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Dave Fetters' Audio Transcription - 1969 - Tape 02

David Fetters

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Dave Fetters' Audio Letters - 1969

Tape #2

There's a little button here I can push that automatically reverses the tape so that I can record on the second side. Let's see, oh, that one package with the surprise in it. I'll be a little bit lucky if it makes it because it's got some, well, not really contraband, but stuff that I shouldn't be sending. Well, shoot, I'm not going to carry on, I'll just tell you what it is. It's another poncho liner. You'll have one and I'll have one. But that's all it is in the box. It's real light so I think it will make it through without too much trouble.

Let's see, oh yes, getting out of Bien Hoa back to Tay Ninh, there weren't any regular scheduled flights so I went scrounging for a ride. I went down to the air terminal and just kept ducking into different offices and stuff until I found a lieutenant who had a plane going out to Tay Ninh and asked him if I could bum a ride on it. He said, "Oh yeah, I guess so. You'll be the only passenger but we've got a lot of supplies and stuff going on the plane but there'll be room for a passenger." So I got on a Caribou. It's one of those twin engine propeller driven jobs with the great big tails on it. I don't know if you remember the plane that the Green Berets jumped from in the movie "The Green Berets," but that's the kind of plane I flew in. It was kind of fun.

I've got all these notes written down here. Tell Chuck that I'll try to get those camouflage fatigues for him. I don't know exactly what size he wears, you know, what size waist or anything, but I'll guess at about a 32 or 33, somewhere around there. Probably the same size as mine. I'll try to scrounge them. They're a little tough to come by because the only people authorized to wear them are the Air Force people. They're a little hard to get but I'll see what I can do. It may take me two or three or four months but eventually I'll run into somebody with some that he'd like to get rid of. Then I can send them to you and then you can give them to Chuck.

Oh yes, when I was out scrounging food with the jeep, it was the first time I had driven a jeep. It was also a real experience because trying to drive through all that Vietnamese traffic is a thrill of a lifetime. The roads are only about a lane and a half wide and the way those idiots drive is just unbelievable. You just can't imagine it. These people all have little Honda 50's or Honda 90's, and they continuously zip in and out and off the road and cut straight across and do loops and circles. Some guys go blazing by at 40 and other guys and girls just poop along and poop along and they have motorbikes that pull little rickshaws on bicycle wheels full of people. They have the little Lambretta motor scooter; they call them buses I guess, or taxis. It's a little three wheel thing like what the post office uses. That thing is just crammed full of people. Of course

all the oxen pulling lumber wagons and food wagons, and people on bicycles and people just walking. They step right out in front of you and they don't bother to turn around and look to see if you're coming or anything. Of course big deuce and a half's lumbering down the road.

The dumb Filipinos back in Tay Ninh, all they do, it seems to me, is loaf around and drive around in their jeeps. They have the old World War II type jeeps, but they're all brand new. Every jeep you see has six or eight Filipinos in one jeep. Can you imagine that many people in a jeep? Well they do it. All they do is just cruise around and stop and yak with the people and drink their beer and spend half their time in the Filipino PX buying all kinds of garbage, just generally loafing. They add to the traffic problem because there are so many of them, and all they do is just drive around in their jeeps. Aside from my driving, I rode in the back of one jeep while somebody else was driving and I took three or four or five pictures up and down the street in back of the jeep as we made our way through the traffic. I think they're just black and white shots so you can get some idea of what it was like. Coming back today on the Chinook I took two or three more shots of the camp from the air, also black and white. So when you get them, if you want to, you can send one to Sue, and one to Dan, and pass them around to anybody who would like to have one. Take one to Dr. VanDyken if you want. That reminds me, I have to write a letter to him sometime. I haven't yet corresponded with him. I got a letter from Dan Wednesday. He's alright out in California. He's complaining about the congestion and the amount of people and all the crazy people and things they do and everything. He's actually thinking about coming back home. But then he turns right around and talks about next year when he enters the Golden Glove competition out in California, how he's going to take the novice class in the middle weight or wherever he is. So I don't know what he's going to do. Haven't heard from Sue yet but I imagine she'll write when she gets time.

I bought four more of these tapes. So you don't have to buy any at your end. Just wait for me to send you mine and then you can tape them onto a larger tape and send them back to me. I think that's a good idea that you said you were going to do, tape them onto a larger tape and keep them for awhile. You probably get sick of hearing the same tapes over and over again but do what you want. Between the four that I've got here and the two or three that I've already sent you, we've got enough to correspond back and forth quite regularly. It will cut down on time writing letters and everything.

[A pause in the tape.]

We've got about 23 of them (combat engineers) so far. Little by little they're trickling in, and pretty soon we'll have a whole bunch of them here. They'll be working on the runway. This coming week we've got a heliborne operation scheduled. We'll be going north of the camp,

northwest, excuse me, northeast of the camp with about two hundred troops and nine helicopters and three flights of the nine to get everybody in. It's going to be quite an exciting operation. I'm scheduled to go with the captain and two other USSF and four Vietnamese Special Forces. We'll be out about ten klicks (kilometers) or so from the camp and work our way back in. But radar planes and everything have reported a large concentration of enemy troops up there so it could be kind of scary. I'm getting a little excited about it right now. I hope everything comes out all right. I can't tell you any more because you know all that stuff is classified. So after it's all over with, I'll tell you how it went, what happened, and if we went, and all that kind of stuff.

Looks like the tape is getting fairly close to running out. I'll just keep talking until the end of the tape. Let's see, shoot, now I don't know what to say. Tell everybody I've been getting quite a bit of mail lately so, not to get all upset because of the fact that I'm not getting any. When I sent that last tape, up until that time, I hadn't gotten any. But right after that all the mail started to come in. You can tell everybody that I'm pleased now and I'm getting lots of letters. I have lots of letters to answer so if they don't hear from me right away, just tell them I'll answer them when I can, if I get time, and all that kind of good stuff.

Things have been pretty quiet otherwise. I think I got the tape recorder all picked out. I've got the amplifier and speakers all set and ready to order. All I have to do is get enough money and I'll send all that stuff to you. Don't think that because I'm getting all of this stuff that we can't get our Magnavox. We can have both. I can always sell the outfit that we're getting, but it would be fun to have for a little while anyway. Shoot, when I sell it, we'll make 100 percent profit. The total system will probably come to about \$500 worth of stuff but when I sell it I ought to be able to get at least \$750 for it, even used because this is real good stuff. If you want to, go ahead and buy a refrigerator, or do like you said in the letter I got today just keep the one we've got because you aren't freezing very much food. Goodbye.

9 April 1969
Wednesday

Good morning, Hon. Today is Wednesday the 9th. It's about quarter to 8 in the morning. I just got up and washed and ate breakfast. I'm sitting in my usual spot up on the roof of the teamhouse. I'm sending you this tape again because I don't have time to write you a letter and there's a lot I want to say before the work chopper comes this morning at about 10 or 10:30 or whenever it comes.

First of all, I want to tell you about the operation I just came back from. It started, well, the plans started forming about two weeks ago, but at that time I wasn't scheduled to go. But from the time they planned it until the time we actually left, we had increasing reports of heavy enemy activity in the area we were going to so at the last minute, which was Saturday afternoon, the afternoon I had gotten back from Tay Ninh with the food and the beer and all that stuff, they decided that I should go as well as the captain and two other Americans with four Vietnamese Special Forces and 200 CIDG people. So at the last minute I was rushing around preparing to go, reading over the operations order and everything else, so I was real busy Saturday afternoon, Saturday night. Then Sunday morning I was preparing all my gear and we got a message from the colonel who said that he was sending a special helicopter out to pick us up and bring us in for a briefing. So Sunday again I got on a helicopter and we flew back down to Tay Ninh and I was there for about three hours during which time we ate with the colonel and had a formal briefing by all his personnel, the S-2 concerning the enemy reports, and the S-3 concerning the operation itself, plus we had the FAC pilots, that's F-A-C. It stands for Forward Air Control pilots who fly these little birddog airplanes over the operational area and keep their eyes open for enemy and call in artillery and air support, et cetera.

Well, after the briefing we got back on our helicopter and they flew us back out here. We got here about 2:30 or 3 o'clock. It was beautiful flying. I didn't take my camera this time but I probably should have. At the time I thought "well I've flown over the same area four or five times and at least three times I've had my camera so all I'm doing is just repeating pictures." I think I really should have this past time because it was so absolutely clear. From the height we were at which was about 2,500 feet, we could see the primary and alternate landing zones that we were to use the following morning. Already they had started putting in 105's and 175 shells. The whole area was aflame and smoking, and billowing, in fact still exploding because they were still shooting at it, prepping it for our landing. Well, anyway, I missed some good pictures.

Coming back from Tay Ninh, we were talking to the pilot before we took off and convinced him that he should fly close to the ground so that one of the guys on the chopper could use his new Yashica SE860 movie camera; you know that real fancy one we were looking at? Well, he had one of those and he wanted to take some good movie pictures close to the ground as we were flying. The pilot flew at an altitude of ten feet. We were buzzing water buffalo and farmers out in the field cutting rice, and palm trees and pagodas and all over the place. Just barely skimming the tops of them. It sure was neat. Of course I was sitting right in the door like I usually do. My left foot was sitting right on the edge of the door as well as my entire left side of my body was right on the very edge so all I have to do is barely turn my head and look over and I'd be in the wind stream out the side of the helicopter. It was real exciting.

Coming back in we flew close to the mountain again. By the way, that mountain is 3500 feet high, something like that. It's really a sight to see because it's the only thing that's over the height of the jungle in the whole area of III Corps. It's so funny because it's such a big mountain and there's no rocky crags or anything. It just rises straight up almost like a perfect cone. Usually it's shrouded in clouds and everything, but Sunday it was real clear and I missed some good shots. Well, anyway, Sunday night I was preparing my web gear and my rucksack, and making sure my weapon was all set. Took plenty of ammunition, water, and food, and the whole works. It was quite an exciting deal because we don't make very many heliborne operations around here and when we do, it's a big deal. As you know, we're almost completely surrounded by VC and except for air support and long range artillery support we're fairly well cut off. That's why so much planning goes into a heliborne operation because once you're on the ground, you're on your own except for the FAC pilot above you who can call in artillery and request for air support. But that takes 20 or 30 minutes and by that time you can really be in trouble.

Well, anyway, the plan was for nine helicopters to come in Monday morning, land on the runway and make three lifts of about 70 people each lift and take them to the LZ. Well, as it worked out, we were out on the runway at 7 o'clock Monday morning, and we had all the people broken down into their respective lifts and all the men counted out so that we had about eight per helicopter. Well, anyway, the same morning, we had three Chinooks come in prior to 7 o'clock and unload about 80 troops, American type, from the 25 Infantry Division who were also planning a heliborne operation that we knew nothing about. They just wanted to use our runway. They landed and they were being organized at the southern end and we had all our people at the northern end. They, too, were going to be picked up by a flight of nine helicopters. Believe me, for about an hour there, there was so much confusion that we really had trouble trying to figure out what was going on. Our operation was planned thoroughly and everything, but their operation was a last minute deal and they neglected to keep us fully informed as to what their plans were. So here we were waiting to go on a heliborne operation and we have three Chinooks landing, unloading troops, and their flight of nine Hueys came in before our flight did so they landed on the southern end of the runway. Pretty soon here come two enormous flying cranes bringing bulldozers in for the engineers to work on our runway and then comes a C&C ship which is a command and control helicopter that had the colonel, and a forward air controller, and an artillery forward observer and all kinds of radio gear. We had two Huey Cobra gunships flying around. We had the command and control ship for the 25th Division. We had their nine helicopters on the ground waiting to takeoff. The three Chinooks had just taken off and were heading back. The two cranes were coming in and we had our eight helicopters circling, waiting to land. Oh, plus we had two little bird dog single engine mono planes that the FACs used. All those people were buzzing around here. What a beehive of activity that was.

Well, finally our helicopters got to land. At the last minute, the colonel's ship landed. He came running over, grabbed the captain and me, and told us, just before we got on the helicopters, that the LZ had been changed. We were going in neither on the primary nor the alternate because they had reports of heavy enemy activity in both places. So obviously Charley knew we were coming. That's one of the most dangerous things you can do is to go in and take a heliborne operation in on a compromised landing zone. So at the last minute, we decided to, or he decided for us, that we would be going in on a big field just between the two landing zones. All we could do is say "yup, okay." We took off. I was in the first lift along with the captain. We had our radio men and our interpreters and about 50 troops. We got up in the air and we were flying in formation. If you're not used to that, it's really something because those helicopters look like they're so close they're going to bump. But they don't. We were flying around waiting for the okay to go in. At the last minute, a FAC said that he had three jet fighters coming in to put a load on our now primary landing zone. So we flew around up there and I sure wish I had my movie camera because that would have been a movie to beat all movies. We could see the fighter planes circling. Then one by one they'd peel off and come flying down over the landing zone and drop a couple of 500 pound bombs right on the thing or right off in the woodline on either side in front and rear. Then the next fighter would come along and drop napalm and the next one would come along and drop 500 pounders. They kept on alternating for two passes per plane. Then, each plane made about three passes shooting, I don't know how many guns they've got, probably six per plane, 20mm cannons. What a tremendous amount of firepower those things put out. What a roar those guns make. Just a buzz, only 40 times as loud. You can see the woodline almost disintegrate when those cannons hit.

Well, if anything had been down there it would really have been chewed up so we thought we were relatively safe. So just before our choppers went in, we had a chopper fly over and drop two smoke grenades on the landing zone so the pilots could tell the wind direction. We had another chopper come in and completely circle the landing zone while we were landing, laying down a thick, heavy smoke screen. All the time that we were coming down, the door gunners were firing their machine guns. Each gunner on each side of the helicopter, on all eight helicopters. We had a lot of firepower going into the woodline as we came down. However as we were landing we still were shot at a little bit, not too much. Probably maybe half a dozen troops were shooting at us or so, probably snipers.

But anyway, as soon as we jumped off the chopper and started running toward the woodline, we had our weapons blazing on full automatic shooting into the woodline. We went in with the Cambodian company first. These guys are called KKK, Cambodian Border Bandits is what they are, mercenaries. I'm glad they're on our side, that's all I can say, because those guys

are maniacs. They got on the ground and they started yelling and screaming and just charging full blast for that woodline with their M-16s just blazing away on full automatic just as fast as they could fire. I sure wouldn't want to be out on the receiving end of that.

Well, after the first lift got into the woodline, the remaining three lifts came in without incident. We silenced whatever fire was coming in on us. We got organized and started moving out. We moved to the northwest and we hadn't gone more than about 200 meters through real thick jungle when we received two enemy mortar rounds. Right away that upset everybody a little bit. We had the FAC up there trying to locate where it was coming from but he couldn't tell because the jungle is too thick. So we took evasive action, what little we could in such thick jungle, and waited. We thought for sure we were really going to be hit but luckily nothing else came in. All this happened between about eight o'clock and nine o'clock. At the time I thought if this is any indication on how this whole operation is going to go, I just hope I make it back in one piece. As it worked out, that was about it for the morning.

We started moving out through the jungle and we didn't meet any VC but we came across some recently dug graves and a lot of bunkers and trenchlines and gun positions. We didn't have any explosives with us so we just marked the area and sent in a report and then any time that no troops are out there, our artillery here in camp could fire harassment and interdiction on those bunkers and placements to destroy them any time they felt like it. We were moving along fairly well until about two o'clock that afternoon when our leading element came across a couple of VC sitting on the edge of a field cooking their meals. So instead of giving our position away, our element away, by engaging them with small arms, we called in artillery on them and well, the FAC said we obliterated the area, but he didn't see anybody running so we thought we had gotten them. We moved into the area and scanned it. We couldn't find any bodies so we never did find out what really happened to the VC that we saw but I'm sure after that artillery attack, they probably were a little worse for wear. At least their morale dropped to an all time low, I can be sure of that.

Let's see, the tape is about ready to run out so I'll give it just a second and hit my automatic reverse button and that way I don't have to flip the reels over. Well, okay, I'll do it now. It was real tough for me, being so tall, I'm about the tallest guy on the team, going through that thick jungle. I can tell you what it's like, but if you've never seen it, you wouldn't really know. The bamboo over here grows in thick clumps. It's so thick that a man couldn't possibly try going through it, so he has to weave his way between the clumps and the clumps are real close together. This stuff grows up and also curves over and bends and intertwines with the next clump. The CIDG with all their equipment on and everything still only come up to about my shoulder. They can stoop over real low and squeeze through that stuff. A man my size, all I can

do is get down on my hands and knees and crawl. It's real slow moving through the jungle when you have to crawl on your hands and knees which is what I was doing. The other Americans were doing about the same thing. They could get down just on their knees, bend over and squeak through but I had to get all the way down on my hands and knees and literally crawl through the jungle.

Of course, the whole time there were these cotton picking enormous red ants. They drop off the leaves and the bushes and the twigs as well as crawl on your clothing from the jungle floor. For some reason or another, they always go to the vulnerable spots on your body like the back of your neck and my crotch, and boy can they bite. Gee whiz. Half the time I'm trying to slap them and knock them off of my clothing as well as keep my forward momentum going to keep up with everybody else. It gets to be a real problem. Those things will dig into your skin and just hang on with all their might. So I sprayed myself with DDT and put on insect repellent and everything I could find but still they were a problem. The same thing happens at night when you string up your hammock. The stupid ants keep dropping out of the trees and the leaves overhead. All night long you're knocking ants off of you as well as other bugs. It gets to be a real problem. If it isn't enough that the ants are on you, you've got snakes to worry about and all kinds of other crazy little bugs, leeches, and spiders and stuff that all bite, get on your clothing, and bother the heck out of me. I've got my rifle to keep untangling from all the vines and terrific thorn bushes out there. The set of tiger fatigues that I wore out there were shredded by the time I got back to camp. Not much I can do about it.

Here I am again. I was rudely interrupted to go down and receive a single side band radio message from A-Company. I've been gone for about a half an hour so I don't really remember where I was. I think I was talking about bugs and stuff. Anyway, there's something I want to tell you about. At night, on this past operation when I was out in my hammock, it got to be about 8 o'clock and it was pitch black, and I heard the craziest noise I think I've ever heard out in the jungle. It sounded like Dad's table saw going full blast cutting through a big chunk of 2 by 4 only about two full octaves higher than the normal noise it makes. I found out later it's a bird that makes that noise. When it does make the noise it sounds like an outer space type noise, something you'd hear on a science fiction movie with the flying saucer landing. Well, we had three or four of those noises going on all the time and it really sounded funny. Of course I was so tired that night it didn't really bother me.

We also had artillery H&Is fired all around our RON position, which stands for "remain over night" position. Truthfully I can say that from the time they started firing at 21:00 until the time they quit at seven in the morning, I only heard one salvo all night. They weren't more than five or six hundred meters away, those 105 shells landing. They really make a lot of noise,

especially in the still of the night. But I was so tired I slept right through every bit of it. The command element of an operation like that sleeps in relative safety. We were inside a double perimeter. The outer perimeter was composed of about 150 of the CIDG. The inner perimeter was composed of about another thirty or forty of what is called the combat recon platoon. They're the people that take the point and the rear security all the time and they're usually the ones that initiate contact. They're a good bunch. They know their stuff. All the command element sleeps in one little area right in the middle, so we have very little to worry about as far as being hit during night. If we are hit, surely we'll hear about it before anything ever reaches us.

Well, we walked all day Monday and Tuesday, got in last night at about 7 o'clock. Boy, it's just like Christmas Day coming in off an operation like that. I was thoroughly soaked with sweat. My clothes were all ripped. My legs and arms and everything were all scratched to pieces. Of course I had a growth and I was dog tired and just dragging. My reflexes were slow and my mind was dulled. I was sure happy to get in, take a nice leisurely shower, shave, and hit the sack real early. Well, at least I thought I was going to hit the sack early. I had radio watch from eight to midnight. Today I'm going to take it a little bit easy. We have most of the engineers and the infantry moved in outside the perimeter to work on our runway now. They've got an area toward the southern end of the runway. They cleared a great big area with their bulldozers and everything. They put up a berm and barbed wire and they've got radar set up already and they're building a big water tower and they've got all kinds of trucks and garbage and stuff out there. It will take them a full month to complete the work on the runway. In the meantime they have all these trucks and stuff running around and it's kind of nice having them around. It's good to see more Americans. It's good to talk to them and find out where they're from and all that kind of stuff. They're buying our beer left and right. In fact, we made over \$100 just yesterday, just in one day. That's charging 20 cents for a beer and 25 cents for a pop. It's just good to have them around. Somebody to talk to, somebody different to look at rather than these Vietnamese people. When they leave, I'm sure they'll leave us lots of good stuff like extra diesel fuel, tar, cement, and wire, probably ammunition and all kinds of stuff. We can bum some food off of them too. They use our shower every now and then. We in turn of course barter for items we need from them. So far they haven't been bothered by Charley or anything but in another few weeks I imagine we'll start getting hit pretty regularly because there's a lot of stuff out there that they can hit, they can shoot at.

I think I explained to you in one of my letters that big super duper surprise that you were waiting for was your camel hair coat. The reason why I kept leading you on and giving you such wild ideas was because I didn't want you to guess what it could be. You know how you usually keep pestering me about little secrets and stuff, and I'd lead you in a 180 degree direction from

the actual truth. I was doing the same thing this time through the letters so I hope you aren't terribly disappointed. I thought the coat was kind of neat. I never did get to see the final thing. All I saw was the material and a picture of the coat when I ordered it. If it turned out anything like I imagined it, it should be a pretty nice little outfit.

I got a letter from Floss, one from Chris. I got a letter from Dan. I got a tape from my family. I only had a chance to listen to it once, that was Sunday afternoon before I went out on the operation Monday morning. So I'll listen to it a couple more times and then I'll return it to them full of information. I will try not to repeat anything I've said on this tape or any previous tapes to them because I know you like to pass the tapes along.

I forgot to tell you concerning that operation. I think the captain is going to put me in for my CIB [Combat Infantryman Badge] for being shot at, et cetera et cetera. I'll let you know later on how that comes out. As far as I'm concerned, I could care less whether I get the thing or not. I would like to have it, but I could care less whether I get shot at again or not, I'll put it that way.

I can't understand what's taking that catalog so long to reach you. At the same time, I sent in for another one, one for myself. Up until this time I've been borrowing other people's catalogs. It's not as big and as thick as you probably think it's going to be but it's still a pretty good catalog and it's got quite a bit of stuff in it. When I first saw it I thought, "Gee, is this all they offer?" But when I keep looking through it I keep noticing little small things that would be kind of neat. Of course there's no end to the stuff that we'll be able to get in Hong Kong so you can just look through it and if there's something really in particular that you want through the catalog, or anybody else, then I can order it. As far as sending money to me, I don't know what would be the best way, especially if an item is expensive, like maybe a hundred bucks or something. I don't know whether to send an international money order or what. I think that would probably be the best way to do it, send an international money order. It would probably be better to send it in small denominations, say under \$50 because I don't know if I can cash more than say \$50 at a time. I do have access to an APO, an Army Post Office, so if you send a postal money order, I could probably cash that without too much trouble. When the catalog comes, just show it around to everybody and make sure my dad sees the cameras he wants and if he doesn't like any of the cameras he sees in the catalog, then have him look around in the States until he finds one he wants with attachments and everything else that he wants, and let me know. If I can't get it before I go to Hong Kong, then I'm sure we can find it when we do get there.

We've got a couple guys going on R&R next month to Hong Kong so I'm going to have them look around and find out what they can and let me know how it is. I have talked to people that have been there already and they say the place is just magnificent. It's really something to

see. Of course they have all the high class restaurants and hotels and all the areas like that, but there is a dumpy side too, of course. They have all the slums and the poor people, people who live in sampans and all that kind of stuff. Be prepared to see everything. Another thing, one of my acquaintances from B-32 was there recently and he was riding in a rickshaw one evening after a night on the town. He was just a little bit inebriated but somebody took advantage of him and lifted \$200 out of his pocket. He didn't know how it happened or where it happened but he figures it was while he was on the rickshaw. It was one of the larger types that carry maybe a half a dozen people. Between all the people getting on and getting off, he was probably bumped and somebody just lifted his wallet.

Another little incident happened yesterday when the engineers first moved in with their big bulldozers and stuff. My demo man went out there and showed them where our mine field was, where not to go and where to go, and where to camp and where not to drive heavy equipment. But somebody got their figures crossed or something. A bulldozer was pushing a great big log across the field and the log hit an anti-tank mine. Luckily it was about the biggest bulldozer the Army makes and the log was quite a large one and it was well out in front of the driver. The only thing it did was completely demolish the log of course. The big heavy blade on the front of the tractor protected everybody, well, it protected the driver and the equipment and everybody that was anywhere around when the mine went off. A couple of guys were up on the teamhouse roof and they heard this horrendous explosion. They looked out there in time to see 40 million pieces of flying log land all over the place. It really could have hurt someone, but luckily it didn't. Right after that the demo man went flying out there and again explained to everybody where they could go and where they couldn't go. We did have, or do have, a fence up out there, barbed wire fence with mine signs hanging all over it, but the grass is so high out there it's so hard to see where the fence is.

Well, I see the tape's about ready to end, so I'll say goodbye. It's been nice talking to you again. I always await anxiously for your letters and tapes. It's so good hearing from you. I try to get out at least three letters or three tapes or three tapes and letters a week, every Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday for the work chopper, so you should be getting at least three a week. If they don't come spaced evenly during the week there, then you probably get them all at one time, but I can't help that. Write me when you have time. It sure is good hearing from you. I sure miss you. All I can think about is Hong Kong, even though it is three or four months away yet, and that's about all I ever think about. It'll sure be neat seeing you there and we're going to have a lot of fun in the week that we'll see each other.

Keep checking into plane fares and stuff. Also, you might check if you fly from Chicago to the west through San Francisco and Hawaii and all around there to Hong Kong, maybe you'll

want to fly from Hong Kong and continue the rest of the way around the world. At least you can say you've flown around the world. That would be quite something. I don't know if the distance would be any greater or what. Maybe the plane fare would be just about the same. So you might keep it in mind. It could be worthwhile. You could be the only member of your immediate family that could say you've honestly flown all of the way around the world. Well, goodbye now, tape's out, so long.

17 April 1969

Thursday

It's black out, and I'm sitting up on the teamhouse roof but not in my usual spot because it's quite breezy tonight. I think the wind would affect the microphone as I talked. Well, I got your nice real long tape yesterday, Wednesday and a couple of letters. I got a letter from Bob Shaver. I still haven't heard anything from Larry and I haven't written to John Downing yet. Or wait a minute, did I? Yeah, I guess I did write to John Downing once. I haven't gotten an answer yet. Anyway, I read your letters first and that was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I saved the tape for that night. I watched some movies yesterday evening. Let's see, Wednesday is the day the work chopper brings all our movies in and we exchange them for new ones. As it usually works out, the whole team sits around starting Wednesday afternoon about 4 o'clock and we show about three straight movies. That's what we did yesterday evening. Well, we didn't start at 4, we started at about 6, I guess. I saw "They Came From Beyond Space," another one called "Bikini Paradise." Both of them were \$35 movies. And let's see, the third one, "A Man and a Woman," some French film. It wasn't too bad. It was better than the other two.

After that it was about quarter to eleven so I got ready for bed and laid in bed and just plugged a little earphone into the tape recorder here and spent an hour just laying there in bed relaxing and listening to your nice, long tape. You can say anything you want on any of these tapes because I have this private earphone thing that I plug in all the time. I just lie there real quietly and listen and can't hear a sound from the tape recorder. It's really neat. Well I sure enjoyed the tape. I don't recall everything that you said on it but if you want to send more long ones like that, it's fine with me. I noticed it was kind of expensive, \$2.95. These ones I send you I only have to pay 60 cents for, but of course they're only half the length, but still. Anyway, I enjoyed the tape and all of the sounds from the house, and puppy dog, and the cat. I heard the cat meowing in the background. I like that song too. I never hear anything like that over here. Well, I won't say never but very rarely do I hear anything like that. And just the sound of your voice. You kept apologizing for the volume and for your fast talking and squeaky voice and all that.

But to me it sounded just like you. You didn't seem to talk any faster than you normally do. It sounded exactly like you.

With that volume thing, I wouldn't watch the needle all the time. I would just record once and find out the number, I think there's a number on the volume thing. Maybe not. If there isn't, take a little crayon or something and make a mark and then every time you record, set it on that spot and forget about it because I can adjust the volume here on this machine. If yours is a little bit weak, I can just turn the volume way up over here and I can listen to it okay. Some of my tapes end up a little bit funny, especially right after I hit the automatic reverse button. It seems to cut the volume in half for awhile there and sometimes it seems to slow down or something. I noticed on one tape there was a portion there that the tape seemed to be, or it must have gone through the machine slowly because everything I said seemed to come out much lower and slower, like that. I don't know what the deal was.

Anyway, I really enjoyed your tape last night. I just laid there and I can see everything real clearly in my mind. What you're doing, how you're sitting around the house in your housecoat and puppy sniffing things and chewing on her ball, and the cat scratching at the door to go out. Usually when I get a tape from you, I imagine you just sitting on the living room floor for some reason with a tape recorder in front of you and puppy sniffing around. I don't know where you actually make the tape but that's just where I picture you, on the living room floor.

Let's see, oh yeah, right after I listened to the tape, it was quarter to twelve. I shut it off and turned the light back on, put the tape recorder away, then turned the light off again, got back in bed. I was just laying there in my shorts. That's what I usually go to sleep in, I mean the same tiger shorts that I wear around here in the daytime because underwear is just a bother. Well anyway, I was just laying there sweating, waiting to go to sleep, and daydreaming and everything, and I fell asleep almost immediately. But exactly 15 minutes later, because as soon as I woke up I looked at my watch, I was awakened by a horrendous racket. Explosions, machine gun fire, and the whole works. I thought uh-oh, here we go, we've been hit tonight. So all the team comes running out of their bunkers. We put on our flak jackets and grab our weapons and web gear and ammunition. All the team members have a certain point they have to go to in the camp perimeter when we are attacked. So they all took off. Of course, I think I told you my position is in the commo shack. We have about three radios we have to monitor. We have the perimeter defense radio which is just for our camp alone, plus the direct line telephones to the artillery, and we have the normal communications with the other teams and our B-Team. We have one other radio that we switch on that takes us directly to Bien Hoa to the C-Team in case we need their support.

Well anyway, everything was breaking loose. The first thing I did was run out here and

jump on the teamhouse roof just to determine what was going on, and the direction the fire was coming from or going out from and what exactly was going on. That's one of my duties. So I jumped up on the roof and one of our star points, it was the one to the northeast, 360 Company, Vietnamese company, their entire star point was shooting wide open with all the mortars and machine guns they had. Of course it was real exciting but it was also kind of scary because we didn't know what was happening. Right away the mortars started firing flares up in the sky so we could get an idea of what was going on out there. But even with flares it's hard to see because that grass out there is about 15 feet tall. I don't know what they call it but it looks something like bamboo, but it isn't. It's just tall grass. If the Vietnamese, I mean Vietcong, wanted to they could sneak right up to our outer wire without being detected. But anyway, pardon me, I've got a cold. I've got the sniffles, my nose is running, and my sinuses are just killing me. It just came on last night. I feel miserable but I'm taking pills for it.

Anyway, I got all the information I could and ran back down to the radio and started putting out the information to everybody. The captain was running around with his counterpart and they went over to the company to see if they could find out what was going on. About ten minutes later, everybody was still firing full blast. You could see the tracers going out into the darkness and ricocheting off trees and woodline and bouncing off the ground and everything. It was really something. Mortar rounds exploding out there in the grass and everything. After ten minutes we found out that the reason why they were shooting was because earlier in the evening something had tripped a trip flare. We have trip flares tied to all our barbed wire out there in the field. The slightest tickle by anything, even an animal, could set one off. Well, one went off earlier this evening when it was still light. Did you hear that noise? That was a mortar. I think it just shot a flare up. I'll have to wait a moment and see. But anyway, it set off a trip flare and of course everybody was looking out there trying to figure out what was going on. Yes, it's a flare, it just went off. There, you can hear the explosion. Nobody could see anything and since it was still daylight they didn't try firing at it or shooting at it or anything like that. The company commander over there said "well, you just keep your eyes peeled out there and if it happens again come get me." Sure enough, about ten minutes later, another one went off. This time it was just starting to get dark, kind of hard to tell what was going on. So we fired a couple flares up there, or they did. Couldn't see anything. The company commander said "well, keep looking and if one more flare goes off just cut loose with everything you've got because it doesn't hurt anything to be safe than sorry." So he waited, and he waited, and he waited, and nothing happened for a couple hours so he went to bed and then right about midnight, another flare went off. The whole company just opened up with everything they had.

Boy what a lot of fire power. Those tracers at night are really something to see. They

have about six or seven machine guns per company, per star point plus two or three or even four 60mm mortars that they fire, plus all the individual weapons and M-79 grenade launchers, which shoots a 40mm grenade out up to 350 meters. It's a pretty deadly little weapon, boy. It shoots a little ball out there and when it hits, it explodes. Just ka-wham. Anyway, the captain got over there with his counterpart and they got a hold of the company commander and he got a hold of his people and told them all to quit firing until they could determine what was going on. Apparently no rounds were incoming so they figured it can't be anything too bad. So after everybody shut down, they found out that another trip flare had gone off. They were just following orders from their company commander to fire. So naturally we told him he did a fine job of watching the star point, et cetera, et cetera. The alert was called off and everybody went back to bed. While it was going on, it was a little exciting--when it's pitch black out here and all of a sudden everybody cuts loose with machine guns and mortars start firing and you can hear explosions ripping the outer area. At night when it's real calm and quiet like tonight, you start hearing explosions like that, it really sets your adrenaline flowing. We got to bed about quarter to one last night. That was that. The rest of the night was quiet.

The next morning, this morning, I got up and spent all day just working my butt off. We have a lot of things we had to do. It's kind of hard to get people motivated. There's only 12 of us Americans to get so much work done. We just all work in different directions, because we have to. We can't get six people together and spend all day working on one lousy job and just let everything else drop. Today I was busy handing out bags of cement to some of the companies to build up their areas, driving around picking up sandbags that people had been filling, delivering them to the different areas and empty ammo boxes for the CIDG so they can build up their company areas and make bunkers and homes for their families and all that kind of stuff. A couple planes came in and dropped off many mucho pounds of rice and PIRs [Packet, Indigenous Rations] ,which is the Vietnamese equivalent of our C-rations. Of course, I go out there just about every plane that comes in and find out what the cargo is because I'm the S-4 officer and I have to keep track of all this stuff. I usually end up doing a lot of the manual labor of loading the truck and everything because we don't usually bring any CIDG out there with us. We used to take CIDG out there with us but then whenever we got a pallet of beer or something, of course they just kick it off the back of the plane and some boxes were bound to break and of course, the CIDG, man, they fill their pockets and just make a bee line for home. They wouldn't even stop for any reason. They get six cans of beer and they figure they've got it made; they might as well hustle out before they get caught. So they just run and hide, until we quit bringing them out. We do all the work ourselves. We had about 20 hundred pound bags of rice and probably about a hundred 50 pound boxes of PIRs to load on the truck and then drive in and unload in the food storage shed.

Oh man, I did so much I can't even remember what all I did. I spent most of the afternoon changing deuce and a half tires, believe it or not. We do have a couple of civilian employees who are mechanics but one's on leave and the other one's overworked. The other lieutenant and I pitched in and we have a little deuce and a half here that was hit by a 120mm mortar round, really demolished it. It's just been sitting around in a big pile of junk, no wheels or anything. All of the good parts have been scavenged off it and we want to backload it out of here so we had to get wheels off of one of our running deuce and a half's and put it on this one. We got one of the engineers to come over with a great big, heavy duty 20 ton crane or something and pick up the front end. Then we hauled it out to the turn around point of the airfield, jacked it up, stuck boxes under it, took the wheels off again, let it back down on the boxes, and it's going to sit out there until we can backload it. Then we had to bring the wheels back in and put them back on the deuce and a half that we took it off of in the first place. Boy those wheels are big and heavy too, they must weigh 75 pounds. There's four of them and all we had were crude hand tools and one lousy little hydraulic jack and that was it. The rest of it was all wooden blocks and braces and cranking and all that junk.

Right in the middle of the daytime I was out back working and the Top, the Vietnamese Top, the sergeant major over there, was sitting around with some of his boys who were in the CRP platoon out back here, drinking rice wine and eating cucumber and some kind of seasoning. They saw me working up on the team house roof and they invited me over for a couple minutes. The Top and I get along pretty well and the past two operations I've been on he's been out there with me and he's had real good control of the people so I kind of respect him, even though he could be cheating me behind my back. I don't know, anyway, I went over there. There were about a half dozen people there and nobody could speak English, and I couldn't speak Vietnamese so we just communicated by sign language. He got the point across that he wanted me to relax for awhile, you know, sit around and drink with him, munch on cucumber sticks, and just generally play around. I know a few words, like "beau coup" for many, and "di di mau" for move out or take off or hurry up, and "tee tee" for a little bit. I know a few more. I can't think of them right now. Oh yes, "xin loi" for good bye.

Anyway, I was sitting around the table with them and of course one of the old mamasans brought out a Coke bottle full of some clear stuff and I thought it was water. I was quite thirsty so I poured a good slug in a glass and sniffed it. It sure wasn't water; it was what they call rice wine. It's a potent clear liquid. I don't know if you ever tasted that tequila I had, but that's tap water compared to this junk. This stuff is really murder. It's like nothing that you could imagine. It's worse than anything I've ever seen or tasted or smelled or had the misfortune to run across. Well, it's a slam to them if I refuse their hospitality so I had to swallow some whether I

liked it or not. Boy, I almost choked to death. They had a good laugh. That stuff is really horrible. Of course they thought I was hungry too so they made me eat some cucumber sticks and stick it in a bowl with some kind of goopy looking junk that sticks on the cucumber and then you eat it. Of course, they only have one glass so they pass the glass around the table and you've got to share it with them, all their germy looking mouths and flies crawling all over the place. I think that rice wine would kill any germs that were on the glass.

So, I was sitting around there for a few minutes and decided I wanted to get up and leave but Top wouldn't let me. He started comparing his forearm muscles and arm muscles to mine. His were larger than mine but shorter in length. So he decided he'd try the Vietnamese arm wrestle with me. So we tried it his way and I beat him. Then I showed him my way, you know, the usual hand clasp method and then you try to push the other guy's hand down to either side. He didn't like that either because I beat him there too. So then he thought he'd be slick and he went outside and did a little stunt where he balanced himself on his hands and chided me into doing it. So I went out there and it was no sweat for me. It was something I could do easily. I made it look like I was having trouble and everything but I did it. He said, "Oh yay" and clapped me on the back and all that stuff. I said, "Oh, wait a minute. Let me show you one." So I got that yoga position, you know, where I balance myself horizontally to the floor on just my hands with my hips resting on my elbows. I did that and he said "Oh man." He was mumbling and groaning about that so, he didn't want to try it at first. I said, "Oh c'mon, I did yours now you do mine." All kinds of sign language. He got down there and he tried it and tried it. He couldn't do it so he was all embarrassed. He bid me farewell and I got about my business. I'm sure he'll try to come up with something else in the near future.

I'm sitting here in the dark and it's kind of hard to tell when the tape's going to run out so I've got a flashlight sitting up here trying to spot it. I think I'll just talk until the tape just flaps around the other reel and turn it over and start on the other side. Let's see. We got the engineers, infantry, and everybody else moved in. Whoops, there it goes. Okay, here I am on the other side. As I was saying, the engineers, and the artillery, and the infantry and everything have all moved in. It's quite an operation. They've got their own perimeter set up right at the end of our access road. The access road goes out of the camp and turns south and they are on the, excuse me I just burped, they're on the eastern side of the road going out. Right where the road meets the runway is where their main gate is. They had bulldozers in there and they plowed up a big berm for themselves and they've got concertina wire up and everything, and standoffs, which is mesh fence out away from the burn to set off any rockets before they get inside the area. They had dug in emplacements for all their APCs with 50-calibers mounted on them and of course all the people that live out there have their own bunkers and stuff all set up already. It's real dry and

dusty and dirty.

Did you hear that? That was another mortar going off. I don't know if you could hear it whiz through the air or not, but I sure could. There it goes, another flare. Those flares are 500,000 candle power. It lights up the whole area. It's really neat. In fact it's light enough to read by right now. It's about as twice as bright as a full moon would be.

Anyway, they're out there with all their equipment and everything, getting all set up in these great big trucks tearing up and down the runway. People coming in all the time to buy our beer and soda and everything. We make \$150 dollars a day, at least. It's nice to have them around in some ways and not so nice in other ways. We can sponge off of them, and like I said we got to use their big old crane today to get some of our work done. We use their bulldozers to plow up our roads and make them much nicer and cover up our junk piles outside the perimeter. Of course they're doing a whiz bang job on the runway. They're just starting but they're still doing a good job.

Tonight earlier they had what they called a mad minute. That's where every weapon in their camp fires as fast as they can fire for a solid minute. They just wanted to test all their weapons and their areas of coverage, et cetera, et cetera. I didn't know about it until things started popping, otherwise I would have had the tape recorder up here and gotten a good minute tape of all the noise and everything. I was downstairs cutting time fuse and everything, getting ready to go out and blow up some VC bunkers. All of a sudden I heard all of this tremendous uproar and I came flying out and here the whole team is standing up on the teamhouse roof looking over in their direction. They had every weapon that they owned firing as fast as they could: tracers, 105 howitzers exploding on the woodline, grenade launchers, rockets, 50 caliber machine guns. You name it, they had it firing. Boy, what a roar. Gee, there are two companies of infantry, one battery of six 105 howitzers, of course all the engineers have their own weapons and everything. Everybody was just putting out as much firepower as they could. For a minute solid you couldn't even hear yourself think, it was so loud. Bullets flying every which way. Not over the camp, but all out away from the camp, south of the camp, from 90 degrees around to about 310 degrees or so. They were firing full blast. It was really something to see. Most of the day we had jet air cover and Cobra gunships flying around to protect these guys because they have to go from here six clicks south down to get laterite which is something they need for their resurfacing material. I guess they throw that in with cement. That's what they use to resurface the runway. They have to send convoys up and down that road daily. Every morning they have to get out there and sweep the road with the mine detection team to make sure Charley hasn't put any big command detonated mines in the middle of the road.

Oh, I just remembered one thing you asked me if a klick was a thousand meters. Yes it is. It's one of those little squares on that 1/50,000 map that you have. Oh, another thing while I remember. My heliborne operation was to the northeast of camp, oh I forget how far. I think it was about seven klicks out. There's a real long, clear-type area that you can see on the map. There's one smaller area northwest of it, I mean northeast of it, and another smaller area southeast of it. I don't know if you can spot it or not, but that's the landing zone that we landed on. The other two that I mentioned were the primary and alternate that were called off at the last minute.

We usually have a light socket and a light bulb in our shower, otherwise it's pitch black in there. When a guy goes in he just screws the bulb in the socket and he has light, takes a shower, when he's finished, turns the water off, unscrews the light, and walks out. Well, the lights have only been lasting in there about, oh, three or four days and then they'll disappear. We know where they go. Sammy CIDG steals them. Of course they put lights in their bunkers. Then they get wire, again stolen from some place and tap our electric lines which put a heck of a burden on our poor old generator. Every other stupid little bunker and podunk hole-in-the-wall place around here's got a doggone light in it. The team's getting pretty upset about it, especially when we went into the shower last night and not only was the bulb gone, but the whole socket and switch, too. So we immediately went over to the generator and shut off everybody's electricity including the stupid Vietnamese Special Forces club house, and bunkers, and everything. The only electricity going out was right to our teamhouse. Of course that pissed everybody off and they came flying back over and wanted to know what we were doing shutting their electricity off, et cetera, et cetera. So we told them, "Phooey, you're not getting electricity if you're going to keep stealing bulbs and stuff from us." So they were all mumbling and grumbling and they turned and left. We still haven't gotten any light bulbs back or sockets back so they're not getting any electricity. We replaced the bulb and socket in there with a fluorescent fixture. I'm sure that will stay in there because if that's stolen, we'll go from bunker to bunker until we find it. I pity the fellow who's got it, that's all I can say.

My Dad didn't preach to me or anything, he just gave me some good pointers about the people and how I should feel about them and everything, which is true. I don't know if you heard the tape or not but he said that basically they're human beings just like we are, and we have to show them respect and learn to communicate with them and try to understand their position, et cetera. That kind of stuff. Well, it's true and no matter how hard you try, it's just fighting a losing battle. I don't know, I just can't explain it. It's just too hard to explain. Maybe when I get home and have time to think about it, think about it, and think about it, and a couple of hours to talk about it, I can maybe put it into words. I'm not really great at describing things and putting ideas into words, but this is especially tough because you just don't know how these people act.

You just don't know how they treat you.

Every company here has its own water well and they have their little shower stalls and things like that. Yet people will still come over here and sneak into our shower and take showers and everything. In fact just before I walked up on the teamhouse roof I heard somebody taking a shower and just for the heck of it I thought I'd check. Sure enough there was "Nguyen van Nguyen", or whatever his stupid name was, taking a shower, using our water when they have perfectly good wells and their own water and everything. It's just more fun to come over here and use ours. So I went in there and told him as nice as I could to get out. Of course he didn't understand a word I said, but he knew what I was saying and he left. This goes on every single day and there is no way to stop it. You can tell these people as many times as you want to just stay out of our area, you've got your own. But it doesn't do any good. I don't know. Everybody around here has been here quite a bit longer than I have and they just almost give up trying. You just can't do anything.

Yesterday we had our B-Team commander and A-Company commander come out, a couple of colonels, big wigs, and Vietnamese Army coming out and looking around. So we briefed them and everything. They put command emphasis on the fact that we are only advisors, we are not commanders. We are not in command of this camp. In no way shall we give commands, we can only give advice. As soon as they left, everybody threw up their arms and said phooey! Stupid desk jockeys, none of them I don't believe have ever been in an A-Camp and know exactly what is going on down here. They don't know how tough it is to tell the stupid Vietnamese to do something and expect to have it done. You could give them advice day in and day out as nice as you please or as nasty as you please or any way you please, put it in writing, throw it at them, give it to them on a silver tray, anything, twist their arm, but unless they want to do it, it just won't get done.

I have a problem in my supply and issue. I've got all kinds of fatigues, boots, and socks and everything for these people. Originally, we were supposed to order everything, receive it, and then give it to the Vietnamese to issue to the companies. Well, what the Vietnamese did, they'd take it from us, they got it all for nothing, as much as they wanted, they'd turn right around and sell it to the stupid, I mean to the CIDG. They were making money hand over fist just as fast as they can make money, until somebody caught them at it, realized what they were doing. So we can report them. The B-Team will say, "Well, you know how it goes, they like to make some money too, et cetera, et cetera." You can't do anything to the stupid people after you catch them doing that stuff. So that's why I've got all the supply stuff locked up in the supply room and the only way it goes out is through me. I keep track of it and all the paperwork and everything that's involved. I don't even let the Vietnamese Special Forces have anything to do with it, because just

as soon as you do, they'll find some way to connive and scheme to make money off of it. The way it's supposed to work, all these companies around here should go to the Vietnamese Special Forces and request what they want through them, and then they're supposed to come over to us and get what they want. But Sammy CIDG knows that when they go to the Vietnamese and get something or ask for something and the Vietnamese come here, and we give it to the Vietnamese, they will only get a percentage of what they requested, and of what we gave them, because the Vietnamese Special Forces will keep the rest. When they find the opportunity, they'll sell it or use it for their own good purposes. So, Sammy CIDG is smart enough to come right to me when they want cement or chicken wire or sandbags or clothes or anything like that, because they know that when I hand it out, they'll get all of it and they can keep track of it.

I have about four rolls of film here to send you, but I don't know when I'll get a chance to take them personally to the post office and mail them myself or have somebody else do it. I haven't wrapped them yet either. I've also got a couple snap links I'm going to try and send you. Those were the things that we used on your Swiss seat you know, when you rappelled at Ft Bragg. I thought they might come in handy some time. I've also got a, let's see, besides an M-16 in my room and an automatic carbine and a .45-caliber pistol, I've got a .45-caliber grease gun which is a regular submachine gun, the old World War II type, with three big clips. One of these days I'll have my picture taken with that slung around my neck. I also thought that maybe for Richard, Robert, Pete and Paul's sake, I'd get maybe four or five hundred rounds of linked machine gun ammunition, just drape it all over me, you know, have it hanging off of my shoulders, and around my arms and waist and have my picture taken that way, but it's too much trouble, otherwise I would.

I've got a few more rolls, I can get 127 super fast black and white over here but that's all I can get. I can't get any color slide film. Let's see, I think the price you paid was \$1.09 at that little store, whatever it is, Downtown Discount. I think the PX price was only a dollar. Or another thing I think I mentioned already too, when you mail a tape try putting on twenty cents. It might make it, because my folks' did. Theirs got here with twenty cents, not thirty. I think I'll take that long tape from them that I got and work on that maybe tonight or tomorrow, I don't know, whenever I get a chance.

We've got an inspection team coming here tomorrow to stay for a couple days and check over everything we have and everything we do to make sure it's all tip top and all that garbage, more paperwork. These people are from the SFOB in Nha Trang and it's all harassment. I can't believe junk like this has to go on during an actual war, but they do it. They check for things like if you have too many weapons, you've got to backload them. Even if you make good use of them, you know, put them to good use, if you don't have an authorized amount then you've got to

send them back. All this junk that I got in the supply room, it came in just a couple days ago. I've got enough to outfit everybody in camp with a pair of boots, a couple pairs of socks, and a completely new uniform but what we're supposed to have on hand is only ten percent of that so, by regulation I'm supposed to have issued out ninety percent of it, as soon as I get it, you know what I mean? Before the CRT team comes to inspect, I've got to have all that stuff issued out, but I'm not going to because it's just too much work and I've got more important things to do. So some sergeant first class or something will come in and say, "Well, Sir, why didn't you issue all this stuff out?" I'll just tell him, "Shoot, it just got here two days ago, what do you expect me to do? Jump through my butt trying to pass it out to everybody?" He'll say, "Oh, no excuse, we'll have to give you a gig on that." That's the way it goes. There's nothing you can do about it. There's a lot more stuff that gripes me but I won't carry on. There's no sense in it. It's just a crazy way to fight a war.

Another crazy thing, we need sand bags something fierce around here to patch up some of the holes and build new bunkers and replace old sandbags that are worn out, and you just can't get the dumb things. I've got a pallet load of about 4,000 of them but the only reason why I got those is because I stole them from A-Company when I was down there getting the beer and the rest of that stuff. I walked into the supply yard at noon hour when everybody was eating and sleeping, got a Vietnamese driver, had him pick the load up and set it on my flight line and then I camouflaged it. That's the only way it got out here. But I've had a request for 12,000 sandbags in for about a month and we haven't gotten them. But then you get crazy things like an ice machine or super-duper thirty-inch floor fans, you know, stuff like that really helps you fight a war. Boy, I don't understand things around here. It's really crazy. It's a good thing the engineers are here because we get sandbags from them and ammo from them and food from them that we need, things that we can't get through our normal supply channels.

Well, enough of that. I'll tell you about those, well, I don't know. What I was going to do is take the tape recorder around with me one day and just walk around the camp looking at things and making comments on things as I see them, because when I'm sitting up here, I don't really recall everything that I want to tell you about. There's gobs and gobs and gobs of stuff that I can tell you about but when I'm sitting up here I just don't think of them. So, one of these days I'll just put a, maybe I'll put that big 600 footer that you sent me and just walk around camp, and as I see things I'll just make comments about them.

I could talk about our food. I think Richard, Robert, Pete and Paul are under the impression that I have to eat C-rations all the time and dirty, grubby rice that is crawling with worms, and whatever I can get my hands on, jungle food and all that junk. Well, it's not as bad as all that. What we do have to eat is scrounged; otherwise we'd have to take money out of our

own good pockets and go buy food. Another problem there is that there's no place to buy it from because we don't have any villages in our operational area like most A-Teams. But we scrounge food off artillery; they have their food flown in. Of course, the engineers are here now so we bum food off of them. Our cook, Cookie, he does a pretty good job of fixing things up. We don't have milk or anything like that, but just Kool-Aid, and Lemonade. By the way, I do have Pepsi, that big pallet of pop that I brought back was Pepsi. I made sure of that. The next time I won't make the mistake of getting five pallets of beer and one pallet of Pepsi. It will be the other way around because I think we sell more soda than we do beer, mostly because, oh, oh, bye, hon.

18 April 1969

Friday

Hello again there, Sweetie Pie, it's immediately after finishing the first tape. I decided well, I've got some more to say so I thought I'd just start it on the second tape. I'm still sniffing, as you can hear. I just finished listening to the first tape I made you and there are so many things that I want to say and explain, well, let me start over again. When I'm explaining something to you, I should elaborate some more because there's more than I can say on each subject, but at the time I'm talking these thoughts don't run through my mind. As soon as I shut the tape recorder off, everything comes flooding back. So I thought for once I'd start another tape and see if I can remember some of the things that I wanted to say.

While I was listening to the first tape, I came back down inside the teamhouse. I'm sitting in my little room right now. While I was listening to it, all of a sudden, the whole world started to shake. Things started falling over on my shelf again and I realized, oh cripes, a B-52 strike right nearby and I don't even have a tape on that I could quick rush out and listen to it. I thought as soon as I shut this tape off, and quickly got out another tape and put it on, it would all be over. Anyway, so I just sat there and shook my head and thought well, maybe next time, some other time. One of these days I'll get a good B-52 strike on tape or weapons firing or something. I thought about taking my M-16 out and my grease gun out and just turn the tape on and let you listen to what an M-16 sounds like when it's shooting. It's really something, brrrrrrrr, just as fast as it will go. Right now I'm down in my little room, just looking around. I'm sitting on my bed, leaning back against the wall underneath my guns, looking at the shelves.

I sent you a letter, let me see, yesterday. I think it went out yesterday, on yesterday's work chopper. It had three pictures in it. It wasn't much of a letter. It was just three pictures with a little note, but a tape went along with it. On the tape I forgot to mention anything about the

pictures so I'll mention it here. The first two were taken Easter Sunday morning. It was about 7 am. I had just gotten up and I didn't feel like eating yet because I hadn't worked up a hunger, so I took the tools and the new basketball hoop out back and started to take down the old hoop. Then I remembered, shoot, I don't have a picture of it yet. Here I had been carrying on about the neat little homemade hoop I made and the basketball backboard and I don't even have a picture of it. I'm starting to take it down. Just then Lieutenant Valez came walking up. We call him Tieu-Uy. Let me inject this first. Tieu-Uy means second lieutenant in Vietnamese. The reason why we call him Tee-wee is because he was here as a second lieutenant when he first arrived here. He made first but never threw a promotion party. Just to spite him everybody on the team calls him Tee-wee. They call me Trung-Uy. That's first lieutenant, and Dai-Uy is the captain. Anyway, he came walking out and he just happened to have his Polaroid camera. So I said, "Hey, snap a couple shots." So he took the first one, and waited 60 seconds or whatever the amount is and we looked at the picture and decided it was a little too dark. He said, "Well get up there and I'll take another one." So I got back up there between the posts and I was looking at the first one, or at least I had it in my hand when he took the second shot, and you can see I've got tools in one hand and the picture in the other on the second shot. You can see the basketball hoop that I started to take down.

The third shot was taken on a Polaroid swinger camera with a flash cube. It was taken in my little cubicle that I live in. I'm just going by memory now, but, let's see, as you look in, your, on the left would be the doorway outside the team house. Looking straight in, of course you see my bed on the right side. On the left side I think you can see my footlocker. Toward the front, just behind it, I've got a little two-shelf box with my Dopp kit sitting on top of it. I think you can see that. Inside I've got my camera and my film and I've got that package with two watches in it all wrapped up ready to send you. I've got my shaver, some paper, my shaving cream, extra toothpaste, toothbrush, foot powder, pens. On the bottom shelf I've got all my letter writing equipment, all your older letters, my envelopes, pens, and all your clippings of things that you've sent me. So far I haven't pinned them up on the wall but I intend to soon. Looking straight back you can see a tall vertical shelf where I keep my clothes. On top of that, I'm going to stand up now and look while I explain. I've got a couple cans of applesauce, some C-4, my maps, pills, bayonet, a little radio in a cardboard box, and the light bulb right here in front. That's all the stuff that I take out on operation, all the stuff on the top shelf, maps and all that junk that I just mentioned. This long shelf on the top, I'll start from the front: I've got a couple cans of nuts, one is shelled pecans and the other one is shelled walnuts. On top of the can is a tail fin of that 82-millimeter mortar that landed outside the other day and I've got a light bulb and 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 boxes of .45-caliber ammunition. Light bulb, a marking pen, some books, everything from FM7-11 rifle company infantry airborne and mechanized 1965, to When Eight Bells Toll by

Alistair MacLean that I haven't read yet. I've got some aerosol, insecticide, some C-ration cans of jelly, and all kinds of magazines and information here, mail order catalogs, camera literature, stereo literature and stuff.

I got your cute little cutout that you sent me with the little picture on the second page of Portia [our German shepherd]. I thought that was really clever. That's cute. I've got your nice Easter card, sorry I didn't mention that before. The big purple thing looks like an Easter egg. I also got one from Joe and Rose, with just a little note saying this might not reach you in time for Easter, which it didn't, but wanted you to know that we think of you often, Joe and Rose Cramer. It got here Wednesday; yours got here on Saturday, just before Easter. Perfect timing. I got something here from my mom, Easter greetings. It's a card that enrolls me in the Association of Marion Helpers and you can ask her about that if you want. I got a little note and a card from my grandmother saying how glad she was to hear from me and thought that maybe you and I would slip up to see her before leaving but realized that we were probably too busy.

I've got 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 boxes of ammunition and 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 30 round magazines for my M-2 carbine. Oh say, tell Chuck that if he ever comes across an M-1 carbine again to scarf it up and hang on to it because I can get a little adapter kit over here that very easily slips on to the weapon and makes it an automatic, just like a machine gun. Tell him I can get a hold of this stuff. If I were staying in the Army, it would be no sweat to get free ammunition and as many numbers of 30 round magazines as he wanted but since I'm getting out, if he ever wanted something like that, now would be the time to pick it up.

Back to my room. Straight back on my back wall and on my right wall, I've got a plastic mat of all different kinds of colors. It's got yellow, orange red, green, white, pink, purple, blue, and of course all those colors interwoven in solid stripes and all kinds of specks. It's just nice for decoration. You can see my two rifles hanging up on the wall. The little blob toward the front is my pistol. Hanging all across the front of my cubicle here I've got vertical plastic strips with paintings and stuff on them. It's just enough for a little bit of privacy, is all. Also on the floor I've got that same plastic stuff that's on the walls.

Now, let's see. I'm trying to think of some of the things I wanted to tell you. I saw Skip George when I was in Bien Hoa. We had a good evening together and talked about old times. He's got an A-Team, or he's on an A-Team, he's the XO. He's working with Montagnards, so he gave me a Montagnard friendship bracelet. You know, one of those brass looking things that go around a guy's wrist? I'm sure you've seen them around at Fort Bragg. I pestered him and he's going to send me a few more. He's also going to send me a couple of little carved Buddha's. Supposedly if you're a Buddha, or you're a believer in Buddha and you wear one of those things,

nothing can hurt you, but you can't take a crap when you have one of those things around your neck and you can't say a naughty word. If you're going to do either of those two things you have to take it off. There's a whole bunch of other little rules that go along with it, but I don't know what they are yet. He said he could get me a crossbow and some arrows so I said, "Man oh man, get me one of those things." I saw one while I was down there and boy they're really neat. Powerful little jobs, too. So I told him to try to get me one. I don't know how he's going to get it to me, but when he does, I'm going to wrap it up and send it home. Those things are somewhat hard to get. They're really neat. Good little souvenir.

He told me that Judy Holland was fine, that he had a good leave. They missed us out on Ocracoke Island after the party. The weekend after the party they said they were going out the following morning, I forget when. Anyway, they said they were going out there and they wanted us to come out. You know how we said, "Well, maybe we will come out." We almost did. That was the weekend of the big storm or hurricane or whatever it was that hit the coast and they didn't have such a great time out there. So I'm kind of glad we didn't go out.

I also got a letter from Chuck. He was carrying on about the new car. Let's see, if I remember it's a '66 Oldsmobile. It's got a stereo tape deck in it. Now, I would like you to listen to that the next time you get a chance to, and tell me what you think, because I can get one over here brand new for \$53 or something. Those things are really neat. The music is pure and clear. One of those little tiny cartridges holds an entire record album, or more even. It's real easy, you just slip it in and away it goes. If you don't like the song, you hit a button and it changes to a different track and you get a different song. I heard Lt. Ellisor's and also Crabtree's. They both had them in their cars. Although it's a luxury, it sure is nice. It's almost like FM radio, only it's even better because you don't get any advertisements or static or anything. They had Hugo Montenegro's album, the same one we do, and Percy Faith and the Shirelles, you know those old songs like "Soldier Boy," and a whole bunch of other things like that. They're really neat. Also, well let me know how you feel about getting one of those things. When we sell the car we can easily take it out and put it in the next car we get. Also, that thing that I sent home earlier to you about that Columbia Record Club or whatever it was, the stereo tape cartridge player that you can get for \$14.95, whatever. I could get one of those things and we could play the tapes in the car and in the house through the regular stereo system that I'm presently building. So, it might be something to keep in mind after all.

The reason why I have so much time to myself tonight is because the team's in there watching "The Green Berets." We got that movie in this week. A couple of the guys haven't even seen it, so they're showing it. Since I've seen it, I didn't really feel like seeing it again. I started to watch it but then changed my mind and I came out here and made tapes.

I was talking about Chuck's letter. He told me about the jukebox he had and about how he wanted some more fatigues and how I was doing about getting some watches for him. I can get watches easily enough, it's just a matter of having the money at the time I see them, buying them and wrapping them and sending them home. I don't know if there will be duty or not. Maybe a dollar or two duty, if that much. These watches are really sharp. I've got two of them that I'm sending home for you. If you want, you can sell them to my dad, or whatever. I don't know what to say.