

Sept. 22 1966 {we are probably going to Ben Cat near Saigon.}

Dear Mom and Dad

Well, here starts a 2-week letter. I am on the Walker. We got on at 10:00 a.m.. the boat left dock at 2 p.m.. We are in very crowded quarters. Near the fantail at the deck near the waterline. We are packed in like sardines and it takes three hours to feed all of us chow. They cook a good meal on the boat too. For as big as this boat is, it is like a toy boat in a bath tub. We had a storm while in the straights around midnight. The boat started rocking on top of a shake from an off balance propeller shaft. Today is cloudy but not raining as of noon. We are 250 miles on our way. Troop ships are top heavy riding. I got hit by sea sickness before breakfast. I had been all right before. I ate very little breakfast. This noon I made a mad dash from the chow line to the rail. Then I felt better and was able to eat something. Quite a few guys are feeling bad. And the rails are used even by Lts. and Majors. It is strange how a rocking boat can do that to a person. Some people are used to it. Others are not affected.

We have a mascot aboard. It is a dog named Fido. If the writing is rough, it is because the boat is tossing worse. I'm a little better tonight. Other guys are getting woozy.

Saturday time three hours' differences from home. I was able to eat breakfast without feeling like I was going to heave. But was still feeling bad. I went back down the stair well to get my jacket, when I came back up I had to do some dodging. Someone didn't make it to the rail. They showed movies on deck last night. I was in bed but from what I hear it sent a lot to the rail because there was only standing room. There are medium seas today. We will start some classes today as well as a boat drill. Pm, It has cleared up but still jacket weather. I was able to eat lunch OK am much better. Still, just as rough. If you look in any direction, you'll see the same thing elsewhere. This is all one can see for weeks.

Sunday the 25th. Well, it is cloudy again with patches of fog. Still, cold yet. I saw a school of dolphins this morning. All the guys rushed to the rails to see them.

Monday the 26th. Well, we reached warmer waters. The sun is out and it is partly cloudy. The water is much rougher today. At times the prop leaps out of the water. We are heading straight in at an SWW course. This morning one guy barfed down the stair well and one on the Mess hall floor. Other than that most guys are OK. Although cool up here it is hot and muggy inside.

It sure is unusual guys walk around like they are drunk. Those that are sick look like they are suffering from a hang over.

When one eats your soup, the coffee slashes back and forth. The boat is just plain crowded except for the 2nd deck fantail where there are fewer guys as it is bouncy. The deck in the rear is covered with black grit or soot. It gets everywhere.

Afternoon a bunch of guys got soaking wet. They were up near the bow. A big wave broke over and got them wet. So that area is off limits as it is rough still. Got two pictures of bow waves.

Boy, that is something to eat lunch. Ones feet almost leave the deck then double weight. The tray stack went up and down a foot on its spring weights. The floor is slick from spilled coffee, food. Luckily the dining hall is midship where it rides smoothest.

Tuesday, Well, it has calmed down. The temp is in the 80's. Nice on deck but like an oven below. There was a great deal of barfing yesterday. I'm up in the bow now. It's deck is

drying off. I was up here yesterday, when a wave washed in and knocked some troops down. Much calmer today. They put us on water rations today. Only three hours for shaving, showers. The evaporators only makes so much which is not enough anyway for 3500 people and cooking and washing laundry and dishes.

Wednesday, time is six hours different from home. Last night I was eating chow when the boat ran into a rain squall. All at once we tilted so that the trays slid down the table. Up on deck the wind was very strong and out of the northwest. It rained like mad for half an hour. It got so rough that waves were breaking on the bow. And water flew as far as the pilot house. The boat tossed all night. This morning it has calmed down and is clear. Also, cooler. We are north of Hawaii islands. Haven't seen one yet.

Friday. You are probably wondering why I didn't write Thursday? Well, for us it never existed. We crossed the international date line last night. We are now one day seven hours different, being 6:15 a.m. here, probably 1:15 p.m. at home.

We know we are only going as far as Okinawa from there are destination is not yet known. Not even to the Captain of the ship. He will receive our destination there.

I saw a boat this afternoon. Everyone went crazy to see another boat. It was a Gulf oil tanker heading east. Our boat tilted to one side as everyone lined the railing to see.

Saturday Oct. 1. The seas are calm today. However, it is quite warm on deck. And like an oven below. Our ventilator broke down last night. And since we have no portholes we roasted. Compartments with portholes are cooler.

T-355 days of the tour.

Sunday. Already, it is so hot that we have our shirts off. There is little breeze as we are going with the wind. The seas are still calm. Yesterday temp air 88, water and unbelievable 84. Our laundry system is unusual. We tie it on a rope and throw it in the ocean McHale navy style. It works pretty good too. At 4200 miles out I got Vancouver BC. last night. Their temp 54 at 1 a.m.. It was 8 p.m. here. 8 hours difference. Today I also received a New Mexican station.

Sunday afternoon Oct. 2. Well, it finally happened. The boat broke down. We are now running at reduced speed. And only on one propeller.

Monday Oct. 3, they finally got the engine repaired. A bearing burned out. So we are back at normal speed and will continue to Okinawa. The temp reached 90 yesterday. It was so hot below everyone stayed on deck as much as possible. At night many slept on floors, at ventilators or if they were able to sneak out on deck. Everyone is in undershirts even Captains and Majors.

Well, we are due in Okinawa Thursday. All letters have to be mailed today so I will have to close. I don't have an APO number yet so until I get one use the Fort Lewis address.

Our total time difference will be 13 hours ahead or you 11 hours behind. 160 longitude differences.

Ron.

PS, our destination and mission are still unknown. Today temp Monday 3 Oct. air 86 water 84, the humidity so high there was a rainbow in the sky.

October 4 T-354 days of tour 11 days at sea and no land.

Dear Mom and Dad.

Well, another hot day is here after a hot sweaty night below. I stayed up in the fan tail till 10:30 last night with the radio listening to Japanese stations, play American music. The seas have been calm for the past week now. The water temp. is still 84. But one thing remains the same. The humidity is so high it is hard to dry anything. Yesterday, there was a rainbow in the blue sky from the moisture. The boat is just plain crowded. It takes two mess halls three hours to feed everyone. Prices in the PX are low on other things such as a 7x50mm binocular with case \$25.00, even expensive Accurtron watches only \$90. Cameras are low priced for the expensive ones.

We will spend a day in Okinawa but will be treated like a boat load of prisoners. There will be extra guards on board. Also a massive guard on the dock and woe to the guy whoever gets near the gang plank or tries to jump overboard.

Did you know it is a federal offence to have a US dollar bill in your possession? It is in Vietnam. We will be paid on the 15th of October, or three days after our arrival in Vietnam base camp. We will be paid in military currency.

For what few persons have blood relatives in Okinawa they won't even be permitted to see them.

Everyone carries canteens full of water with them. The water gets turned off unexpectedly for long periods of time including drinking fountains. Our time difference is 9 hours or 15 hours ahead of you. It's getting hard to sleep. Little room on deck in the day, too hot at night.

T-353 Wed. Oct. 5th.

Found out more. We will be the last group to unload from the boat. This is so our tracks will be there. We will unload four days after we arrive in Vietnam or wherever they send us.

I sighted land yesterday. It was a small mountainous island. It was either Wake Island or one near it. Today is cloudy and cool out, like an oven below. Yesterday the ocean was unbelievably flat. There was hardly a ripple and except for flat small swells was like a mirror. I have seen several small boats on the horizon.

Thursday Oct. 6 T-352

It was cool last night. I watched the movie on deck. They start out with a training film, then a comic. Last night they had Father Goose. The night before Goliath and the Sins of Babylon was shown with the wide picture. Well, at 7 a.m. radio reception is very good. We are hearing yesterdays ball game live today. Now 10 hours difference or 14 ahead of you. Haven't sighted land yet but expect to soon.

Will close now as I have to mail it now.

Ron.

T-350 Sunday Oct. 9th

Dear Mom and Dad,

Well you may wonder why it is dated as so. I lost a letter over the side from a gust of wind. We are now in the South China Sea heading for the destination that I put in the last letter dated through Sept.

I sighted land at 9:15. We were in the port of Namu by 1 p.m.. This is a small but busy port. Half is occupied by army and navy yards. The rest is commercial cargo.

There was a new Japanese liner in port that left after we docked. There must have been some kind of convention on board as the boat was covered with ribbons and a large crowd was dockside. As our boat was turning around, we came quite close. Then I noticed that there were seven dozen horses tied to the railing in the fantail. The boat went north when it left. There were also some navy cargo vessels and old merchant ships that exchanged cargo all night. There are also very old rusty liberty ships carrying military cargo. No wonder all the breakdowns.

The only time we set foot on land was for PT. Even that was good. It was cool all the time we were there. The boat took on a load of fuel and we set sail at 7 a.m.. Lost sight of land at 9:15 Friday.

Saturday. I saw several islands of the Philippines today. All I could get on the radio was Chinese stations. Yesterday we listened to the Okinawa stations which came in good. The weather is hot and muggy, water 84 and air 84. Hot below. They loused up Friday movie by calling a muster around 7 p.m. forcing everyone to spend hours in the oven. So what happened tonight? The projector broke down half ways through the film.

Sunday, am picking up one American operated station again. It is getting muggier out so everyone seeks shade. Saw three boats today so far. One is going our direction. It is an old cargo ship and is slower than us. I do know our destination for sure. All I can say now is it is the same place as thought we might go. We are now 13 hours ahead of home. Let me know if any mail gets cut up. If so I will write on one side only.

5 finger discount is getting bad here. I lost two rolls of film and one towel. Many guys are losing clothes and other articles. We still have apples, oranges and the special processed milk. Most everything else is either canned or frozen except for potatoes. There is still ice cream every day. The cabbage is all gone now, so no salads.

T-348 Monday. Land Ho. Sighted some large Islands. They may belong to the armpit of the world. It did not cool off much last night. Our ventilator broke down. It was so hot I took my mattress and moved to a stairwell where the outside air came down. Many people slept on the floor and in hall ways. Those that could avoid the guards slept outside. Our compartment reeked of BO, moisture and mildewing clothes. It is hard to dry anything and as the salt takes moisture from the air and makes them damp. Yesterday's temp 87 water 85 that makes for a warm salt water shower.

This morning, as the sun rises, is sure strange as a small thunder storm is on one part of land. The mountain of the highlands comes down to the sea. The sea itself is like glass broken by the bow of the boat. And it is warm out. One can go naked and be comfortable

The clouds even react to the water. We did not go into the port that day. Instead, we stayed offshore all night.

Tuesday 11 T-347. We stayed out till noon, then sailed into Cape St. Jacques. Where we anchored offshore. Saw several Sampans. There are lots of cargo ships anchored here waiting to

unload at Saigon. We will leave last. I'm stuck with Red Tat so I don't know when I leave as I have to stay with that.

The weather today is cool for this place. It is hot in the sun though. It rained in the morning. It was sure hot yesterday. Like an oven below as usual.

The cape is rugged and has some villages along the coast. The buildings look like a Mexican village. South of the cape the land is so flat it is almost like the sea. There are Jellyfish in the water and already we have seen several poisonous salt water snakes. The only place in the world such creatures exist. That is all that is new now, Will mail this as I may be busy for the next several days.

Will close now.

Ron

Wednesday Oct. 12th T-346

Dear Mom and dad,

Surprise! We got off the boat first. We got on an LST craft at 5:30 before sunrise. Reached shore at 6:30. We then got in trucks and waited at a camp on the coast till the rest of the group arrived. We received C rations and basic load of ammo. At 9:30, we left on a 3-hour trip to a temporary base camp. I lost my map of Vietnam so I am not sure where the camp is in relations to large towns.

This is sure some fascinating country. We went through the town at the cape. It is like a midway at the fair. Lots of color as the shops are close together and all open front. They have a variety of things, even motorcycles, used bikes, restaurants home style of course. Small lumber businesses, wood for fires, booze etc. Even Shell gasoline. We took the main road toward Saigon. The road is gravel but is like Bacon Rd. The first half of the trip was through flat tidal marshland. There were several villages every few miles. The area there is fairly secure. However most of the bridges had bypass bridges as the one lane concrete bridge of the original road had been destroyed. Many are being replaced by new ones under construction. The second half of the distance took us through gently rolling plains. Here the land changed there were large fields of rice. Later on there were large rubber plantations. Also the roads had guards set up like we did on a field problem, as it is not secure along this route. We did see some artillery fired and heard some small arms but both were in separate locations and could have been just practice to move in on potential targets. Had they been real there would have been Jets pounding the area also.

I have our location. The nearest town is Long Thong and is 20 miles due east of Saigon. We are now in Camp Marathon Cox. We will be here for a while, then, set up our own camp.

Pic, The road is Highway 15.

When you send a package could you send a 100 ft. roll of 100 lb. test nylon line like you got once before. Also the better map if you can get one.

The APO number is 96268. Use the address like you would for Ft. Lewis. But, for the last line, instead of ft. Lewis, use APO 96268 San Francisco.

I saw quite a few water buffalo and brama cattle. They are the domesticated beasts of the field. Most are so tame the kids take them care of them. Some families have dogs of a breed I've never seen before.

Everyone seeks shade in the day, even the cattle.

We are in a brushy type of climate. It is not dense jungle in this area as it has seasons like Washington. No rain for six months, rain for six months. We are just out of the rainy season at this time.

There are cocoanut and banana trees in the villages, but, none in the wild land. Unlike other Southeast Asia countries, there is lots of wilderness land.

Oh yes, one kid got bit by a VC scorpion. It is not serious and he just got a tetanus shot and pills. He is OK. The base has a lot of work done by civilians from the village. They leave the post in the evening. They are searched in and out.

There is a pine tree. It has long needles and a funny shape. We have a grass that is the same as a weed back home.

Pic of pine trees here

Thurs. 13th

The hawk was biting last night. *I have no idea what this means.* Did that feel good as it was hot all day.

We started off with classes today. Tonight, we watch the perimeter. This is well set up for once. There is a 200 yd. or more strip of nothing. Anything is fair game at night. This camp has never been hit as the only VC in the area are local.

Everyone noticed something when we got here. A familiar smell, that of fermenting fish. *NucMan, a fish sauce made by fermenting a species of fish found in the Saigon Delta. It smells like rotting fish.*

Finally got mail. It is raining like mad but cooler. To answer the question about the bike. I would be quite safe as long as I am on the main roads. But, only during the day. At night, all roads are Charles. The only action in the day on our road to camp is snipers and the only personnel they get are officers and only if they go souvenir hunting. No one goes off this road into the woods. Too many booby-traps.

Friday 14th. I did not have much time to write and it gets dark early. It rained hard that evening. We got soaked going to chow. After chow, I went to a meeting. Along with several others, I was out on the first patrol. We had a briefing that night and got ready.

Today we left early to avoid the moist heat. Everyone had plenty of ammo and water. We crossed the front line in our defense positions. The area was reconed before the rest came across the fence. Then, we were in the brush. It was not more than 20 ft. high yet we had to hack a path through.

For the amount of time we had, the patrol had been made too long. We came upon a trail where the Cong had set up camp at one time. The area was checked out. We then headed back. In all, we had no contact except for a deer and one casualty when one troop got a branch in his eye. For traveling only 1,200 yards, it took four hours and hot all the way. No breeze, very wet foliage.

I got my Quarter Horse magazine today. This crazy company is keeping us busy. Tonight is perimeter defense and tomorrow is more patrolling.

Last night was quiet. We were awake half the night from our own artillery firing rounds at targets all night. Also, a rat scared a guy when it ran around. We killed another scorpion today and they say there are more around. So, this is how life is like in the "Armpit of the World."

Will close

Ron

Dear Mom and Dad; T-342

Went out on the perimeter defense last night. We occupied sand bag bunkers. There is a brush less view for 200 yards. Only trouble is, it is tall grass and that comes very close to the bunker. There were a lot of itchy trigger fingers last night. Charlie didn't come around the camp. He snipped the water hole instead.

So after a sleepless night with the mice of the bunker, we were able to have time off to get settled in the tents. The temp averages in the 90's by day 70's by night.

T-341 Sunday. Oh, the place is trying to run us ragged. If we are going to be out all night then the first Sergeant is out of his mind if he tries to work us all day too, even Sunday. Spent all morning on getting B bags, cleaning weapons. We had chow at 8:30. When we got back, I got the bike. It was already unpacked.

Well, a dud had to be with us and started coughing at the wrong moment on the ambush patrol. 2 VC's came down the track talking to each other. I was facing rear security at the time. They came from the front, then ducked into the brush when they heard the coughing. Why no one opened up was unknown probably were waiting for the signal. They should have fired then. So we missed by that much from being the first outfit in the 4th div. to get a VC.

Of all the time the 4th. has been there in Pleaku, they have had only nine dead, one from enemy mortar, the eight from their own carelessness.

Monday, another ambush patrol last night. We used a different location this time. A sniper shot was fired at us. It was the only shot fired that night. We heard some VC and saw one but none were in the kill range. It was a much better patrol and we pulled out fast and quiet. Some of the positions got invaded by soldier ants and forced a few of us to move. It sounded like rain as they moved in a river. And they do bite. Had our patrol killed any VC, It would have been the first outfit in the 4th division to do so in actual combat. Put it this way our platoon has had more combat experience in our relatively safe area then the other units, especially the 1st and 2nd bdg in the Pleaku area. Which is suppose to be bad. Now we should be able to sleep for a while. Today Is the 17th. I got a letter dated 14th have all six letters.

It is not rain soaked here, but one area in the Delta being a bad one as the monsoon starts there soon. We occasionally may get a shower every afternoon. As part of the rain. Our temp has averaged in the middle 90's in Pleaku night 60's. Night time down to 60's. It is bad only when the wind doesn't blow. And on hikes in the wet brush. There we sweat a lot. Go ahead and send a tape recorder. You will have to buy two of the same models one for you and one for me as the different models are different speed. They are thinking of moving us again. Found out more about that. Our tracks have to be combat ready by the end of the month. We are good here till December. Then we may set up our own camp. My complete address is

PFC Ronald F. Picardi

Co.A 2-22inf 4th Div. 3rd beg.

APO 96268 San Francisco, California

This will always stay the same no matter where we go.

They better start changing policy soon. They are doing too much in too little of time. And Chow is a mess again. We are working up to 24 hours on many days. This includes perimeter defense and night patrol. One does not sleep on this job. The mess hall except for breakfast is feeding us like we've been surrounded for months. As usual their supply is a mess.

A truck goes into Saigon at least every day. This is been good detail from what I've heard. They take four men to ride shot gun. They then can see Saigon. Another detail is the 24-hour waterhole guard. I guess that must be a blast for the guys down there. There is few down there every night. As it is close to Long Thong believe it or not everyone is required to bring Trojans. The country is crazy. Also, the xxxxxxxxx in dirty conditions and VD is high. Tuesday. Last night we were stand-by platoon for line defense. Well it had to happen. Radar picked up some Cong. So to be extra cautious, everyone rushed to the line. Since most weapons were locked up in supply, there was a big mess at the place. And much wasted time. Now everyone has their weapon and must take it with them outside company areas. The mortars had a bunch of bad flares and as a result dropped one on the Coronals tent. One round fell 100 ft. from the gun. The front line shot up a large amount of ammo. I don't think they hit anything. A Viet Cong could sneak up close, as the grass is tall clear to the line. So I did get some sleep last night even though it was interrupted.

Today I got stuck with trash detail. We loaded it up and headed for the dump. Which is outside the camp. Some Vietnamese workers unloaded our truck. They searched through for C rations, lumber, anything usable. On the last trip out I found some plastic packages of cigarettes, matches, instant coffee etc. When we left, I gave it to them. They sure went through that fast.

Tonight I'm on Battalion CQ, this definitely means the next day off. It will keep me off the line awhile.

Oh yes, we will go Pleaku by convoy at a later date. My address remains the same. It rained today for an hour. We caught some water off the roof. It is good to drink untreated water for once.

Here is a \$1 script. this is what we are paid in. I will wait till next payday, then send a military check home. I got \$102. this month Sept. pay. They change the script every six months to discourage the drain on gold into this country. It also keeps the black market down. In order to buy any Vietnamese products in town or pay a worker. We must exchange it for Piasters. We cannot exchange P's for script as it is no good to them.

Well I shall close. Will write again if they give me any time.

Ron.

Dear Mom and Dad T-338 Oct. 19th Package sent today.

I don't know if you have the package yet. But if you do disregard the camera part. I have located it. Another kid has it by mistake, on a loan from another kid. He is out on line tonight. Tomorrow I go to the water hole so I will tell you now in case I don't get a chance to write later.

I mailed three rolls of film. It cost 40 cents air mail. The PX is small but they have all kinds of film. They even have EX-126-20 slides. When you get the pictures, look at them, then send them all at once in a package. This I'll get at base camp. I'll then send them home. Send the slides too. I have the little projector for them.

While I was on CQ some joker called up and said they were being fired at by the line. It was 7 p.m. and they were on patrol. The stupid idiots should have known better then to come in at such an hour without calling. I guess they were late coming in. They were ordered to stay out till dawn.

The line did get harassed Monday night. Charlie crawled up in the tall grass and tossed a grenade at a bunker. It fell short. There was also small arm fire from Charlie. Half the line opened up at them when the flares were sent. Charlie hid in the grass. It is believed two men were hit by one of our M7A grenades when he started shooting. There is no conformation on that through. No one was hurt by Charlie. Two got injured. One bashed up his finger when he stepped in deep mud and fell on his weapon on a hard surface. Another dropped a mortar round on his foot.

I think they finally realized the danger of the tall grass. And no spotlights. There was a meeting at battalion last night. This was discussed along with other subjects.

I tried to get some piasters today but couldn't find the finance office. I used my bike today. Will go to bed early.

Ron

PS When I can get a dictionary or someone else does, several of us are going to learn Vietnamese.

Dear Mom and dad T-336 Oct. 21

Well, I got on water point guard yesterday. I located my camera but didn't have it for the water point. The next time we get it I will take my camera down. Also, some money.

The water point is down by a small village {BearCat} about as big as some wild west town. It is surrounded by a wire fence to discourage Cong activities in town. A small ARVN camp is next to town. We are on the west side of the town. A store across the creek, then the jungle. As expected twice, 3rd plt starts to guard and others messed up the town and the stores are off limits. Even guys that have laundry in town can't get it. The same old thing, Coronal Garth scared of his own men like on the boat. That still doesn't keep us from buying things as the store keeper brings ware out to the line for us. The black market peddlers bring out their jewelry and watches. There is also plenty of ice cold coke for sale. One has to wipe the cap as the ice is non potable water. Even the whore house has set up shop in a hidden corner of the jungle. The water trucks come constantly all day for the whole brigade. A truck with a chlorination plant produces a 2-inch stream of water continuously. Yet, it takes all day to fill all the trailers twice. Most of the guys were gone to the bridge. The gate by the road or in the woods. Down by the road the peddlers had their stuff. All kinds of traffic from oxcarts to army trucks goes down HX15.

The store had two truck loads of metal foot lockers sold each day to army personnel at about \$6. each.

Guys bought candy cigarettes. I got a jungle hat {cowboy type} camouflaged Australian for \$1.50. So did a lot of guys. The Coronal doesn't like them.

When evening comes it is a different story out here. Towards dusk, all the ox carts come back loaded into town. A stray vehicle may travel in the dark but then there is no traffic. Dark at 6:30. By 7:30 the last oxcart with lights on top comes in then all is quiet except for the noise of dogs, glare of searchlights from ARVN camp and gunfire in the distance. They say water point is attacked every other night. Although we have three sand bagged bunkers, which are in bad spots this is being improved. The force instead of a squad will become a platoon guard. In the mean time we have all the ammo we need plus trip flares and claymore mines out front.

Last night we may have had an aggressor or two but no one fired at us. We may have hit one a blast of grapeshot. A new round for the 79 instead of an explosive warhead it has a small shotgun barrel in the round and no warhead. The effect is like a sawed off shot gun. You don't have to worry about short distance shooting with this round. A few grenades were tossed at night. One flare was set off by an animal but otherwise a quiet night. About 5 a.m. the woodcutter left town in their oxcarts, then everything returned to normal.

Everyone will get a bed tonight for once for a nice weekend of guess what? Saturday, night and all day Sunday a company operation. So there is how we spent the weekend. This is directly connected which what I found out a few days before on CQ. We will wear hot coats like flack jackets. We will lead as usual and we got gypped out of our jungle boots. All companies Inc. HQ have them. Most of ours got at least new boots, but 3rd plt. is stuck with our old rotten ones for a while. And with the worst part of the mission at that.

Our company has caught the worst work of the battalion and 3rd plt has caught the worst of the company. This is why we have had only three good nights of sleep, one bad night of sleep and six nights of no sleep. Oh yes no sleep in day time either. Lately we have got a little and Chow is improving in amount.

You asked in one letter if I got my bike. Well it even beat Red Tats cargo. I let supply room personal use it on post. In turn they keep it in supply room and are supposed to keep it cleaned up and oiled. I got my cowboy hat today. Supply room had it. Today's letter is Oct. 15 today is 21. 6 days difference. Actually our mail arrives in the evening is sorted at night and given out in the morning.

Well it is raining again in the afternoon after a warm partly cloudy day. It doesn't last long though.

We will use our APC's tomorrow, goodie, goodie. No walking and overheating in our heavy coats. Maybe by the end of the tour we may be in Jungle clothes with gear-----gear and a hat instead of a hot helmet that won't protect one anyhow. It will also be much quieter moving around.

Well will close now so it can get sent out by tonight. I'll write again when they give me time.

Ron

Dear Mom and Dad Monday 24th

Well, I've have managed to scrounge some time to write a fast letter. The company commander says it will be better. So far it's getting worse. Time for anything has ceased to exist. We have only 16 hrs. to clean equipment, shave, sleep, write and there is lots to get done. To make things worse tomorrow we go on a 5-day mission. Most of us haven't got laundry back and have no clean clothes.

Talk about getting dirty is what we did. I will only tell a little as I have time to. On the way out two tracks get buried in mud halfway up the side. It took four tracks to pull one out.

More bad news. We are staying out for eight days now. 8 days of little sleep limited water, mud, leaches mosquitoes, briars, thick jungle, deep rivers, heat and even cold. It is eight p.m. that I write this. We set up camp after being unable to cross the river by tracks.

{Intelligence said it was a creek}. Actually, it is 40 ft. wide over 8' deep. 70 degrees mud banks. They made us stay out till we crossed it by foot. We cut down a tree and shimmied across getting all wet in doing so. Some fell in but hung on or they could have drowned. Brigade is sure slaving us. They must be crazy.

Oh yes spent a nice Saturday night on patrol. It rained all night. Average temp 68, believe it or not. It was certainly cold. Stayed cool most of the day.

Them idiots lied at Fort Lewis like the rainy season over. Others here say it is starting. Also 2-3 day missions at most, with rest in between. HA! They keep this up, they will start killing morale and then men because of exhaustion. Oh yes 2-12 killed one of their own men due to careless use of weapons. Now when it gets hot they let us shed flask jackets. They found out they are hot.

Patrols are more fun now. Actually they are not too bad. They have to bring plenty of iodine as we get scratched from brush and it does fester up. There are lots of big 2'x4' leaf plants to cut down. Also bamboo, 10 ft. grass and other goodies. Perhaps the best pests we found are leaches. They are blood sucking slugs and do crawl up to one then sucks blood. You can't feel them bite. They love to bite and suck on the face, neck and around the crouch. And ankles. Some had three and four leaches on their privates.

Well, we will have no time to sleep or do anything else for? amount of time. I don't know when I can mail a letter again. Go ahead and sent the pictures by air. Mail packages, they should make it by the time I am here at camp.

Well, will close, get packed and go to sleep.

Ron,

Dear Mom and Dad Written 28 Oct. ? Friday.

We have three days out in the field. We may spend up to 10 more with limited clothes, almost no water to wash unless it rains and little sleep at night.

During the last problem I had a night patrol. As usual the Cong knew we were there and just played around to see what we do. It rained all night and was cold believe it or not. The monsoon season is here. We only get rain in the afternoon and part of the night. On the same problem we crossed a river by a fallen log. We had been told by recon it was a creek fordable by tracks. HA! It was 8th deep with vertical clay sides. We all got wet crossing. We were then attacked by blood sucking leaches. Well, we came in on the 23rd, only we did get a shower. But had trouble filling water cans and canteens. All our mess gear was filthy.

We left our mud hole motor pool on the 24th. We went down HY. 15 past Long Thong and then down a dirt road going southeast along the marsh land. We are now guarding some artillery pieces. All night they fire at targets on the higher ground. There is also a lot of TNT dropped on the tidal flats 5 miles north of us. There is a village along the edge of the rice paddies. We ran a recon patrol through the suburbs of the village to the rice fields. We went pass grass huts through back and front yards and around gardens because it is on the edge of higher ground. There are creeks and much marshy ground along the way. The entire area is planted in banana and cocoanut trees. The people along the way watch us go by. Many were happy to see us even though we walked through their yards. Most of the guys were careful when they walked. There were some homes that seemed to be abandoned. Now that I think of it, it could be homes of VC suspects. Most people for what they have keep their yards neat and orderly. They are mostly rice farmers living on the higher ground. The rice fields extend for miles of sea level land.

The base camp is on higher ground. The land is brushy jungle with no high canopy. We sleep in leaky tents. When we get time, we will put up new ones. The place is getting very muddy, with coming rains. Once every week we get harassed at camp by VC. Otherwise, they don't mess with us.

You can go ahead and send the hometown paper. Our weather is terrible. It is cold and wet at night. Extremely hot and no wind by day. While one APC movement we are forced to wear heat stroke coats *flack jackets*. This is bad as we don't have much water and are forced to sweat like wet sponges.

I should be back to base camp by the time the pictures are sent. This is sure some war. We set up camp and have a road through which civilians use. Their taxi service is a 3-wheel single piston-powered cart. It is quite commonly used. They are often loaded with people and goods. We sometimes hire one to bring us ice from Ben Cat for 100 p's for one block {quite high but worth it to cool cokes we brought along.} The kids come through with goods and sodas at high prices, the bananas although small and green are ripe and better tasting.

Two big double beater choppers have brought in drinking water and also took out a water trailer.

Well, it has clouded up and feels cooler when it does. At night the road is closed and anything without lights is fair game after 9 p.m. till daylight. No one except Charlie travels at

night. This is all I can think of for not about here.

Yesterday I got three letters. I hope I answered all
question from home so far. You better use airmail to here. The string is for souvenir hunting.
That is to see if it is booby trapped.

Send some hard candy. It is the only kind that won't melt here. Also, send out some pre
sweetened coolade. Well this is all I can think of for now. Will close.

Ron.

PS I have done traveling by convoy a lot as is
the custom of Mech. Inf. So far I haven't used my camera but will take it on the next mission.

The dog from 2-12 got loose one night and came to our area at base camp.

I don't know when I send mail again. This was borrowed paper and we're still out in the
boonies.