

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart,
Sunday, August 21st Saginaw, Michigan.

Well, they kept us busy Friday night at the base until 8:30 p.m.. So I was unable to get off until Midnight. I slept at the base and signed out at 5:30 Saturday the 13th. I took the cab down to the airport with three other friends. It cost us only \$3.75 each. Our plane left at 9:30 a.m.. It was a Northwest Jet loaded with military personal and air mail. I've never seen so much mail loaded on one plane. I had two heavy suitcases with me. They weighted 60 lbs. yet cost me nothing extra to take them. The plane stopped for an hour in Minneapolis, St. Paul. It was pouring rain there. Coming in to land there the fog was so bad you could see only half the wing at times. It was cloudy across the nation except over the Columbian plateau and over the mountains. It was very beautiful in those areas. I had my camera in the suitcase and was unable to take any pictures.

Landed in Chicago at 5:30. I went straight to the North-Central ticket office and so did my one buddy that lives in Shields with me to get a ticket to Saginaw. We could only get one as far as Detroit. It was a stand-by seat. My friend bought the tickets while I got the luggage and hauled it half a mile as Chicago O'Hara is huge.

The plane left at 6:30. It was already past six p.m.. We got to the gate at 6:15. He checked them in for stand by while I called home to get picked up in Detroit. As soon as I got to the gate they called our names and we boarded the plane. A 2-engine Convair. There were only two empty seats left when the plane left Chicago. We stopped in North Bend and Kalamazoo before landing in Detroit at eight p.m.. My mother and Dad had just arrive. We got in Saginaw at 10:30 p.m.. We took my friend home and then I got home. Petted Soapy. The dog just went crazy over me. It took Soapy a little while to recognize me. Boy that horse sure got fat while I was gone. It is a little different riding a well broke horse. I guess I'm too used to riding Jiggs. I also found out I can ride my horse with a halter and rope at a gallop and handle him and stay on as if I were riding him with a saddle. He is that easy to sit on bare back. He will still come when I whistle for him with a whinny and at a gallop.

I'm back in the flower business again. As the glads are in full force. The market is the best it has ever been. With prices high and a huge demand for produce. One night my Grandma made as much as she did last year in a week. So the market is much better. There is a huge crowd of customers always buying. The flowers are very good and the big red ones have 5 foot spikes again this year.

We had a typical Michigan severe storm Monday night. I've never seen so much continuous lightning but it was to the north. So was all the storm damage. Got a nice rain out of it anyhow. It sure was hot and muggy Monday.

Tonight is much cooler. It rained all day today. [Sunday 21st] I picked flowers this morning. They were whole sale to some farm roadside stands. The rest of the day I cleaned and oiled the saddle and bridles and watched TV. Was down to the Market Saturday. My Grandma and I sold over \$100 of produce. A good day for only six hours. Had only a few dozen of white glads left and nothing else when we left

I rode the horse bare back in the evening. He will be five years old Tuesday. He grew a set of wolf teeth while I was gone.

Well, the airline strike ended last night so I will have to get reservations made on the flight back. Now I can leave from Saginaw instead of Detroit.

I don't know if I will get back to the base early enough to come out to your place next Sunday. If I do, I will bring some of my big glads out with me and bring them over.

In the meantime, I will enjoy myself as much as possible in the next seven days. Will close now.
Ron

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart
Saturday 24th Sept. 1966 1st letter.

Well, we got on the boat Thursday and left in the afternoon. It was a nice trip in the Bay. We reached the straits at 10:00 p.m. and then the boat begins to rock. We got up at 5:00 a.m. but laid in the sack till eight a.m.. Even though the Walker is more than 600 ft. long, it rocks a lot in the Pacific, as the waves are quite large. It rained all night. Friday morning I got seasick. I put breakfast over the rail. So did a lot of other guys. Some never made it.

We are in very cramped quarters. There is almost no room for our duffle bags. Fortunately the boat is not taking a full load of troops so we have some empty bottom bunks to stow our gear. My compartment is located at the stern of the boat at the bottom deck. So we have no port holes, The deck rolls and up and down also. 120 times a minute jumps 3 inches from an off balance propeller shaft. No wonder guys get sick inside.

Saturday, Well, I feel better now. I'm able to eat. At least everything is cooked good, even the coffee. The sun came out for a few hours. The sea looks beautiful but nothing on the horizon. The 2nd. and 2 2nd. have a mascot. His name is Fido a small dog. He was not smuggled on either. [Picture of boat]

Sunday 25th. We are now a 4-hour difference in time. It was cloudy and foggy this morning but has cleared up now. A little rougher today but most are used to it by now. Still Jacket weather yet. I saw a school of Dolphin this morning. They were heading east then turned south. They may have been catching fish as they were on line.

Monday the 26th crossed another time zone. We are in a warmer current. It is also much rougher. At times the prop jumps out of the water. It is still nice and sunny but plenty windy on deck. Last night I picked up KJR on the radio at 1200 miles at sea. Also, some Los Angeles stations.

A bunch of guys and I got wet today. We were up near the bow watching it jump the waves when it went way down and a wave broke over the bow sending spray all over and water pouring down from the bow deck above. That area was put off limits before long. Lots of guys got sea sick and barfed all over the place.

Tuesday, It had calmed down although still rough, no waves have broke on the bow yet. We are four hours different from Washington.

Towards evening, a storm squall hit. The wind blew out of the northwest something fierce. It became very rough. The storm was done by night but the sea has remained rough.

Wednesday, It is cooler today, air 78 degrees water 78. but still rough and we bob around like a cork.

Friday, We had no Thursday. We crossed the international date line last night. Time now five hours' difference. We still don't know exactly where we are going, not even the captain of this ship until we leave Okinawa.

I saw a boat today. Everybody went crazy and lined the railing causing the ship to tilt on one side. It was a Gulf Oil tanker heading East.

Sat 1 Oct. The seas are calm today. It is very warm on deck. It is like an oven below. All cabin class passengers [Sarg E7 above officers] are in their air-conditioned cabins.

Sunday was six hour's differences. I got Vancouver BC last night. It was midnight at 7:00 p.m. here. Their temp 54 ours 88 water 89. Also, picked up Hawaii. Time there 9:00 p.m. also San Francisco. It is now nine days at sea and no land sighted. I have seen one boat and two on the horizon.

Well, it finally happened. The boat broke down. We are running on only one prop at reduced speed.

Monday 3, Only a bearing got burned out but they worked on it all night. We are back to normal speed. If you want to see the world's worst climate try the South Pacific. It is hot day and night also very muggy.

I have to close in order to get this mailed. We reached Okinawa Thursday.

Will close.

Ron

PS, If I do take a horse home with me I've decided it will be the colt. Until I get a APO number use the Ft. Lewis address and a 5 cent stamp.

I sighted Okinawa at 7:30 Thursday Oct. 6th. While making the trip around the island to the port of Namu we sight quite a few banana boats. Little motorized fishing canoes, in the open sea.

Okinawa is a large island about 50 miles long, 15 miles wide also a number of smaller islands ranging from a few miles in size and very rugged to sandbars and rock piles making hazardous shipping in some places. There is a monument built on one under water island so as to warn ships of a very shallow spot way out at sea. Near Okinawa is the worlds deepest water, a trench 7 1/2 miles deep.

The port has some Navy vessels, other commercial vessels, a Jap cruise ship, That left after we arrived and US Vessels loaded with military cargos. Some of the US ships are new Navy cargo shops. Others are old rusty Liberty ships. Our boat unloaded several tons of rice and took on a load of fuel. We left port at 7:00 a.m. Friday. Lost sight of land at 9:15 a.m.. Saturday Oct. 8. We found out definitely where we are going. I can't tell you yet as it is still classified and would be cut out. I saw several islands that belong to the Philippines. We went by Formosa also. It was below the horizon.

Sunday Have seen several ships today already. We are along a shipping route to Vietnam. We are now in the South China Sea. Water 84 air hot and muggy. There is church service aboard and I will attend. It will probably be like an oven as usual. They also have Catholic service every day for Catholic personal. We are 15 hours ahead of you. At 9:30 a.m. Sunday it is 6:30 Saturday in Washington.

Monday sighted land. THE ARM PIT OF THE WORLD. [Picture.] This morning as one looks west the mountains of the central highlands come down to the sea. A storm is in land dumping rain on one part of land. The sea is so calm that the clouds reflect off it.

Last night it was so hot few stayed in the bunks. Instead they slept on the floor, in stairs and if they could get away with it on deck. I slept in a stair well where a cool breeze came down. This morning the hot compartment reeked of BO Sweat, stuffyness and meldewing laundry. It is hard to dry anything especially inside.

Tuesday. We finally arrived in Vietnam. We are now docked offshore at Cape St. Jacque. The land of the cape is rugged. South it is as flat as the sea. I don't know when we get off yet but I will probably be busy for a few days as I got stuck with special jobs. No APO number yet.

Will close so I can mail today.

Ron

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart Friday Oct. 14th

We were the first unit to get off the boat. We traveled by convoy to a base camp near Long Thong [20 miles east of Saigon on Hy. 15]

This country is fantastic. We came into the port by LST. We then got on trucks and received C rations and ammo. After waiting for the rest of the convoy we started on an all road trip. Most of the land in this area is flat tidal marshland. Our elevation at base camp is 30 ft. there are scattered hills in the area. Near the coast there are many villages. The main street is lined with open air shops and homes side by side selling everything from charcoal to radio's and TV's. Homes and shops in the poorer section are built of anything available. C ration cartons, cans, bottles, sheet metal, bricks, & straw. Some have fences around them of sticks, bricks, and army barbed wire. Some are real colorful and well kept. Many are crummy. All are small and overcrowded. There is a strong odor of Fermented fish [and it is rotten] a spice they used on food. One thing about this country is that there is enough room to grow food for all its people a rarity in SE Asia.

All the people along the way waved and smiled. The kids everywhere would holler at us. No one knew what they were saying.

The road was secured by two battalions, one an Australian unit and a mech. unit. The road is fairly secure by day but one can see evidence of war everywhere. Most road signs have bullet holes especially near the rubber plantation areas. Almost all bridges in the tidal land have by pass bridges as the original bridges on Hy. 15 have been destroyed. There are holes in the pavement from bombs and booby traps. Our base camp road is not safe to high ranking official or groups of trucks or tankers of fuel. The snipers are always waiting for such. The best way to go in and out is with civilians. At night all roads even between cities are no mans land. HY. 15 is worse then the road in the older areas of Spanaway and narrower. It is odd paving. [picture here]

It is sure plenty warm here. Although at the end of Monsoon when it rains it floods and the red clay becomes a sticky mess. At night it is pleasantly cool. Our temperature reaches the middle 90's every day.

Saturday 15th. Went on a patrol yesterday. It takes an hour to go 300 yards this is to be safe and also it takes that long to cut ones way in the brush. We are not in dense jungle. Rather, it is tall brush similar to the tidal land area. Our elevation is only 30 ft. The land here is flat with hills in the distance.

My address has APO 96268 San Francisco. The complete address is PFC Ronald F. Picardi US 55865619 Co. A 2-22 [mech.] inf 3rd. bdg 4th Div. APO 96268 San Francisco Calif.

All letters go air mail. They take about three or four days to arrive at camp. If a package is not sent air mail it will go by boat and take up to two months.

I was out on front line last night. It gets very dark so one can't see very far and not very good. We occupy bunkers and they are well built. There were a lot of itchy trigger fingers last night. A lot of flares were set up. The cong ought to know a new unit is here as the last units were very sloppy troops and had poor security. They never get hit by an attack so were lucky. The water hole is something else. It gets sniped at about every night.

Sunday Oct. 16. Came off an ambush patrol. We almost became the first unit of the 4th div. to kill a VC. Someone coughed at the wrong time and scared them off. This was at 3:00 a.m. They were coming down the trail like no one was waiting for them.

Had a lot to get straightened Sunday so only got a few hours sleep. Went back out on another ambush patrol. We set up in another location. We heard a few and one fired a sniper shot. No one fired back as we don't know where it came from. None came within kill range. Now we should have time off. So far, 3rd. platoon has been the only unit in 2-22 that has taken patrol so the rest are non combatant chickens. If Charlie knows we are around they won't mess with us unless greatly superior in force which they are not here. All they can do is sabotage and harass.

Well, in order to mail I will close. Mail comes here regularly, No horses in Vietnam. I showed a Vietnamese person a picture of one. They were quite amazed at it. There is KP and tent maids hired from the village. We are starting to learn some Vietnamese from them. They are learning English. They get paid 75 to 150 piasters a day. 118=\$1. So quite a low-cost labor yet good money for many of them. We are paid in military script. It is good only here and only for six months. It is no good elsewhere.

Will close, Ron
Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart,
Friday Oct. 28th

Received a letter marked the 24th. I'm not sure of today's date as this is written on a mission and we have been out for days but I know it is Friday.

The weather here is hot and muggy by day, cold and wet at night. We are getting monsoon rains so it pours every afternoon. This is the only way we get a shower in the field as it is hard to get pure water for drinking or anything else. To add to such harassment in the day if we move by track, we wear flask jackets. They are more like heat stroke coats, for what protection they offer against fragments from mortars. Which we have had now. They are necessary for clearing mines from roads but other than that are more hinder to health than help. We had a 3-day mission in Virgin VC territory which was followed with no rest by this 10 or more day one. No one has much clean clothes anymore. So we all smell. The three days were supposed to be easy going said recon with only two creeks to cross by track. Well we got two tracks buried in the first shallow creek. It took four to pull one out. The second shallow creek turned out to be a deep fast river with clay banks at an 80-degree angle. This clay is too slick to walk on let alone climb by track.

In order to cross we cut down a tree. All got wet crossing. In the jungle on the other side we got attacked by leaches. A blood sucking insect that looks like a slug. You don't feel them when they bite.

The air force sank more VC Sampans near our position today. We are 2 miles from the Tidal Swamp.

Saturday. What a day we had yesterday. We moved to a new area with the battalion. There was organized confusion. We had to set up temporarily camp as we failed to reach our assembly area. We spent more time setting in hot APC's then moving because of Vehicles stuck in mud ahead. The road ahead is so bad one APC's can barely made it. Every thing else gets mired including four wheel drive trucks and heavy trucks.

Monday [Oct. 31] [picture here] Finally, found time to write. We cleaned up Saturday then set up camp. Sunday we had an operation by APC. This was brigade size. Several companies lined up on one end. The mech. units went to the other side of an area to beat the brush. When we finally reached the assembly area to go on line on our troubled road. We hit soft clay and although the brush was growing in it some places had the texture of wet cement. And the tracks bogged down over the tracks. It took four hours to tow everyone out. Mission postponed. On our part we headed back over very bad roads. It hasn't rained in the past few days but the mud is funny around here. A tank went down a solid road and broke through into mud in one place

Monday Well it is for certain this brigade is seeing more action than the rest of the 4th. Today the whole brigade is on a search and clear. Before our unit went on line to beat the brush two VC were captured by the blocking force. I'll find out more tonight as I went with the APC on a different mission.

I've traveled hundreds of miles already here, much of it through uninhabited countryside. The people here live in all kinds of brush and grass huts. Anytime we stop here at a house or village the kids are around looking for goodies. Some of them have about everything wrong with them you could think of. Example, there is one little guy with three thumbs. They are all friendly. The civilians are all friendly and are willing to help. However if they suddenly don't associate with you and the kids run away, you can be sure Charlie is around. I still haven't seen a horse here.

We camped in a rubber plantation. The trees are a lot different than you might think. The trunk has a groove cut in the bark. The sap is then collected in a bowl. It looks like milk, yet if you take some and roll it in your fingers the milk turns into rubber.

Sounds like Miller's horse had something real bad. I hope none of your horses catch it. I sent a package home last week. I got one yesterday. This is pretty fast service. Mail takes two to three days to arrive, two days to go out.

Wednesday 2 Nov. Well, I finally got a little time to write. The company was on a sweep and clear mission. They saw no VC but ran upon a VC camp that was so hastily abandoned that they didn't finish lunch. They also found stores of rice. There was also a vast tunnel network to check out. The only casualties resulted in another squad of another company [I believe 3-12] got too close to an US army base camp at night and tripped a flare. They were immediately shot at, No one killed but nine injured. Of all out here only four have been sniped at and they were hit in the legs.

Last night recon located a battalion size VC unit. It was plastered by artillery all night, 2 miles from our camp. It is doubtful they try to hit us as they would be chewed up bad by mortars and artillery before reaching front line.

Unless assigned another mission we should be in camp in four or five days. The weather here is hot by day mid 90's at night it is cool to cold. Rain about every afternoon. Lately it hasn't rained much.

Well, I'll close and perhaps I can get this mailed today. Don't worry about dangers of VC. So far almost all men killed in 3rd. bdg. has been from their own men and all from their carelessness.

Ron

PS Oh yes I got my bike the 3rd. day I arrived.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart
Nov. 7, 1966 [picture here]

Here is what we did the last two weeks. I don't blame you for worrying. Saturday in an operation our company had one killed, two wounded by sniper and VC bunkers while clearing an area and destroying tunnels. The KIA is in my platoon. I was not with them that day. I was at base camp with the APC's, 3rd. platoon fought like veterans. I listened to radio transmission. In all we did an excellent job for two weeks of hard dirty work and little sleep. Well for the next few weeks we won't be hunting VC. When the 9th div. arrives we will head north in a 6-week trip no VC hunting. Right now we are guarding a camp near Ben Hoa. So we are on a vacation says the unit that just left. They will catch the hell we left yesterday. This leave me safe and well for a while.

Wednesday After I last wrote we had a search and clear. It was a short distance but took most of the day as we were in brush and destroyed tunnels, camp was then set up 2 miles from that area. Near it is a village. The people did not wave to us and the kids stayed near their huts.

Friday, I stayed with the APC's while the company went on a mission in platoon size elements. They were all in the same area. Most of the radios were tuned to company frequencies. Well here is what happened that day. The 3rd. platoon found numerous tunnels and trenches. This they destroyed with explosives. Around afternoon we took the APC's to one area to pick up the men. We got 1st platoon on the tracks to take back and waited for the others. In the meantime a squad of 2nd. platoon was pinned down by snipers in a hut. The other two platoons rushed to the area. They also experienced sniper firing. We went around to the village side of the area of operations. The last two tracks got sniped at in the village. We got that one. About then a squad of 3rd. platoon got hit by bunker fire at close range. That is where our one man got killed. The two injured were in other platoons. 1st went back out. They stayed out all night calling artillery in on the area. In the morning the area was hit by air strike and the hill taken. I don't know how many VC got it. They disappeared with their casualties before the hill was taken on Saturday.

B company swept the village which had been hastily abandoned. They found knives, booby traps, metal, weapons and huge stores of rice more than a village should have. Also, they found numerous tunnels. We picked up our tired bunch 4:30 Saturday. They dodged snipers all the way.

Saturday night I took a class on the starlight scope. I then used one all night. It is a small rifle mounted sniper scope for use at night. The nice thing about it is it does not use a light source but used available light and intensifies it. This makes it look like day out when using it. I cost \$3500. Oh yes Charlie has already taken four of them from other units. This thing cannot be spotted by infra red which needs a black light to see by. Since this doesn't need one you can see as far as you can by day. To look at the stars I could see thousands more in one spot than I could see with my 175x telescope at home. It has a power unit to operate it. A small flash light size mercury battery powers it for a week. It will continue to work for five minutes after the power is shut off.

Our weather is the same as usual. [pictures here]

It isn't raining as much only an occasional storm in the afternoon. There isn't too many bad mud holes any more. Average temp is 90 to 95 degrees, humidity 99% and no breeze. All morning until afternoon when it clouds up to rain.

I crossed a shallow creek while on a patrol. It was only a foot deep but the mud put us up to waist line. The red ants in the palm brush were something awful. The tree in the pictures was a banana tree. Although small, the bananas here are very tasty. I got a pineapple in a field on patrol. It was green and did not have much taste. It was big enough that it would have been good in a week. Did you know green tangerines are sour like lemons? One guy found a woodcutter's ax in VC country. It looks like this [picture] and is 3 feet in total length. It can be a bad weapon for Charlie too.

I have my pictures, I will send some for you to keep and some to send on home after you look at them. They were sent home and developed at K-Mart. Cost \$1.15 for slides \$3.80 for 20 color prints. That

is cheaper than Ft. Lewis. I can buy prepaid processing like form here total cost \$2.80. I can mail to Hawaii for developing.

Well, got one letter from home they said the horse wanted attention bad one morning. He ignored his ear of corn. No doubt he is getting fed a lot.

Here is a 5-cent bill worth 4 cents. There are also four pictures three to keep. I have duplicates, then one to look at then mail home when you write my mother.

Well, will close now and write soon again. Ron

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart
Saturday 12th Nov.

[send all these pictures home]

This letter finds me well and rested a bit but no longer on that vacation. For the next day we moved back to the area south of where we fought VC. Spent a cold wet night there. We acted as blocking force for a sweep of the area. We were called back to base camp to join part of the big mission near the border that yesterday killed 900 VC and captured 19,000 grenades made in Red China. Also, destroyed a bomb factory in the jungle.

We spent eight hours in base camp. Left camp at 11:00 p.m. traveled all night, went through Saigon, ended up at camp Cu Chi and stayed there for a day.

Wednesday 16th., Well you probably wonder why the gap. They are at it again so don't worry if there is a long time between letters. The same thing is happening to sending them home. They just won't let us have time for anything. I am now near the Cambodian border. I'm in part of the largest mech. operation ever undertaken. We've been on the move to assembly area for days. The weather has been hot by days as we sweat in the tracks. At night it blows up a rain so we are cold and wet all night. On top to that we must dig in including prone fox holes. They made us do that at 9pm one night. We were supposed to sleep in them. It rained minutes afterwards so everyone slept sitting under a poncho. So, at 5am we packed up our wet gear which stayed wet and started to rot and moved out all day.

We set up camp at 11pm.

Today we stayed here for once. I have to sneak time to write. They are trying every way they can to waste time today as tomorrow we go on a 3-day mission. We moved position several times already. Oh yes, I'm on flat land. It is like this for hundred of yards. Water table is 1 inch below this marsh. Now they want us to dig foxholes? They will be full of water. This is to waste time and impress Coronal Garth. For the last few days everyone is getting mad.

Well, we are rationing drinking water again. We were lucky enough to have a pond in our area and everyone took a bath and shaved off three days of beard. That is all for now. VC contact is light so not much danger from them.

Hang onto the black colt for me. My horse is getting taken care of quite well and my brother rides him a lot. I figure I can have the colt for myself and Soapy for my brother and sister to ride at the same time. Will write again as soon as possible.

Ron

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart
T-306 Monday 21st Nov.

Finally, got time to write again. I came into our camp after two days of action. I got one letter with Spec 4 on the address but mail is slow out here.

I was in part of two companies conducting a sweep of VC infested woods. We took our tracks in the swamp and set up. We got on line after walking through knee deep water. Charlie opened up when we reached the trees. Everyone fired back. The VC took off. We then made a sweep in the area. About 100 meters in it we found a large hut. Which then attacked. We then got held up, then all hell broke loose. I wasn't scared but when grenades go off in front, 16 fire on the left and 50 cal in the rear kicking up dirt behind one hits the ground. The worst thing is one can't see where it is coming from. Here we stayed for an hour, then we pulled back. No one got hurt in 3rd. platoon However there were five casualties from the other platoons, All injured from grenades. I think a lot of this was from our own grenades. One man in C company was killed by slug. We then sent tracks in on line and went behind. This time there was no shooting. Charlie got out as far as he could. Our platoon found a fortified village of four huts and three wounded VC which we killed. We also found their clothes, papers but no weapons also a GI flash light. When we went through again Sunday, we found more clothes and 80 rounds of armor piercing 50 calibers. I kept a 4x8 piece of plastic for use as a tent. I found out six of these were burned by guys who wished they had kept them instead. Charlie Co. found two 50 cal machine guns and 600 rounds ammo. We burned up the huts and blew up the tunnels.

Today, I am back and finally washed up in our ditch. This is our running water bathtub. I also shaved 1 inch long beard and washed out my stinky filthy rotten clothes. The perimeter area is nice for us. We have our tents up for shade and a nice breeze is coming off the swamp. The base camp area is a sea of mud and plowed up dirt.

Well, this leave me in good health and unharmed but disgusted of the place as usual. Yet I can't do anything about it. I don't know if I told you or not but I did see horses in the country. They are Asian ponies and are scrubby looking. They are owned by the common people in that area.

I get mail from home regularly but is slow now as it takes six days to get to us in the field.

Have you named the colt yet? I'm so busy here I have little if any time to worry about missing home and horses. I'll find out what home thinks about getting another horse.

Well, so long for now. Ron

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart
Nov. 27th 66 T-303, It may be shorter.

I believe officially it is nine months five days we may ETS. Well this completes a nice safe week. Our company alone since last letter has lost two dead, six injured and one APC destroyed. I've also been shot at, missed by a hand grenade and missed by our own 105 shell that came in awful close by accident. No one in our platoon has been hurt since Rice was killed.

We were told we'd be in base camp for Thanksgiving. So we went on an all day foot mission in the deep woods on the 22nd. The 2nd. platoon took a path and found out you don't use paths over here to travel on. The VC set off two claymores as the 2nd. platoon was bunched up. One was killed instantly. One died on the chopper from severe injuries [had he lived he would have been a multiple amputee] and four badly injured by metal fragments.

Our platoon walked, hacked and crawled 6 miles through vines and leach filled bamboo brush. We found several shacks, rice stored in sacks which we destroyed. Here we got shot at but broke contact as we wanted to get back before dark. Later on we stopped and a small element I was with ambushed three VC We got back by dark.

As if that wasn't enough we went back out again for the long tiresome walk. We found nothing.

Nov. 25th. we started back to the small base camp where we would have Thanksgiving dinner and soda and beer. So what happens? We goof off and don't leave till nine a.m.. About 3 miles out [and we made the mistake of taking the same route] 2nd. platoon track ran over a VC buried 105 shells. The track was blown of and road wheels broken. 2 guys were flung out. One suffered a broken arm and one a broken leg. No one else was hurt other then sore ears. 5 minutes later recon track drove by us and hit a mine. It was so close we thought we hit it. Ears rang and dirt was flung in the APC.

They spent most of the day stripping the one APC and repairing the other from salvaged parts of the one. There was nothing left but the shell. It couldn't be towed because of the mud. The track was completely destroyed by 300lbs of explosives. That made quite a bang and sent everybody looking for cover as pieces of metal flew as high as 200 ft. We never made it to camp so we set a perimeter in the boonies. The Turkey dinner was flown in so we didn't have to have C rations turkey loaf for a meal.

Nov. 26. We finally got in after being stuck in mud all morning. Nov. 27. We are heading for our new base camp but as usual are hurrying up to wait. It is 10:00 a.m. and we are still sitting here.

Finally made it to our new base camp, so far it is just a regular set up we use in the boonies.

Nov. 28 Well we got a few mortar rounds in on us in a pouring rain last night. So everyone got soaked and muddy.

Well you think we might rest a bit {HA} DRIVE, DRIVE, DRIVE They sent some of us on a 6-mile patrol in brush and tall grass in which the sun is like an oven. So if that isn't enough I got night patrol too. Tomorrow we go by aircraft to Bear Cat to get out gear. So that will be all hurry, hurry, hurry. They did have church services today but our platoon was unable to attend because we have no time for anything. I wrote most of this letter on the APC when it stopped for the long wait. I have an hour between patrols so I am finishing it.

I hope all is well in Spanaway, Did Jiggs get sold yet? Save the black colt for me. Let me know if you have priced him yet. Also, if he has a name. If not, I might be able to come up with a name.

Where I am now mail takes about six days to go out or arrive. Each day is one day less here and that is about all we can look forward to.

Well, will close now and write whenever I can find any time to. Ron