

29 Nov. T-298

Dear Mrs. and Mr. Hart,

Well I didn't stay at our new base camp long. Yesterday most of our company boarded a small cargo plane and flew back to Martin Cox. We will be here five days to pack our gear. Since most of the stuff is packed it will be a welcome vacation from it all. If we get berm detail during the day like I have today, we can relax in nice cool bunkers also 50% can sleep if they want.

They told the ones that stayed here that we wouldn't come back, so they packed our personal stuff [which was all over] As a result lots of things are missing[such as extra's] On top of that it was all put in one tent near the trash barrel. They burned some trash yesterday morning. A discarded m79 round exploded, blasting a hole in the barrel throwing shrapnel and burning debris all over. Only one guy got hurt when he got a metal fragment in his hand. The tent, a brand new one, was plastered full of holes. The tent with the gear had burn holes and some of our gear got burned.

Last night most of the guys got drunk. It was their first chance in 3 weeks to get beer. They started staggering in the tents around midnight and flopped in every one else beds. It rained last night. Its too bad we couldn't be out getting wet like we always do.

Well that is all I can think of for now. Ron [pictures here]

8 Dec. 1966 Exactly 1 year in the army today. Wed.

Dear Mrs. and Mr. Hart.

Today finds me in questionable health. I am not really sick as far as temperature or an illness. Yet I ran into some funny color urine. So the medics are running some tests on me to find out what is wrong. So far everything is showing up normal and the urine is normal today. Still they are going to send me to a higher hospital for further testing.

Yesterday found me run down from the flu. So that is why I went on sick call. I am fine today. Right now I am in an inflatable portable field hospital. It is air conditioned and that is nice and cold in here. I got my first night of uninterrupted restful sleep since 2 months.

Monday we had a long hot hike which started the whole problem. as far as the flu a lot of guys are getting the flu. Most are not serious enough to get them nothing more then pills.

Today they gave me x-rays. I had 2 taken then I was given an injection in an artery in my arm of equivalent to 1\2cup of dye to make my kidneys show up better. They then took more x-rays, They came out good and were normal. I saw them.

My condition mysteriously cleared up. The medic said that was unusual. They still don't know what could have caused what I had or identified it as any kind of illness or related it to such, So they can not give any treatment until they find something. Tomorrow I go to the 93rd medical battalion for more checkups. [picture]

Well that is all I can think of for now. So I will close. Ron

13 Dec.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart,

Well they couldn't find anything wrong with me so I was released today.

I am now in the process of getting a ride back to my base in Na Tang. This is going to be a series of helicopter rides and possibly one convoy. Right now I am in Ton San Nunc AFB Saigon waiting for a ride to Tay Ninh near the Cambodian border. From there I go to Na Tang. [Picture here] From the air Saigon is bustling over crowded city of French design and tim back alley huts. Each block is a solid row of shapes in the interior is all shacks accessible only by a narrow alley.

Due to the Xmas rush everyone has had slow mail. Mine is done like some. It is taking longer then normal to arrive. I hope they get that settled.

Well the hospital is sure full of patients, Many are shot up and full of stitches. They use stainless steel wire. Others are sick with various of the rare diseases that will keep them in bed for weeks. One of our guys has malaria, another Dengues fever. Its easy to see how one can get this since we are just about run down and live under dirty conditions most of the time.

It is sure hard to believe Xmas is so close. It seems like the middle of summer.

Well I caught a gunship to Cu Cui. It flew low for a short ways. In the suburbs near Saigon. I saw several horses owned by Vietnamese in the backyards. We then flew higher as we reached wooded brushlands. Here I am staying for the night, Tomorrow I will travel by convoy to Tay Ninh then hitch a ride to Na Thank.

Well I got back to Na Tang OK .I had a real nice sight seeing convoy. In the largest towns there are quite a few pony carts. I got your package of goodies . Our company got a ton of mail. It was almost all packages. I got my tape recorder so I can send tapes to home. As far as packages go anything under 5 lbs goes regular postage.

Well I'll close for now. Ron

11 Dec. 1966

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart.

I just got your Dec. 5th letter. As being in the hospital It got missent and delayed. Today I got it. I also got your package yesterday.

I'll write home to see what they say about buying the colt. It will probably be all right with home. I had talked about that before at home and they said I could go ahead.

I believe \$500 is OK for him as he will be a registered stud and I hope he isn't going to cause you a lot of trouble to hold him until I can get home.

I'll have to get an OK from home about paying for him like you

suggested I can pay in advance in small payments. This I could do each month as I get more then I can spend here. Right now I automatically send home \$120 plus \$60 extra a month. I would continue to send the \$120 home for my bank account. that is an allotment. I can send like say \$75 a month from what I would have extra and have to send home. I'll let you know when I get an OK there. I have to know that home knows about this before I send any money. I can have him paid for before I come back.

As far as name go that is sure hard to think of one to register as I know they don't like to have the same name for two unrelated horses. Of course I can name him any nickname for my own use. I have 2 choices. As far as the last part if you want you could change the bar to something else if you need to for registering. I was never told for sure but I guess his father is a Bar. Here are 2 names. ATTABURO BAR OR LIKENS BAR. The one is after one of our missions. The other happens to be our plt leader. That is about all I can think of unless I get some Vietnamese name.

Well It sure is a hot one today. It rained hard last night and got everything wet. Those of us in camp are building bunkers and doing other odd jobs.

Well I'll close to get this sent as soon as possible. Ron

[just a note possibly out of sequence]

Our new base camp has us set up with no tents [the other units have time to set up fortified tents, we have none,] We are on patrols all the time. Town is on limits but we don't even have time to shower let alone raid town. So town is visited by everyone else and by our orderly room personal. We must prepare for patrols and try to unpack. The other units have latrine buildings already. We have to dig holes, that is how primitive A Co. 2-22 is because we are gung ho and get all the field work.

19 Dec. 66

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart.

Well it sure is a scorcher today. It was not cold like it normally is in the mornings. The sky is clear to partly cloudy and almost no breeze.

I got a post marked Dec. 7 letter last night. I don't recall mentioning a fire and explosion then. The fuel dump was blown up on Dec. 13th here. This was done by a local Charlie. Yes I do write home what I tell you. Right now er are in the process of getting settled in our new camp.

I'm sorry I didn't get your letter sooner about the stamps before I got your package. The paper has long been burned. I will save the stamps for you and send them back. As far as sending packages to me anything under 5 lbs will go air mail with regular postage. The post office will mark it with red crayon SAM. Our mail is still messed up due to the Xmas rush.

Well there is not much new here. Only our unit is still set up in the rain, while supporting elements are all dug in. Tents up and sandbagged. So they have it easy . We hope to get settled in by February. If they run us on lots of

missions it will probably take all year and we will leave a vacationland to our replacements.

Dec. 21 1966 You mentioned about a camera stolen. That happened to be my old one. Surprisingly enough they left the film.

Our chow in this company is terrible and in short amounts at times. It is also a limited variety such as all breakfast, Bacon 2 eggs, coffee. In the past few weeks here only once was there pancakes or cereal available. The other foods we get are beans, dehydrated potatoes, dehydrated apples, string beans, peas. lima beans, lots of rice and C ration hot dogs and hamburg. Occasionally they get canned fruit. This is what they can choose from for dinner or supper. Oh yes we get buggy bread.

I noticed other units higher up the supply line eat excellent. The dock yards cream off the best foods. The supply companies the fresh fruits and other goods and by the time it reaches us all that is left is the canned foods and dehydrated stuff.

The officers and E8's are getting high and mighty like kings. All have tents for the night. The rest of us are in the rain. No tents only our improvised shelters. They have enough trays for us all in the mess hall but even E 7 can't get one and officers demand to be served. So that is how the class situation is here.

I guess it does no good to complain. The only thing to look forward to is that each day is one day less over here.

Well I ran into a little problem, when I wet to the hospital I had to turn my 45 in there. they said they sent it to the unit. It never got here. So now I got to locate the weapon or else the company will make me pay for it. they are sending a note to the 45th surgical. I hope I can get this settled and get the weapon back.

As far as "the dashing black with white socks" go I'll have to hear what home says about it. Then I can make a down payment on him. I believe I'll be able to put a \$100 down and him in early January, Then on each payday send more until the payments reaches \$300 and pay the balance when I come home. Of course I'll have to get some kind of a down payment slip. I can send the money by money order.

Our mail arrival is still slow. but should pick up after Xmas. then it should take only 3-4 days each way. Well I hope you have a Merry Christmas, The fruit cake was good. I hope I can find some ice for the milk shake mix. Anything in a package or can that keeps at room temp can be stored for awhile here. So can hard candy, However any soft candies melt and cookies though good collect ants in a hurry.

Well will close. Ron {pictures here]

Dec. 24th, Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart,

Today I am with the platoon guarding a bridge. We came here yesterday eve and stayed all night. It rained half the night with so much lightening it was unbelievable. Some flashes lit the land as long as several

seconds. Charlie wouldn't dare sneak in.

The stream has a gravelly bottom and is nice wading. We have our air mattress in the water sunning ourselves on the water. We also did laundry under the bridge and took baths as after our dusty trip here we were all black. We found a few water leaches to look out for. They are huge and green. [picture here] Yes the blood thirsty things are that large. I got a Nov. 30 letter from home a few days ago. That was a slow one. It was an answer to buying the black colt. This is OK. Home was also wondering about getting him home.

Do you know what a n`gua is? It is Vietnamese for horse. I'm here with some Vietnamese kids that sell soda and beer to the GI's.

Dec. 25. Well some Xmas. We had formations for police call, then had awards all morning which amounted to formal ceremonies. I'm going to try to clean up the bike today.

Well the mail is still funny but catching up on delivery. A package came for a guy in our platoon. It was a missent one and was not his even though it had his last name. The package had all canned goods and was dated Nov. 2. Everyone got plastered on beer last night. The contents of that undelivered package are eaten.

Dec. 26. Well we got up at 4:30 for our mission today. Well we lined up at 7 am. We haven't moved yet but the unit up front has received sniper fire already.

Last night was wild with drunkenness but quieter than Christmas Eve. I cleaned and oiled my Xe Dap [sha dot] [bicycle] I completely tore it apart at the maintenance tent. It took 2 hours to clean.

Well we are held up again. Our platoon is holding 2 Vietnamese. We found them in the plantation. One took off running so we are checking out identification. I guess they smell bad as the squad requested a can of deodorant.

We then surrounded a village. 4 suspects were taken. The VC had been there trying to round up recruits. 15 to 3pm the lead track hit a 200 lb. bomb. I saw that thing jump 10 feet. Only 3 minor injuries. The track has to be towed out.

Dec. 27 Well we were suppose to search villages today. Seems though the VC tax collectors are around and are also stealing. 3-22 attracted a large VC concentration of troops. They threw huge air strikes at them. We were reserve unit.

As we went through some rubber plantations. We found lots of punji traps near the bridge. The company c captured a VC with no papers. We took him prisoner, We got stuck with him in our track. He gave us no trouble and was probably scared stiff. We later turned him over to the national police. I should be getting that letter from home soon.

The company found a dead VC, more punji holes, rolls of sheet metal, 4 bikes frames and parts etc. We then searched a village, got rid of our prisoners and set up camp for the night.

Dec. 29th. Yesterday we had a scare. Our track was in line following the trail in an old rubber plantation, as we made a sharp turn the rear end banged a old tree. A huge limb 8" in dia. came crashing down on us. It missed me by inches. and broke on the TC hatch. the guy by the TC hatch was saved getting his head bashed by being behind the hatch. The SO gunner wasn't so lucky, He was hit on the head and knocked out. He never saw it coming.

Today we cleared the area of brush and hidden villages. We destroyed a large store of hidden rice. Also captured some VC hiding and living there. We destroyed 3 ox carts that were used to haul supplies for the VC. On our way back to camp for the night, we came back through a fortified village, no doubt VC. We captured some more VC before they planted any mines on the road. Some one tossed a match at a camouflaged hut that was timber and straw. Some VC is now homeless with no food or clothes. It made a hot fire.

Those cease fires may sound wonderful but they are more harassment for us. We don't get the days off anyhow and Charlie used it to fullest advantage to move supplies and regroup.

Our weather had been surprising lately. It has been cold at night and cool and breezy in the day instead of so blasted hot and humid. It hasn't rained for a week now. I've been writing by moonlight lately.

Jan. 3rd. Well I been waiting for word from home. It is OK but I want to know that they know about buying the colt. I'll sent the down payment in the next letter. Ron

Jan. 3 Dear Mrs. Hart.

Well I'll mail tonight if I get the letter from home yet. Yesterday I was up in Charlie hills with the platoon looking for a dud napham bomb. We never found it only large pieces of metal. In that area the country is steep hills with much rock and dense jungle in area with any soil.

I got surprised when I got paid Friday. I got some back pay. this made a total of \$209 of which \$120 automatically went home. I am sending in this letter \$140. in money order for down payment on the colt. If it is OK I can make some more payments later on to bring the paid amount to \$300. Then pay the balance when I take him home.

I will ETS out of here in early September. Maybe sooner. Some married guys will get out in August.

We have another mission next week for 2 weeks. What we will do I don't know. The rumors are thick about that mission. The latest one is we are going south to secure roads in the Mecong Delta for the 9th Div convoy as the move to their new camp.

THE LATEST VERSE

Everyday in the field a holiday, every meal a picnic, every night a camp out. We stay slim and the 1st Sergeants and E 7 get fat and lazy.

Base camp is all details and town is off limits to everyone except the

Coronal and his MP's. The only time one goes into town is to clear it of VC's. Even the E6's old soldiers of WW2 and Korea are writing their Congressmen and 20 year men are for the first time wanting out.

Well we finally got better supplies for chow. We now have more variety, fresh fruit, cereal, pancakes, fresh fruit and more of it.

Our mail is getting held up on us. No one has had any for 2 days. It is taking 8 days and more to get here. Can you let me know how long it takes this one to get to you?

Finally got mail at 2am 5th Jan. So I will close and mail. I hope the letter with the names got there in time for you to send in. Ron

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hart Jan. 9th 1967

Well here I am out in the middle of the jungle by the Saigon River across Hobo woods on a bit operation. I have no idea of the date only I know it Monday [Malaria pill day]. we are a long ways from supplies and mostly on our own in small groups in this swamp by the river edge.

I took a most horrible hike as we set up along the river. The mud is so bad that we got one guy stuck. It took 6 guys to pull him out. When we set up the water came up to the level of the rice paddies. Since most of the positions were all at once below the water. We spent the night in the trees.

I was in one such position. Last night around 11pm I sighted a boat load of VC's heading upstream. They were 20 ft. away, the other guys did not see it. 15 minutes later another boat came by. I cut loose on automatic then had a misfire on the 4th round. While injecting a new shell the VC jumped overboard, After recovering from the shock that I had shot at them. I don't think I hit anybody but between the 1st man and the rice, well everybody opened up then.

I saw a head bob and cut loose at it. The boat kept going. Then all quiet. One was wounded. He moaned and made a lot of noise as he crept to shore. The next position spotted him and cut loose. There was no further action at our end that night.

Today the boat came down and ran aground on the other side. We shot up and sank another drifting boat this morning.

A lot of noise here. All day and night, artillery fire and rifle. The B52 strike and when the explosion of 30 to 50 500 lbs bomb go in chain reaction the ground and air shake.

We may be in this grubby state of living for quite a while or until Hobo woods is cleared of VC.

You can send the down payment receipts home as I can't keep them safe here. The names sound OK even you choice. The one is spelled LIKENS BAR. After my Lt. ATTABORO was the name of a big operation that killed over 1000 VC in one week.

Christmas was too much like any other day. They did not even let us attend church. When I came on the operation though they had plenty of services. This usually means a rough mission planned for us.

New years Eve I was on night ambush patrol.

Surprise We did get one last night. As the river went down we saw the body in the water on the bottom.

Well the end of that unpleasant thing. I am going up and will mail this.. Ron

Jan. 12 1967 Dear Mrs. Hart.

Well to continue. The second plt. had shot up the one boat that went by and got one. Our next night here was pretty quiet. There was some action down by 2nd plt. They shot up 2 more boats of VC's and confirmed 7 kills.

No one slept the night of the 11th. At about 7pm the flares started flying across the river and a fire fight broke out between the VC and the base camp across the river. Then the action started on both sides of us. The VC were making a mass attempt to cross the river and escape the trap. The company cut the VC down, 11 kills were confirmed. there are many more that are not confirmed. There was one WIA on our side. Those bullets were really flying close by. There was a dozen flares up at once for hours.

When I went up to logging area for water. I took a different route and found some banana trees. I stopped by on the way back. but couldn't find any ripe enough that would peel down. A banana tree is very weak. I broke down one 8"dia just by doubling it up. It is nothing but a huge foam plant.

We are surrounded by water most of the time except for a few hours when the tide is out. It is risky to swim because of deep mud and BIG GREEN LEACHES [T H I S big] I've never seen anything that big for a blood sucker. The water is dirty here. It is full of garbage, sewage, dead bodies,& mud. We set up in our sleeping racks above it all as we are surrounded by the water most of the time.

A POW was caught. He said that the 2000 odd VC in the area don't know what to do. They are chased from one area to another and back again. This is a result of men to clear but not enough to secure. A tremendous amount of artillery and mortars is fired all night and morning. Air strikes hit all day. 3rd battalion has 138 VC kills to their credit so far on this operation.

Well News Year Eve was party time for everyone except 17 of us which spent the night on ambush patrol. Yes there is suppose to be a truce, There are no air strikes or artillery firing. Still they break it so if they are on the roads we will shoot back. the VC take advantage of a truce to move supplies unharrassed.

We brought out a bag of goodies and left the area a mess of beer cans and papers. About midnight everyone at base camp cut loose with flares and tracers. This made the Coronal very unhappy. So he called up to asked who was doing all the firing. Everyone but A Co. denied .So A Co. has done it again. They have put restrictions on top of restrictions on their men for something they did the least of.

I still have my camera it was the old one that got stolen.

Christmas, we never got a chance for church. They had us on details tell afternoon. However they had services for the Company several times before this mission was started. I was able to attend the last one as it was out in the field. All the other services everyone was on bunker details.

I have my pictures and envelopes and film in a sealed metal box to keep dry. Those ants have ate holes in plastic bags. You can send cookies, but we must eat them up in a day or two. Anything canned, coolaide, hard candies, peanuts or nuts and the fruit cakes do keep good. Soft candies get sticky and of course collect ants no matter how many bags we put them in. A can with a plastic cover is the only barrier they can't get through.

Well I hope you get along OK with your new false teeth. I hope I don't scare you with my dangerous living conditions. but in another week it is 4 months down 7 1\2 to go. and Actually the 1st 2 here is the most dangerous. Well will close for now from the swampy jungle. Ron {pictures here]

Dear Mrs. Hart Jan. 17 66

I got your letter with the receipt yesterday. You can go ahead and send the receipt here. I'll send them home. So for being out in the field the mail service is beginning to return to normal.

Well to answer the questions. I've never been outside of base camp with my bike. Some day I hope I can go into town with it but in the meantime only the Coronal and his MP's are allowed into Dau Taing. The town was on limits but as soon as we came in off our first mission it has been off limits since. A few rotten apples have to spoil it for the rest. They almost cut out civilian laundry. I don't know how we ever get clothes washed if they did as there is no quartermaster laundry.

Our PX is a sorry establishment compared to other base camps. It is always overcrowded and some items are rationed. But we are able to get toilet articles OK. and even get some free while on missions. They do have a good camera shop set up now with plenty of film but 126 film is hard to get. I can't get any 2 1\2 size tape for my recorder as it is an odd size.

Could you tell me what size film your camera uses? I'll send a roll of prepaid processing color so you can take some pictures of the colt, other horses and around your place. You can send the film to be processed free and have them send the pictures to me. I can send some of the prints for you to keep. I'll put paper between them to prevent sticking. The blue pen ran out of ink.

Well since you are taking care of the colt for me. I guess I'm obligated to pay for hoof trimming since it is impossible for me to come there and do it myself. As for as the Vet goes I guess if the colt stays out of the fences and stuff I have no worry about that.

I sure wish I could be at Ft. Lewis for the rest of the tour instead of here. As I certainly would like to be with the colt as he grows up to a 2 year

old. I'll probably have to spend a day or two to get to know him again. before shipping him home. I might take him back by train or drive back myself. That is a long trip for a horse by trailer, but I know a guy who brought a 2 year old colt from Oklahoma to Michigan by trailer. I guess it took 2 days. I'm asking him about the problems of trailering a horse a long ways.

Well I never thought battalion was that crazy. They made us come out of the swamp at night. They wanted us to go out into the place at 9:30 last night to come in at 5am today.

Boy was the old man mad at having to send us on such a suicide mission. But he had to give the orders to go out there. No one went further then the edge of the paddies. We set up defensive positions there and spent the night there instead of the VC infested swamps. I wish he would quit trying to play Russian Roulette with us.

I'll let you know on some statics [how ever you spell it] on this Battalion. Of the 350 men that do the actual fighting over 100 have become casualties in the past 3 1/2 months to ease you worries about me. Our platoon has the best casualty record. In 3 1/2 months of hard fighting and dangerous missions. We had only one combat casualty caused by a VC. He never felt what hit him. We have had about 6 minor injuries as a result of rough riding APC's including one head bashed by a falling tree. It only knocked him out. I guess the name Rice is bad luck. Our KIA was named Rice. Yesterday a kid in 2 plt by the name of Rice had a fatal accident. He did not have his grenade tied on right. A vine pulled the pin out and it exploded almost tearing him in half. He died upon reaching the hospital. I don't know how he lived that long. He was as good as dead when they took him out.

Most of us have our grenades fastened so it is impossible to pull the pin by accident. The strap runs through the rings and the cotter key is bent flat as a further precaution. I hope we don't get any more Rice for replacements for our company.

I don't know if I told you or not but the idiots nice R&R center battalion headquarters got mortared one night. As far as mortar attacks at Dau Taing we have no worries. Charlie doesn't waste mortars on line companies. He plasters the center instead.

Well I guess that is all I can think of to say for now, so Will close. Ron

Dear Mrs. Hart 23rd Jan. 67

Did you know our base camp is in the Iron Triangle? Well it is considered as such but the worst area is marked as operation Cedar Falls.

We got back in yesterday. We came in early so we had most of the day to clean up. The day before we surrounded a village and cleared it. I wanted to take some pictures in a hut so I made as excuse to go check it again. What do I find some joker under a bed more startled then I., Very supiciously a draft dodger. The old man said were the #%^\$*#^@@ did

you find that joker? So we searched all huts again.

Well we are back at base camp again where they will mess with us and made us wish we were on a mission again.

Did you know you can get a DR for mixed uniform [regular or jungle fatigues] or for long hair, beard, etc.? or for shirt tail not tucked in or patches not on? This place is run like a prison and they play Russian Roulette with us.

They send out 3600 meters night ambush patrols. So Charlie gets between them and attacks the base camp.

So I go on one tonight. Boy it sure is hot here. It was cool near Saigon. Well I'll close for now and write as soon as I get a chance to again. Ron