed for Kontum. Sister Mary tells me Pat is just recovering from pneumonia and is obviously wearing under the strain. In my previous trips here we used to complain about the waste of time incurred in the required overnight stop in Nha Trang. I'll have to confess that this time I was looking forward to this - swimming at the beautiful beach, dinner at the famous French restaurant. This was not to be since part of the general improvement in efficiency has been the elimination of this layover. -- on to Kontum. Word of my impending arrival had spread by USAID grapevine but my letter had not arrived. A warm greeting by Pat and in 10 minutes I was doing a spinal tap on a Montagnard baby suspected of polio and following that with excision of a small cyst from the cheek of a Montagnard boy. Recently Pat has had the help of Capt. Tom Dew, a young doctor from

4th Division. --- They brought in a young Montagnard boy in extremis with overwhelming pneumonia. All three of us worked on him - Respiratory - endotracheal tube(!) oxygen double bag respiration - cardiac - external cardiac massage - intracardiac adrenalin - fluids - IV cut down. All to no avail - we were forced to discontinue after 1 hour. -- Dr. Dew is a chess player.

I'm having some time trouble. The skin on the back of my left wrist began to irritate under my watch -- I wear the watch on my belt - it doesn't get slack enough to run. --- I don't have a mosquito net yet -- last night they were out in force -- my forehead and ankles feel like a relief map of the Cascades.

The work is even more satisfying than before since Tet and her western staff have made great strides in training the natives in handling technical details. I feel in excellent physical shape and am enjoying this time very much.

Dr. Dew represents an admirable mixture of the philosophy of his generation somewhat refined by his education. Here he refuses to carry a watch. At first I thought this was a silly idiosyncrasy. But yesterday I went through the whole day without my watch and consciously not inquiring about the time. I must admit there was a sense of freedom to the day, perhaps all the more marked since in my no time at home we are so time governed.

I was scheduled to go bicycle riding with S. Lily Chu this morning. She is in her late 20's, born in Hong Kong, she lived there until age 18 and then went to England where she was educated as a nurse and then as a midwife. She is a very devout Catholic and from my observation thus far one of the most saint like people I have ever met. Most of the time, she can be very animated in discussions. Like yesterday, wanting to be a little independent transportation wise I rounded up an old but usable bike. When she discovered this she insisted that during my time here I use her fancy Hong Kong bike while she would use the old one. We had quite an argument about it and it was only settled by Dr. Smith who said I should concede.

As in Saigon, life here seems much more secure than on my previous tours. There is still the rare sound of distant artillery and small arms fire. We have seen no war injuries at the hospital since I arrived and within reason there are no restrictions in moving about Kontum. They now drive from Kontum to Pleiku during the daytime without concern. -- There are two interpreters available now and I usually have a young man by name of Tong with me while working. His spoken Vietnamese is adequate, French, English in addition to VN, Laotian and some Serai. In addition I can now ask such questions as Do you have fever? cough? diarrhea? etc. The attractive answer to these questions is often a simple (I have none.) -- My daytime apparel here is a scrub suit from the hospital and a pair of trousers, very comfortable. Yes (!) the housekeeper does my laundry so this part of life is very simple.

While bicycling - Kair, Jean's dog, came with us and periodically performed her dual function of getting in front of our front wheels and attracting the innumerable dogs. Each VN home here seems to have at least one dog and with very few exceptions they are the ugliest dogs I have ever seen. They do a great deal of barking but the far more of them seem to appear close enough to be threatening.

After breakfast Dr. Dew and I went to the hospital to see only the seriously ill. (Sunday) I took care of a little boy with T of lp5 and also worked up a Montagnard who had GSW (gunshot wound) of one arm and flank. He had been stealing in a village during the night. The arm wound included fractures and ulnar nerve separation so I shipped him by chopper to the 71st Evac. Hospital in Pleiku.

You can tell Red that while I have had to drink lots of instant and otherwise bad coffee, every morning as I sit on the porch Yeow brings me a pot of boiled coffee worthy of any RB camp coffee.

The big organizer is striking again. Pat left for Saigon yesterday (Mon.) and Dr. Dew's CO, a Col. in the 4th Div. has allowed him to stay here until Friday. In an attempt to persuade the 4th Div. to continue allowing one of their doctors to work here I conceived the idea of inviting Dr. Dew's Col. and also the Com. Gen. of the 4th to come here for a visit on Thurs. afternoon and stay for dinner with us. I have written a letter to these gentlemen explaining my position here on my third tour and our appreciation of Dr. Dew's services. I also noted that on returning home from previous tours it has been my pleasure in public presentations to speak of such good works by the US army. This letter must get to the General in AnKhe, some 70 miles away, today so I will try to see Col. Dillard, Province Senior Advisor at breakfast this morning at 7:00 AM. Shortly, I'll leave on my bicycle for MACV.

Yesterday was a real hard work day. Few patients being seen on Sundays, Monday is always busy. The clinic was particularly busy with a large number of very ill. Shirley Chu, the midwife does all the deliveries here but yesterday had two deliveries requiring some advice so that added to it a little bit.

I remain in excellent physical condition with only slight exceptions. I have the usual low grade diarrhea incident to taking chloroquin. The skin on the back of my left wrist has broken out some. The food is prepared by the VN cook Yeow and is quite adequate. Somewhat lower in protein than I am accustomed to, my own calorie intake is assured by a plentiful supply of delicious bread cooked by the sisters. We have quite a bit of exotic vegetables such as the chinese food at home. Meat is often the canned variety of US Army origin. Yesterday we had buffalo which was very good. They tell me one day they will serve dog. Don't tell Bones. *Squid's dog*

I was just starting rounds when they called me to see a Montagnard lady in labor with a hand presentation. This is one of the dreaded critical situations in OB. Fetal loss from asphyxia and maternal loss from blood loss is common. We made the various emergency arrangements and moved her to the delivery room. There I had the good fortune to successfully do a version and extraction by breech delivery and to my surprise both mother and child seem to have survived quite well. After that it was difficult to go back to the hum drum of tuberculosis, malaria and amebiasis.

At noon we had a large group of visitors, field grade nurses and physiotherapists who in a sense were out seeing how the other half lives. They were nice but I suspicious somewhat taken back by our

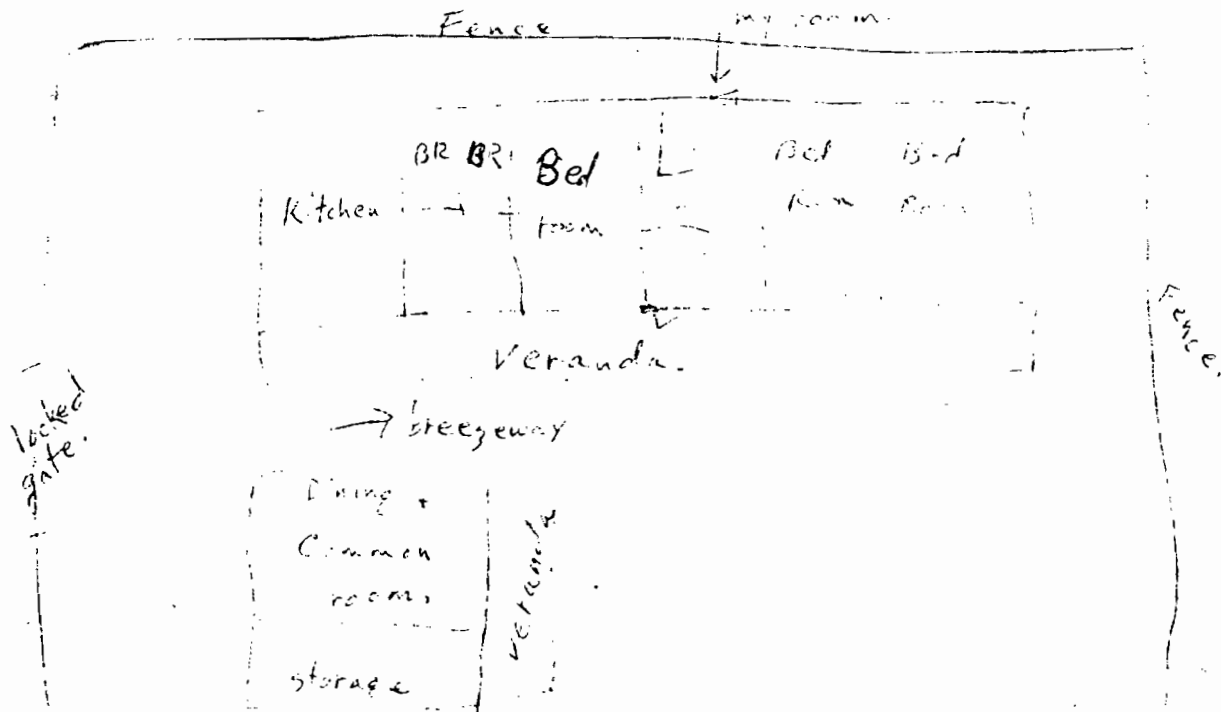
primitive working environment. Furthermore they shot my noon nap-time.

Afternoon clinic was light (89 patients for the two of us)

I have no doubt been very confusing regarding dates of letters. Not only am I doing without a watch, I haven't seen a calendar since arriving here.

My Bahnar vocabulary is increasing.

I should tell you a little about our living quarters. These are located about 3 blocks from the hospital and comprise two buildings as below.



They tell me this is **the** first time they have let one man stay here alone with all these ladies - perhaps a compliment to my character or a reference to my advancing age. It's really much like going on an RB outing, a male is so outnumbered here that it would be impossible to become involved with any one of them.

The water supply comes from a small tank on the roof which is filled by hand pump each day. Thus we have only cold water and one takes a nearly dry shower. I have gone up to MACV several times to partake of their more luxurious hot water showers. I hope the malaria pills work. I wear thongs all day long but in the evening I put on the knit slippers. While I sit and write the mosquitoes have their meal on my ankles.

I have worked much harder thus far this tour than the previous ones but I expected that. You asked how the weather is here. I don't know the temperature in degrees but we live in open window rooms 24 hours a day and most of the time I have only a scrub suit on and haven't been cold yet. This is the rainy season and for a good part of the day the sky is clouded and there are frequent short spells of rain. Then periodically the sun will come out and it seems to raise the temperature 10° almost instantly.

In the far distance I can hear the periodic rumbling thunder of large bombs from high flying American planes, dropping on Cambodia. One does a lot of thinking and considerable discussing of philosophical nature in such a situation as this. I believe America is a great and well meaning country but there is an enigma in the fact that a few miles apart natives are dying from American bombs while others are being succored by American health personnel.

You will recall I told you about sending the letter of invitation to the general of the 4th Div. and including in it my observations about what a great thing it was to have their young doctors helping here and how I hoped they would continue it. We were not surprised to receive a phone call that he would not be able to make it. However, today Col. Harris, Dr. Dew's CO showed up. After introductions he made some reference to the fact that his trip here was precipitated by a suggestion from the general which originated from some letter he had received. I played dumb. The Colonel was very impressed with the operation here, wonder of wonders decided to leave Dr. Dew here until next Friday and promised to continue sending at least one doctor as long as the 4th Division is here. Assuming this continues for several months, if I accomplish nothing else, my trip here has been worthwhile.

I was not looking forward to having the responsibility for the hospital all to myself for the several days until Pat gets back. Dr. Dew was very pleased to stay although he is suffering lack of mail since he has been unable to have it brought up here. The Col. promised to try to get it sent up here and my opinion of him will be greatly enhanced if he follows through with this little detail.

I don't think I mentioned there is a new Swiss nurse here by name of Rita. She speaks French but apparently of a different accent since she doesn't understand mine well - ha ha.

* Rita Lampart
later had Kimmel

This morning I again got up early and went to MACV by cycle. I had a big American breakfast - eggs, bacon, hot cakes, juice and coffee, and I really enjoyed it. Since the regular staff here can't do that I don't feel I should go very often, but now and then it's good for a change.

Morning rounds went rather routinely. After lunch Capt. Dew and two of the nurses went swimming. I cycled back to MACV, had a long hot shower and a haircut. In searching for the barbershop I found they have a Px operated snack bar where they sell such things as hamburgers, sandwiches and soft drinks. In a nice shady spot I sat and ate this nice stateside type sandwich and read - delightful.

This evening we were invited by Capt. Marsh to the officers' club of the local helicopter group for a cook your own steak dinner. All in all my stomach is quite pleased with this day.

I learned a new medical procedure today. Shirley got some pepper in her eye at lunch. The Vietnamese cook found her trying to wash it out. The cook insisted she had a better treatment. With Shirley bending over at the waist the cook poured cold water on each of her big toes. Shirley swears it worked. I can't wait to try it at the RBMC.

Sunday - I went to church at MACV which was both enjoyable and uplifting. They sing the old familiar hymns. A men's quartet sang "My Anchor Holds" and it was all I could do to keep from joining in. The sermon was on love and based on 13th Ch. of I. Coringhians. Perhaps I thought it was good because he spoke thoughts I agreed with.

After church I got one of my familiar ideas and invited the nursing staff to be my guests at MACV for Sunday dinner. The meal made me think of Thanksgiving. We were served a slice of meat loaf, a veal outlet and potatoes and gravy on a compartmented tray. Then from a buffet I loaded up on beets, a tuna salad, canned peaches and a slice of delicious plain cake with brown sugar icing. This topped off with a cup of coffee was a fine meal and enjoyed by all. My concentration of description of food the past two days may lead you to a flurry of CARE packages here. Please don't. Actually there are snack items available in the Px and I'm not suffering. I do not wish the long termers here to conclude that I consider their fare unworthy nor to incite in them any unhappiness with their cuisine which will continue long after I have left.

I am scheduled to leave here (Kontum) 6 September supposedly on a direct flight to Saigon. The way these things work out I wouldn't be surprised if I have a stop over in Nha Trang which wouldn't be hard to take since I still have a hankering for the beach there. As long as I get to Saigon on the 7th and depart on the 8th I'm fine. My visa expires on the 8th and heaven only knows what diplomatic maneuvering this would engender.

I hope you can tell from my letters that all goes well here, I feel very well, there is no reason to fear my personal security, and I'm happy and satisfied with the decision to make this tour.

25 August 1970, Tuesday

Dear Bev, Cheryl and Peggy,

Having received letters from each of you in the past two days I know I can count on your understanding my writing one letter to all three of you. I very much appreciated the various descriptions of the Van Trump expedition and share Bev's delight in this success. It is perhaps significant that the four different accounts I received from the participants were individually unique except for two things, a unanimity of opinion about the material deposited on Bev's hat and the goodness and plentiful amount of food at the Copper Kettle. Take my word for it girls, when you reach my age a considerable amount of enjoyment is attained in vicariously sharing some of the good times our young ones are having. I am most grateful for the fine friendship the three of you share. I am also grateful that during my absence you have included Gwen in some of your doings.

Sister Margaret Mary, a nursing nun here is shortly finishing her tour. She has worked with the Montagnard nursing nuns and tonight the staff had all of them to dinner. The dinner was cooked by Shirley Chu, the Chinese midwife I previously mentioned. Indian curry on rice and delicious stewed chicken, jello salad with scraped carrots, pudding and coffee, this was a fine meal and enjoyed by all. The petite little Montagnard nuns, clothed in their all concealing habits showed only their smiling brown faces and hands. They were jolly and giggly between themselves but somewhat repressed by us westerners until I got them to play "Simon says thumbs up." We had a good time with that and even more with "concentration" the game based on remembering your assigned number and responding to its call in rhythm to the hand clapping. Since we used Montagnard numbers they got great fun out of our clumsy attempts at pronunciation. My friend Capt. Dew has a southern accent to an ultimate degree and what he does to the English language must be nothing compared to the Montagnard tongue.

Beverly asked me some searching questions about VN children, some of which I will not be able to answer since virtually all my experience is in the medical treatment of Montagnards. Many of these children come to the hospital from villages essentially untouched by what we call civilized man. I have heard it said that their village life is comparable to other civilizations 3000 years ago. Like American children at the doctor's office their behavior is varied. Some start crying at the door, some are scared but brave, some respond to a smile and a tickle and many warm your heart with their uninhibited response to acts of kindness. Few we see with minor disease and many with man's worst somatic afflictions. Probably the most striking are the ones with malnutrition, their skin oaked with dirt, their pipestem arms and legs, protruberant bellies and sunken eyes and cheeks. One easily develops a feeling of

anger and revulsion of the ignorance which made them thus until one remembers pictures of similar children at Dachau. I have watched them at play. They are natural builders. For the most part dirt is their medium in which they dig holes, or dredge little channels from mud puddles or pile up into mounds. Later on sticks are their toys. Except for those few associated with westerners I have never seen one playing with a formal toy, although it's possible they may have them at home.

There will be a great field for educators as well as health workers here for generations. Unrecognized by most Americans except those who have served here the Montagnards are considered by the more sophisticated Vietnamese to be an inferior race and they face much the same problems which other minority races have faced in man's history. At present only a small percentage ever go to school, and it is the exceptional one who progresses beyond the equivalent of fourth grade. I have not met one who has attended high school, and I'm sure that the only ones who have obtained higher education have been adopted or obtained unusual help from foreigners. Yet there is evidence that in suitable environment these people can learn and are capable of deductive reasoning. The young man who served as my interpreter for a time had adequate command of English, French, Vietnamese and besides his native Bahnar, several other tribal dialects.

Dr. Pat Smith has adopted a $3\frac{1}{2}$ year old Montagnard boy by name of Det. I believe he was about two years old when his mother was killed and he lightly wounded. Since this time he has lived on the compound here, surrounded mostly by a changing staff and countless visitors. Lacking peers as playmates he reacts readily to grown ups. I think he is too young for letters and Dr. Smith does not wish him to have many toys such as our children grow up with. I would think that little children's books would probably be appropriate.

Thanks again for the letters and for what you girls have meant in our lives. Like Peggy, I have a slight melancholic feeling about the approaching end of this summer for you, somewhat like the feeling I have on the last day of a particularly great hiking trip. But have faith, it is in the scheme of things that there will be other mountains to climb, other ski slopes to conquer, other vistas to view -- and if not, que sera sera.

Love,

The ole doc

Our work at the hospital had been rather routine today until the end of the day. In the morning we admitted a primip breech. She has slowly labored through the day. Shirley, the chinese midwife, has excellent training in conducting a normal delivery. She has also been trained that any abnormality of labor is in the province of the physician. The young, military doctors here, Dr. Dew in internal medicine, Dr. Horner in surgery and Dr. Fackleman, have completed two years recent training in their specialties and consequently in those fields I learn from them. They are glad to leave the OB to me and I am happy to do it in this environment where even my clumsy hands have something to offer in complicated cases. At any rate by the end of the day our primip was making slow progress we admitted another lady in advanced labor with a breech -- double footling. She progressed rapidly and the delivery of the lower half of the baby was simple. At this point I found she had double nuchal arms (Peggy will explain). This was relatively easily reduced but the combination of the double footling and the double nuchal arm left us with cervical dystocia (I'm not sure of his writing, gb) in an unanesthetized woman. With considerable traction and pressure from above I was finally able to deliver the baby - a real Apgar 0. (?) with the rather primitive equipment we were able to do a good job of resuscitation and the last report I have indicates mother and child doing well.

Tuesday. Re primip breech. This delivery did not turn out as well. About $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before the actual delivery we lost the fetal heart tones. The breech delivery was again complicated by bilateral nuchal arms and the concomittant delivery of the placenta which had separated prematurely. The baby gave no sign of life. The mother was awake and aware through it all and I was again amazed at the equanimity with which these people accept that which we would consider a tragedy.

Our morning rounds went well which was fortunate for at the end of them I had a traffic accident victim to suture. --- OP clinic was the usual rush followed by a long repair of a badly lacerated finger.

The days are flying by fast now. Dr. Smith was due back yesterday so I expect her by Friday. It would have been a really tough time for me if Dr. Dew had not been here and I'm very grateful.

--- You might inform Karl that I have developed the Kontum variety of the P II. I prop an empty beer can on the top of my door at night so that if any one opens the door I'll be awakened.

26 Aug. Morning rounds went smoothly. Actually we are in a bit of a lull at present between the waves of near epidemics which sweep the villages. As a result Dr. Dew and I have steadily cut the census down from 200 to 150 in Pat's absence. Also the OP clinic load is down. Recently when the census was high they were seeing many cases of whooping cough but this has ceased.

Last Sunday Dr. Dew saw the local Catholic Father, an older but large and capable man and a petite little Montagnard nun carrying a wooden altar down the aisle between the beds in preparation for the Sunday service. The little nun was struggling with her end so Dr. Dew, being a good man relieved her of her load. He was nonplussed when the Father beckoned to the nun and had her take his end, leaving the two of them to carry the altar. Told with Dr. Dew's southern accent I thought this was hilarious.

Thurs. Gloria, the practical nurse and general public relations person here was going to drive patients to Pleiku today. There being no OP clinic in the afternoon I decided to go with her for which she was glad since she doesn't like to drive. In my two previous tours here this road was considered a no man's land, but now is quite safe. After stopping at the 71st Hosp. I drove over to the Province Hosp. where Gloria dropped me off and went on errands. I had previously heard that one of the enlisted men by name of Pickus, from Puyallup, had extended his tour and was still there. Furthermore he and my former interpreter, Maria, are to be married next month. I had a happy reunion with them and also with a number of the other VN interpreters and nurses. Visiting these familiar areas I found myself half expecting to see Dale coming around the corner or walking across the yard.

While I was there a young Montagnard boy was brought in with a large painful abscess on his forehead. Dr. Castellis, unhappy with the army, eleven months in country and eager to go home treated this boy with such kindness and compassion it was beautiful. Added to the many other benefits of coming here I must add that witnessing such things as this makes me proud to belong to the same profession and also proud of our country. It was an experience I'll not forget and yet I'm sure it is repeated many times in this country.

The big news is Pat got back today. Her trip to Saigon was most successful and it is now definite (within the realm of definite here) she will be going home around the last half of October. Dr. Hoffman will be her replacement (CRS doctor) backed up by a 4th Div. doctor and most likely a VPVN physician.

Fri. The chopper from 4th Div. came about 11:30 bringing Dr. Dew's replacement and carrying him back to An Khe. His replacement is a young Capt. Pat Desimone, 1 year training in internal medicine and 10 months in Vietnam, all in the field. He seems very nice, dedicated and capable. There is little formality here.

I greeted him at the chopper, escorted him into the hospital, he shook hands with Dr. Dew, who placed his stethoscope around his neck and while Dr. Dew ran for the chopper Dr. Desimone began making rounds where Dr. Dew had left off.-----I was fussing with a 1 year old M. baby who has diarrhea and some other mysterious life endangering malady. --- OP clinic was fierce. Not only a large number of patients but quite a few very sick ones requiring admission. ---Our wind up rounds revealed six critically ill patients, two 4 to 5 year olds with the same appearing disease as the little one I fussed over all day. I spinal tapped all of them but no significant findings. We think it's probably cerebral malaria. One of them went bad about 7:30 and Dr. Desimone and I spent an hour doing the last desperate things but death was not to be denied. We finally left the hospital at 9:30 feeling thoroughly whipped.

From a letter to Larry and Sheryl: You would particularly enjoy Capt. Dew, doctor from the 4th Div. Product of an old line southern family, he has espoused the cause of a raceless society. Reared in affluence, he eschews inheritance and plans a career in academic medicine, the financial stepchild of our profession, (similar to geology professors). Surrounded by conservative democrats, he calls himself a socialist. Here, safely away from the demands of military life, he wears a Montagnard headband, beads, a loose fitting jumper, fatigue pants and combat boots. We make a pair walking to the hospital, he in that get up and me in a scrub suit and sandals. He calls himself a coward but was awarded the soldier's medal for pulling injured GIs from a crashed chopper.

Dr. Jim Touhy, my young friend from the trip over arrived for a visit. He has been working at Qui Nhon hospital. Dr. Smith visited there on her way home. He has been working with Dr. Hoffman, CRS physician. He is the one who will replace Dr. Smith on her home tour. I had talked to Dr. Touhy about spending the second part of his tour (he is going to stay for 4 months) here. Since he has been working solely with Vietnamese and is anxious to experience the Montagnards. It would appear that the replacement program is in good shape at present.

---I saw a man who had been bitten by his dog. Since rabies is not unusual here and they have a routine here that in such circumstances the dog should be tied up. When asked if he had done so he explained that after the dog had bitten him he hit the dog on the head with a piece of wood, killed it and ate it before coming into the hospital. Perhaps you should pass this along to Bones. --- on the OB front I can report I delivered Jean Platz's dog Noire yesterday. Actually she had two pups yesterday morning down at the hospital, one alive and one dead. I took the jeep down and picked her and the one pup up and delivered them back here to the house. Life continues interesting.

Sunday -- This morning after making rounds on the urgent ones I went to church with several of the nursing staff including Sister Margaret Mary and Sister Vincent (Montagnard) and Gloria -- ecumenical, No. In tribute to Sister Margaret's departure Gloria sang the familiar arrangement of the 23d Psalm. It was beautiful. We also sang several other familiar hymns which I of course enjoyed. I took the whole gang to MACV for Sunday dinner -- roast beef, mashed potatoes, brussel sprouts, rabbit food, canned cherries and cookies. Not a drop of Nuk Mohm in it. Right after lunch we got word of eight GSN casualties arriving at the hospital. It's 10 o'clock now and we have just finished. I must confess that the old man is wearing down. Today was particularly trying not only because of the number and seriousness of the patients but it was considerably complicated by company. The general of the 4th called to say he would not make it but Col. Nelson, surgeon from the 71st did come with several sight-seers. I don't see how the regular people here keep it up but then they are remarkable people. There is a bit of enemy activity outside of Kontum the past two days but thus far nothing near us.

This having been a bad day I would hesitate describing it except that by the time you receive this I'll be living the soft life of a world traveler. I got up with the promontory signs of one of my colds and through the day it has blossomed into full bloom. Actually the key to the day was given by Gloria, the ebullient one on the team, when she announced at breakfast that she was sure this was going to be one of those days. Breakfast was hardly over before one of the Montagnard male nurses came with word one of the child patients was dying. An hour's effort and we staved off death until this afternoon when we lost. In the meanwhile another child went bad and died rather quickly. Through it all we tried to get morning rounds done. Young Dr. Pat Desimone is a fine young person but like many of his age has some mellowing to do. Lacking confidence in himself he tries too hard and I find myself sort of running interference between him and the nurses. He is a good doctor and most willing to work, but I guess it takes some sparse gray hair to really get along. Pat takes these deaths as a personal failure.

---We admitted a woman six months preg. in premature labor. She has placenta praevia and most likely tonight will see some fancy obstetrics again.

This is the first time I have found putting on socks a necessary preliminary to writing a letter. Wearing my knit slippers and somewhat short scrub socks the mosquitoes overdo on my ankles. I have also had a tough time with pens. When I arrived I had my good Parker, two new Bics and an old pen that was left in my brief case. Shortly after I arrived Shirley lost her pen so I gave her a Bic. Later Dr. Dew lost his and there went the second. My Parker was the next to go and today the old one I was using wandered away. At home I would blame Mitzi but here we blame Noire, Jean's unattractive dog of doubtful lineage. She is a young dog who recently delivered her first litter. An average trip down the veranda for her would include sniffing in two coffee cups, destroying a chess game with her tail and then sauntering on to the lawn directly in front of us to do her business. At night she more or less stays in the metal bunker in back of my room and periodically she and her pup make some of the weirdest noises. If they serve dog meat here before I go and Noire is missing I believe I'll eat some.

My head cold is in the very runny stage. I tried to get by today on the two clean handkerchiefs I could find but by the time I got home they were wringing wet. Rummaging around the laundry room I found a clean diaper and any nose says it's the best handkerchief. When I get another cold I shall borrow one of Billy's.

I just finished a wonderful book - The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson by Goldman - paper back. It gives a fascinating insight into this man who I think I understand and appreciate much better now.

Dr. Smith has reservations to fly in to Seattle on October 21.