

Dear Mom and Dad, 28 Nov. 66 T- 9months 3days.

EST 1 Sept, So they say.

Well, to start off I have heard from other guys of some joker sending false KIA, WIA, and MIA. to their parents and girl friends. Had one guy hurt today. Back at Martian Cox they were burning trash in a barrel. An M79 round exploded in the fire spraying metal fragments through the tent. He got a piece of metal in his hand.

Yesterday we went on a long patrol. It was through brush and waist high grass. The sun was like an oven. Everyone sweated like mad. When we came in, we were all beat although we had water left. We lucked out on ambush patrol. Bravo company beat us to the same sight.

Today we came to Martian Cox by air to pickup our gear. We rode in an old C143 2 engine cargo plane. The flight was rough. A few days before we saw one crackup on landing. It had received VC ground fire. They clipped tree tops then bellied landed. No one was hurt seriously. We landed at Bear Cat ARVN camp. Which is a mile from Martian Cox. It had been welcome rest all day.

Here is a roll of exposed 126-12 I found in my duffle bag. Seems though they told the guys here we would not come back. So they packed all our stuff. Everyone is missing stuff. I have no idea what is on the film. If it is the one I think it is there well be seven pictures of the boat and trip to Bear Cat also a 2-engine cargo plane. The rest are water point which Mike took. If it is the one from the old camera {which is missing again} there will be seven of Mikes water point pictures and the rest?

My radio uses penlight batteries and rig up a 6-volt hookup. I'll probably have trouble taping here if other guys are around as our language is out of sight even in front of the Vietnamese tent maids they hire. They just wash clothes {we supply the soap} shine shoes, sweep the tent and loaf the rest of day. Usually we try to learn each others language.

Will close for now,

Ron

Nov. 9th Dear Mom and Dad

Well I have no choice but to send this home. The PX had no film developing service. Saigon's film lab is closed.

So I'm sending this home for you to develop. Send it all back in a package as soon as possible. I'll then mail them back.

Something else happened. A low life stole my camera while I was on detail. They left the case. Could you send me Christine's camera in the same package? I'll pick up one here as soon as I can get into town. About next payday, I'll send a check home of over \$100. They say it is better than money orders.

Ron

Oh yes, I've locked up everything I can. so have the other guys who have lost watches, radios, shaving gear even dirty underwear.

You'll have to send back airmail. Otherwise, it may end up on a slow boat.

Nov. 30 T- 9 months 0 days. Dear Mom and Dad.

I just read an article in the Nov17th paper of the Saginaw, News. 1st page section D. All this is happening. An example is the free beer ration. This is supposed to be two cans a day with a 5th of hooch every week. Well they sent our entire months supply out for Thanksgiving. This amounted to three cans per man, which we shelled out 15cents per can to the Water Buffalo. I wonder what happened to the other 57 cans and 2\5of hooch?

We have a ration card which limits us to how much of certain items we can buy. Oh yes, everywhere we go, the kids have cokes for sale at high prices. We won't pay them over 20 ps. Undoubtedly, they are getting a 50% to 75% profit and make more in sales then their parents do all day. So far it is genuine Coke. Some also sell booze. Some guys get gypped on this. It turned out to be coolade in Hooch bottles.

Our new base camp is by a big plantation. Near the border, the plantation has an airport, ARVN camp and small village in it. The big plantation homes are used by the Vietnamese, Few being lived in by the French owners. All are barbed wire and barricaded.

Most of the beer we get is Australian. Only one is good, the other brands are bad. American beer is scarce. The guys drink it any how and get drunk. No one had beer last night. Instead they got crocked on Seagram 7, Gin, Old Granddad, etc. One of the tents was downed four times and the fights were plenty, about midnight they were all out in beds.

We hired three Vietnamese girls to clean the tent, wash clothes, polish boots, etc. They have no work until the mess hall reopens for the 9th div.

There is a new song out it goes.

"I'm on an all expense paid vacation, with my little rifle in the Republic of South Vietnam. Sleeping in the jungle and dodging real bullets and man, it's a lot of fun" {HA}. My hair is long, I'm always tired and I seldom have time to shave. HOW TRUE.

Ron

Dear Mom and Dad, Dec. 2

Well the packing is all done so today is like an R&R. Most of the guys are in the tents or playing games. Some are on the perimeter but even they are doing nothing. There are also patrols as usual. I got stuck on one last night of the 1st. It was very noisy. I slept half the night anyhow. So did the other guys but since the hard ground is uncomfortable there is always someone awake in each position.

All the stuff is being packed in connex's and being shipped by army trucks. I got the bike in one. Supply is not taking care of it so I will leave it with maintenance when we take off on missions.

Tomorrow we go to the base camp with our gear by air. I stocked up on film again. Good thing I did as I wanted to get more extra today and it was sold out. The guy with a 35-mm camera has a film paradise here though. He can get any kind of any amount. Any thing from extra sensitive B&W to a choice of 20 pic. or 35 pic. of the most expensive slide film. Polaroid film is hard to get.

The beer parties last night were as bad as usual but less fighting. There was a nice quiet one in our tent. There was a loaf of bread which we sliced for salami sandwiches. Also pistachio nuts, iced beer. Tonight it will be French toast, peanut butter sandwiches with the salami and beer. Also olives last night the black pitted ones.

Well there are a few pets around here. I've seen one of the Vietnamese puppies running around. One of the supply personnel has a small monkey for a pet.

Well that is all I can think of for now.

Ron

PS Here is the last three prints. All are sent now.

Letter written on Red Cross Stationary.  
Wednesday Dec. 8th One whole year in the army.  
Dear Mom and Dad,

No, I am not injured in any way. I

went on sick call.

Monday we started out early on a nice long hike. We got a new platoon leader. Now, we had a well-led patrol. The first 500 yards was hacking brush then we hit open land and crossed a fence into a cow pasture in the brush. The going was easy as it was cool then and there were so many trails one couldn't get off them. There was an open land when we changed course. It took us across a swamp so soft that if it wasn't for the sod on top, we could not have crossed it. It was like walking on Jelly. There was thin bamboo brush for a while. At noon we got open ground and ate lunch. It got hot out. We crossed the open plain on our way in. Then we hit heavy bamboo only head high and just brush. There was little wind. The sun was like an oven. Everyone sweat like mad. We had plenty of water for once but still we felt like we were burning up. Finally we found enough cool spots so that no one got heat stroke. We came in at 1:30 p.m.. I was worn out as I had a sore throat, which didn't help it any.

#### *Field Hospital*

This place here is real nice. There are the new inflatable quonsets huts with surgical and bed wards. All are air conditioned. It sure is nice and cool in here. The chow is good too. "My bunk mate has malaria" Yes a guy in our platoon came in a day ago. He has malaria.

Well I will go to the 93rd for more tests

If not, then I go back to the base camp. The town of Dau Tieng is on limits believe it or not. It borders our camp. I may go through it by bike if I ever get time. Last night the 3rd plt had another night ambush. I imagine there was something else nice planned for the day as well.

Well will close for now,

Ron

Dear Mom and Dad, 9 Dec. 66 Map of my travels.

Well, now I am waiting to be flown to the 93rd evac hospital for more tests. If they can't find anything, I'll be sent back to camp. In the meantime this is a nice cool R&R.

Dec. 9, 66 I was flown out to the 93rd. I was tested there and then sent to the ward to stay for more observation. Then I shall be sent back to camp. So that is all that has happened to me.

The 45th was busy. 3 guys were sent in from a helicopter accident in which the guys got pinned inside. None were injured and were kept for observation then released. I got news that one of recon tracks hit a command detonated mine and was blown over killing two and badly injuring six others in it. What the rest of the company is doing I have no idea. The camp at the 93rd is an older one but very large. Few of the buildings are air conditioned. Can you send me a watch band with pins? One can get watch bands but for some reason I can't find pins for sale anywhere even the Spidel bands have none.

I've located two members of our platoon here. One has Malaria, the other Dengue fever. It means a long vacation for them by the ocean beach. There are all kinds of rare illness here. Also every form of broken bones, sewn up gashes, wounds, internal ailments, bed ridden patients etc.

I got to the PX here today. It is a nice one and is open to the hospital only. I don't know why they have so much hard liquor for sale, when no one here can have it. There are lots of other items including several sizes of tape for recorders. I should be getting mail tomorrow. Our battalion representative brings it and anything else we need in. The Red Cross gives us the letter writing material, shaving kits, and other items. I bought some comics to pass around, a Readers Digest, Nov. issue.

. Well, it is not at all cool here. This place is not far from Da Nang. It is also by a 4-lane highway and a large river. From the helicopter the land looks very swampy in the Delta. Here it is rolling and dry.

Well I'll close to get into tomorrow mail. Still, have found nothing wrong with me.

Closed 10 Dec. eve,

Ron

13 Dec. Dear Mom and Dad.

Well they couldn't find anything wrong with me so today I was released. I am now hitching a ride back to camp by way of chopper.

So ends the nice rest. I got down to the hospital PX and bought some things I couldn't get at Bear Cat.

From the air Saigon is sure crowded looking. The river is chocked with boats. The main street has a solid line of shops and behind the alleys are solid buildings and narrow walkways.

All the small villages look like toys and have only foot paths leading to them. It sure is something how crowded they live. Yet they have plenty of land into rice so few are actually starving. The cows look like toys and can be seen easily in the fields as well as the ant like size people.

The hospital has sure got a lot of patients. Many are injuries. Some are the rare illness, and some have had operations for various reasons.

The Sarge that flew into the 93rd with me has a belly that looks like this. {Picture here} He caught a claymore blast in the gut and had an operation at the 45th to repair the damage. The stitches in his stomach is sure something. They're s no infection and no bandages over it now. Well it is now 7pm and I am settled in Cu Chi for the night. I will go by convoy to Tay Ninh tomorrow. We flew here in a gunship. The chopper flew low for a ways.

We then flew high to the south is the Delta. Large areas of rice are still flooded as a result of the flood and the high evening tide. The Saigon river and large rivers are very dirty looking with debris and scummy water.

Well I got back all right. It was a real nice convoy.

While traveling through towns, I was able to see them real good for once. I saw a lot of ponies pulling carts in the large towns. Well, I'm afraid I won't get a chance to go into town. A few guys got drunk and some local Charlie blew up the fuel dump so it is off limits to all.

The company is out on a mission. I'm in base camp though.

Well, will close

Ron

PS I've got too many goodies in the line of food. I have the tape recorder. The guys would like to know more about it so they can get some.

Dec. 16th Dear Mom and Dad.

Well, it is a good thing that I brought some extra paper from the 93rd. I got my {lost} mail from last week.

The tape recorder works real good. I have already taped most of one side. The extra tape you sent has a wheel too thick to close the cover. How long do the batteries last? I changed them yesterday.

Well, our company is in the action. No one hurt to my knowledge. They captured a Charlie today. We are building bunkers in our new camp area. Last week so we are stuck with the removal of garbage, tangle of barbed wire, etc.

Today was very hot and muggy. Towards eve, it cooled off as usual. I will fill up the tape soon and mail it home free. Say, can you send some more extra tapes? Our PX isn't open yet. Later on I can buy tapes as well as reuse them. Well will close for now,

Ron

PS Please no food stuff till I can eat up what I have now. Everyone has the same problem. Our town is Tay Than about 20 miles east of Tay Ninh in Tay Ninh province. There is no major highway but dirt roads to our town from Tay Ninh. We are on a main river that is part of the Saigon river. {Map} I found out our platoon went on a too long patrol but left later. Had they left on time they would have ran into 1800 VC. They would have been wiped out for sure. When they ran out of ammo trying to hold em off. They did not see them and air strike pounded the area.

I got our town located on a map it has two names, Dau Tieng or Tri Tam



Dear Mom and Dad 23 Dec., 66

Well it is another scorcher as usual. We got out bunkers almost finished. the other platoons haven't. Well guess what happened? The company got stuck with bridge guard for the weekend. Since we are almost finished, we got guard tonight and the 1st and 2nd plt get it on Xmas eve and Xmas night. There is supposed to be a big booze party both nights. Everyone donated money but guess who got control of? Yes, the Water Buffalo. Had we known this there would have less money put in for booze. However the platoon Sargent is going to get as much as they can away from him. Our mess hall got a shakedown. Seems though the old man got the shits from the greasy water used to wash dishes. Also, there was a long bitch session about chow. So now there is hot water, salt and pepper, better food. And even cereal around for breakfast, they haven't been drawing such supplies, it came out.

I found out where I can get a new Japanese made 35-mm camera for \$40.00. It is a good brand for a Japanese camera. It had range focus, lense setting shutter speed, etc. and features a built in exposure meter. I talked to a Vietnamese soldier today. He was in dress uniform and is a Sargent. He knew quite a bit of English. So while I was there we had a conversation. He asked me if I had been in town yet and down to their bars. I told him no but other guys had been down. I then showed him some pictures. He also showed me some pictures of his wife and family. He also tried to tell me where he lived in town. I was unable to understand as I don't know any streets and if I were even to find the place he would have to show me himself. I asked him how much the bicycle cost over here. He said about 2200 piasters or about \$20.

Here is a roll of color film. It is the last color roll. The rest will be slides from now on. Send the slides all at once with the box and I can send them back in the box by a letter. This gives me an idea on how good my photography is.

The film is mostly air pictures from Tri Tam to Bear Cat. There is one bunker picture and the rest in camp. I took one under the bridge showing the remains of the old bridge.

I got my watch band. It fits good. I got a letter dated 30 Nov. evidently lost in the mail mess. The picture is good. It got ruined last night in the rain when I had it in my shirt. All my pictures in the wallet are glued to the plastic. I had two nice 5x7 colors glue on me and threw them away. My color ones in the plastic in the ammo can are nice and dry. Do you have trouble with sticking pictures from me? If so, do they come apart without tearing? If they do get stuck bad there, I may need to put plastic between them.

We are in the dry season for sure. It rains very little now and several days go by between showers.

It is definite. I will be getting out in early September. The married personnel will get out in August or earlier, The duds as early as October. Well I can't think of much more to write. So I guess I'll close for now. My next letter will describe the booze party. Oh yes no beer.

Will close

Ron

Dear Mom and Dad, Dec. 26<sup>th</sup>

Well except for a few hours our Christmas was like any other day. That morning was spent in drill and awards. A dozen purple hearts were awarded as well as combat infantry badges and Medical awards. We had noon Christmas dinner. Here is the Menu. Today we are searching a village. We captured four suspects. We then left to set up camp 2:45pm I saw the lead APC hit a 200 lb. bomb. It leaped 10 ft in the air. Only three more injured but not serious. The rest have sore eardrums. So there is another track to tow out. I got pictures of the explosion.

Dec. 27, I don't have them now but most of the guys got the GI's from the greasy wash water. I got a picture of greasy pre dip water. Today we clear a village. I got extra film with me for that.

3PM Well guess what we got in our track? A VC suspect. Well, he is tied up, blindfolded and has bad BO. He hasn't moved an inch since he was flung in here. Oh yes he weights a mere nothing.

Well it is 4:15pm and were still stuck with it. Our original mission of searching some towns was changed to reserve unit for 3-22 which was chasing Charlies.

I got good pictures of air strikes. I also got Charlies pictures. 5pm Well they took our smelly prisoner away to be questioned. So we are digging in for the night by the bridge. We have found a lot of new punji traps. Well, after searching the area we found one grave with a dead VC, lots of punji traps, rolls of sheet metal, four bicycle frames and all the parts except tires and rims. Our track has the bikes. If we have to give the stuff up, I'll get some extra parts. Included is a west German tire pump like mine, pedals, seats, spokes, chains etc.

I got a roll of slides to send. The 1st half is of the bridge guarding. Several pictures of our swimming hole, I have some of a Vespa, one water buffalo cart. Also track blowing up and the hole it made. Pictures of the air strike. Dec. 29th, We searched an abandoned Village yesterday. There was some evidence of occupancy. We spent the morning securing a landing area. Then went to make a patrol on tracks in the plantation. The trees in one area were old and close together. When we turned to go around some, we hit one with the back of the track. One branch 8" in dia. broke off and came crashing down on the track. It broke in half on the TC hatch cover. Had it not done so two guys could have been killed. That thing missed me by inches. It hit the 50 gunner knocking his helmet off and knocked him out. It put a gash in his head. He came to when the medics took him out.

Last night just our squad was on a suicidal mission. We secured a bridge all night. There was no action yet one position fell asleep all night. Today we are clearing Villages again. Bravo company had a track hit a mine one injured. That Truce is about the stupidest thing thought up. We never got the day off any how. Charlie used the two days to fullest advantage to regroup and move supplies.

We cleared VC village today. We destroyed a lot of hidden rice also captured hiding VC's. The fire bugs of our platoon burned up lots of straw in the rice fields hid in the jungles. On the way to a camp for the night someone tossed a match at a near by grass hut. It was unoccupied at the time but was lived in probably.

Our weather has been unusual lately. It has been a cool breeze instead of so blasted hot. It has not rained for a week either.

30,Dec. We got mortared last night. None came in the camp. Now some brass claims it to be 57 Recoilless fire. It is most likely 60-mm mortar as there was no noise from any recoilless rifles. And the explosion makes a pattern of a large hand grenade.

We guarded the area for the ARVN troops while they loaded rice brought in from villages that were tired of the VC tax collectors. The villagers are moving out.

Here is more Vietnamese.

Will close for now.

Ron

Dear Mom and Dad, 2 Jan.

Well at 7am today the truce ended. Some truce. Charlie uses it to his advantage to move men and supplies to hamper us. I got stuck on ambush patrol New Years Eve. We saw nothing. Last night the ambush patrol going out was shot at by Charlie. So we create as many indecent as they do. We have to for our own protection. As far as day off goes this is everyone except-----company.

Incoming mail takes up to eight days to arrive.

The mission today was to locate and destroy a dud bomb left three days ago. It was a 750 lb. napalm bomb. For as thin as the aluminum shell is and it was dropped on rocks, I think the darn thing broke up but didn't explode into flames like it should. There were huge pieces of metal in that area. We went into Charlie held mountains not far from camp. We had sniper fire before we left the tracks. There was dense jungle for 1000 meters with two creeks to cross, There it was more open to the hill of 800 ft which we climbed and went down the other side. The terrain was real steep going up the other side, a gentle rocky slope full of bombardment. Charlie was passing through then. There was a clear mountain brook in the small valley between the hills. This trip took all day. We only found pieces of the bomb. It was cool and cloudy yesterday.

Jan3rd. We are guarding an excavation area for the engineers today. It is actually cold and windy. Has been cold all night with northerly winds. This cool weather is probably caused by a typhoon in the south China sea and has disrupted the hot air current we normally get and sent cold air down from the north.

Well, the old man got tired of our bad chow and complained to the supplies so we now are getting issued better chow, even fruit and fresh vegetable. We had real potatoes one night. however the town still belongs to Coronal Garth and his MP's

Did you know that one can be fined \$25 for not carrying his weapon, having his shirt tail out, not wearing a steel pot? They have done it. There is even an E6 Staff Sargent that has written to his congressman about the stupid things this outfit does. They even charge 20 cents for sodas and beer. No wonder every day on a mission is a holiday and every meal there a picnic and every night a camp out. Base camp at times is like a prison camp. The only time we see town is to search and clear it. The E8's and first Sargent get fatter. The rest of us are as lean as ever. Supply personal are chubby too as well as cooks. The officers are in shape only because they are out with us where they can't get extra food and beer.

Well, on top of it all mail is being messed up too. No one has got mail for two days now. It wouldn't surprise me that out going mail is messed with as well.

4th Jan finally got mail last night,

I don't think we will ever get the bunker finished. We have to tear and rebuild so much we get nowhere. Now the Captain is mad about our camping place. But how can we live in squad tents? We don't have time to sandbag it to live in and then they are so far from the line to be impractical to run back and forth to relieve the guard. Also, we are not in our little tents half the time anyhow. Comes tonight we tear them down anyhow as we move out tomorrow.

Well, I know our mission. We go to Hobo woods near Tay Ninh to be a blocking force. This place has a bad reputation and is full of mines, recoilless rifles, etc. But at least it is supposed to be mech. and no patrols, night ambushes.

So will close.

Ron

Dear Mom and Dad Jan 5

Well, we did not go to Hobo woods. We are 30 miles due south of Black Widow Mountain and will set up a blocking line along the Saigon river. In heading for our logging area { a over night camp} the lead company surprised some VC. They killed two, captured two. Some got away. One they caught naked as he was changing into farmer clothes and hiding his weapon and black pajamas. The land here is flat as a table and swampy when it rains. We are well in the dry season. The rice has been harvested and the fields are dry and being plowed for the next monsoon, When they will be replanted, Now cucumbers and watermelons are growing.

Well, I'll mail this film out tonight. They plan on a possible mortar attack as we are in thick VC country, although there are villages around here. Here is a brand-new leaflet that just fell from the sky. Oh yes the VC already shot at a recon unit searching for ambush sites. Armed choppers attacked the VC. B52s are dropping heavy stuff south of us.

The film is clearing villages ARVNs loading rice, some pictures of Charlie hill, and the village coming here. Some will be dark as it has been cloudy, 2 did not take.

It is still quite cool out here . Has been all day. Wish it be cool all the time. I will send a tape as soon as I get the one from home. I cannot get size 2 1\2 tape. The smallest sold is 3" Side one is two minutes you put on, 4 min of the Vietnam letter music. Some talking the 10 minutes a conversation between Wickenburg and New and home, two Vietnam kids that could speak some English. They sell beer and soda.

Side two the speed is changing a lot as the batteries are weak. You may have to slow it to green. Also the take up reel loosened up and I had to tighten it so part of the tape chatters. I don't recommend playing this side to anybody as it is our squad members I recorded saying various things on Xmas eve. There was enough un profaned sections that I did very little censoring. But it is still bad and real funny. Oh yes most of them had a few beers already so they were feeling real good on the line that night. I had one too.

Well, will close now.

Ron

Dear Mom and Dad 9 Jan 67

Well, here I am on a operation. We are securing the edge of the Saigon River along Hobo woods. We are setting in a swamp at the edge of 1000m of rice paddies to our track which is stuck in the mud. This is the second day here. I don't know the date only that it is Malaria pill day. This river has a tide high all night low afternoon 6 ft difference. So we found out and sat in trees all night.

Had some combat last night. I ambushed a sampan of three VC and rice. I fired automatic then after four rounds a misfire. This gave the VC time to recover from the shock and go overboard. I believe I hit one. The machine gun and I then blasted the water for a few minutes. The two got away, The wounded one moaned and crept along the brush for shore. He made a wrong turn and caught a blast from Sarge's 16. There was gurgling in the water. This took place at 11 p.m. last night. Half on hour ago a VC boat went by. They travel close to shore. We let them go as we weren't ready but notified 2nd plt which killed one on that boat.

This afternoon when the tide went out I found the VC we shot last night, also some gear. He sank to the bottom when shot. He was in a shock look and looked like he was in a hurry to run away as his arm and fist were in a running position. So that is how pleasant our day was. YUCK

We are stuck here for us long as two weeks of isolation, mud to the waist, dirty living and no sleep as well as a giant type of leaches.

{Yes it was this big, 4" long}

10th Jan Tuesday It was real quiet last night in the swamp. We have built small platforms in the trees. No boats came by us. We did fire at some possible Charlies trying to sneak up on us during the night. This is hard to do when the water is high unless they swim in, then drop a grenade in the water and things, If they are there they are dead. We are surrounded by heavy brush, mud to the waist and dirty leachy water.

The artillery unit across the river fired steady all night. There was lots of small arms fire in the distance, evidently, Charlie was trying to get out of Hobo woods. There has been a lot of KIA's in our battalion but so far not our company.

We have found tons of rice hid under brush and in huts on our side of the river. There are also VC in the area. At night here, no one moves out of his sleeping place as anything around us is considered VC. This morning we are surrounded by water as usual. By noon it should be down a few feet and by 4 p.m. at its lowest. The tide varies 6th and when coming in the river run backwards

I have a tape ready to sent home as soon as I get the extra ones you are sending.

Well, will close for now.

Ron

PS The seeds are from cucumbers the size of watermelons and still green.

Dear mom and Dad Sat. Jan 14<sup>th</sup>.

Well here I am on another little nuisance mission, designed to keep us from getting any sleep. They want us to keep the river blocked yet they keep taking us from it to go on patrols into heavy VC infected areas for long ranges. Is just plain suicide. Ours was late in starting and we canceled it to go to the rescue of 3rd platoon Bravo company. 20 man patrol which almost got wiped out. They got hit by a VC machine gun bunker while in heavy brush. 3 men killed, 4 badly shot up. They had to leave dead men and equipment behind to save their necks. We went in with APC's to recover the bodies and gear. Lucky for us they were there and Charlie gone. After picking up their stuff we destroyed what was a newly constructed VC base camp. Today we were forced to do the most stupidest thing ever thought up. We left our blocking positions in the black of the night where VC were close by. It's bad enough when you're by your tracks and makes all the noise but here we are in the swamps with the water high, VC across the river trying to cross all night, so no one sleeps here and we have to pack up, wade through waist deep water, cross a mile of rice paddies and it is a mile of mud, with all our gear in the night. To make it worse we got to occupy it again tonight.

I hope Charlie charges across there while we are gone. Then maybe that idiot at his desk at base camp and in his private helicopter might learn he had better do something. One mission at a time instead of making us being spread too thin as it is doing too much at once.

This is why we have never effectively cleared Hobo woods because there is not enough of us to effectively block all exits. They pull us out to go on little missions planned by battalion instead of keeping the sector blocked. While we are goofing off getting shot at playing John Wayne for battalion, the VC get out of the main target area. Anyway we are lucky no one got shot as they never informed us till after dark so we had more gear to take back as we had planned on a few more days. This is what makes it bad. We had to yell to the other positions or we have no contact at night *it is suicide to check positions so far apart 200 meters in swamp at night.*

I guess the cooks are really partying it up at Cu Chi. They must have beer and good food every day because our chow is skimpy in amounts and lousy, C rations, hot dogs, burned chicken and only one piece, not enough cake to go around. 5 gallons of juice for a company of 150 men. Good thing we have lots of C rations.

Well, I'm watching the air strikes of our blocking area of today's mission, I just saw a new type of anti personal bomb in use. When dropped it flows apart into thousands of 81 mm mortar type rounds and covers a large area at once with a huge spray of shrapnel when they hit.

Would you believe it hasn't rained a drop for a week? It is getting hot again though. I rotted out a pair of socks from this mud of our position and am still wearing the same filthy pants { they are not rotten yet} One guy's boots have fallen apart and they don't have his shoe size. Well, it is 3m 3w down, 7 month 2 w to go and I can't wait to get out of this place. I have shaved only once this week and it has been 5 since my last haircut. I did take a homemade shower on Wednesday. Our position has the awful odor of sewer, water buffalo and the smell of a rotting body about 50 ft down river of us. 4 days dead and already falling apart. Now they want us to bury it and we can't reach it let alone touch that slimy mess.

There was a slight accident yesterday. A grenade failed to explode. Ed Shell stood behind a tree 20 ft away and shot it. Butler, although down and further away got a piece of metal in his leg. Shell got a small piece in his chest just enough to break the skin and stay there. They



wouldn't even put him on light duty so minor was the injury. Anyhow, it was just a scratch. Although butler was not hurt too much, he had to go into main to get the piece of metal taken out of his leg. I was also 30 ft from that thing. I was down low enough to miss the flying fragments.

I don't know how much longer we will be out here on this mission. They say it will end soon but no one knows.

*One person was killed from another company and three others wounded when a grenade pin improperly fastened to a web gear pulled out and the grenade exploded. The guy that died lived for two hours in agony with half of his side missing. He died on the dustoff.*

Well I guess I better be keeping an eye out for any VC out here.

Will close for now,

Ron.

Dear Mom and Dad Jan 17<sup>th</sup>

Well last night I found out first how crazy that Battalion commander is. Our Captain was very mad, but couldn't do a thing about it, when we were ordered to go down into the swamp after dark only to come back before daylight again. Like playing Russian Roulette. Well we left for the swamp but no one got any further then the edge of the rice paddies. Here we set up a defense position and operated as if we were by the river. As far as that idiot at battalion knows we were at the river. That would have been suicide to go there at night. We got word that the VC were already waiting. Today we went on another glory {planned by battalion for the commanders glory even though he is at base camp} mission. All we found were some bunkers and a live mine which one of our APC's ran over. No one was hurt but we have to destroy the APC. This means the other 3 tracks are now overloaded with personal and gear.

I finished a roll of film today. It is a prepaid process. So I will send it into Kodak when I get a chance.

Well will close for now.

Ron

PS We have dependable water supply at camp. A large river. However all water is the field is flown out which means very limited amount.

Dear Mom and Dad, Jan 20

Well, they did mess up our mail around Xmas. Today I got a letter postmarked Dec. 27th. Quite a few guys got late letters. You said you sent a tape. This didn't arrive yet. So they are really messing things up. Our PX doesn't have 2 1/2 size in stock.

Today we went for a boat ride. We got in landing craft patrol boats and land leap frog every 100 meters to check out the shoreline and destroy boats. We found in one spot an abandoned store of supplies for a large VC force. This was hundreds of bags of rice broken open, 100 tins of rotten fish full of maggots, rolls of sheet metal. further down was a bunker complex on a cliff. This had some nicely built bunkers. We didn't have time as usual to destroy them. Part of the place had been hit by 500 lb. bombs.

We are getting rid of the Battalion commander. I guess he is trying to get rid of the battalion too. C company has only 40 of its original men and has lost eight tracks to mines. In this mission alone. B company had lost 5. We have lost one and even though have been constantly on the go we have the lowest casualty rate.

Well we are stuck here for a few more days. Then we go in for seven days. Out again, back in for the truce then out for a long big one on February,

Well will close and mail,

Ron