

Out of sequence letters

5 March Dear Mom and Dad,

This will probably get mailed later as we are away from supplies for a while.

10th Cav. came in yesterday. They said they hit two many mines out there. They also hit five coming here. Like us they found a lot of VC stuff. They found a huge sack of dope. That's proof that when VC make a wave attack on us that they are feeling high.

We are securing landing zones for a few days. We will then set up on the river again, but as a blocking force for a few more days. Then we will go back to base camp. Where we will start again with the work. We will be doing engineers work such as building huts and mixing cement. After that possibly another mission.

I got some back teeth getting tender from this living like an animal. I think during that week I'll go to the dentist and get them fixed.

The 20th of July is only an approximate date of leaving here. Until I see the list, I don't know for sure what rotation date is.

The heavy monsoons hit in May. Right now it is hot and dry. Between 12 and 3:30 one really roasts around here. Nights are cool but no longer cold.

March 6 Monday.

Well It wasn't quiet last night. The VC mortared the battalion loger area last night. We were close enough that we were taking compass bearings to the sounds of the VC mortar tubes. The area was then plastered with artillery. They came close to mortaring us. All this went of for an hour then the gun ships came and all was quiet.

There was a noisy fire fight down the road this morning. The tracks were with whoever ran into VC so the 50's were busy. As the VC fled, gun ships shot them for quite a while. Haven't heard anything about it yet. I must not have been too much of a fight.

Will close.

Ron

PS Got a tape yesterday. What a lousy song they play in the morning. I believe it was no 59 on the top 60's.

8 March Dear Mom and Dad,

Well, we don't know that our mission is half the time. We are guarding engineers' equipment by the Cambodian border. They are clearing land for a base camp. The 3-22 and 2-12 are going to be blocking force along the river.

I ate the can of olives a few days ago. I don't know when I'll cook up the macaroni. Maybe some day I might. I'm all out of coolade but have a lot of gum. I'm able to get a lot of lifesaver candies here. Could you send another spool of 100 lb. test nylon string? The one I had is all used up. The booby trap cord I had from it I left on a dead VC. It got all muddy. The rest we used on tent ropes, tying poles, fixing things etc.

Well I just got done ducking. I'm on a perimeter today. The engineers just blew a tree and chunks of wood went flying everywhere.

2-22 got in the paper for finding VC radio equipment that is all the mentioned. I found out more about the Skirmish on the 6th of March. A road security element with the engineers got shot at by VC. The security element killed several and the choppers chased them after wards.

Well that is all that's news here.

Ron

Dear Mom and Dad  
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After sitting here a few days we crossed the river and set up a perimeter. The engineers are clearing the road and are preparing to build a bridge. The road will be a short cut to Dau Tieng. We just got set up at noon. Snoopy the small observer helicopter was flying low outside the perimeter. Suddenly automatic fire opened up on the chopper. We shot back with 50 cal. As they haven't been fired in a long time half of them didn't work right. This one I fired was slow but fired until a round blew up in the chamber. I was able to extract the ruptured cartage. Later it happened again and I had to change barrels.

*This gun was later found to have a bent bolt slide. This happened when the tree limb fell on the TC hatch some months ago.*

An air strike was called in on the woodline. It was very close and I got some good pictures, Napham started some grass fires real close to us.

Well, the rain slacked off a bit. The cold season is back with us. *Common cold that is.* Everyone has the sniffles. I got a dilly of one.

Still, no idea when we are coming into base camp. The rumors are dense and all different about what is next.

The grass sure is burning in this clearing. Even though it rained last night it gets dry fast.

I should have another roll of film in a week or two to send to develop. I got the tape with the scream. If I ever get a chance to, I'll get the comical guys together for their version of Vietnam. So will close for now or tell something else comes up.

Ron.

Monday 20th March  
Dear Mom and Dad

Yesterday was a day of hell. This area is very heavy with VC. Recon platoon was lead yesterday as soon as they got 200 meters across the bridge the VC snipers cut loose on them. Our platoons lead track saw the second one in front of him hit by a Russian made recoilless rifle. Recon opened up all weapons on the woodline and an air strike was called. That ended that free for all.

As for yesterday well it started out our mission was to secure two landing zones. The battalion didn't accomplish either, recon and 3rd platoon the reason why? About 8 a.m. while heading for the landing zone recon track hit a mine along the edge of the clearing. A command detonated one, went off near another. They opened up on the VC setting them off. We had to dismount with the rest of the company and get on line to sweep the woodline. While we got on one, the artillery pounded the woodline. All of a sudden it was also in the clearing too. Everyone ran for cover. The stuff being as close as 50 ft., After that we swept the woodline and found several fresh foxholes, some ponchos, a claymore mine with fuze wire and a PRC 25 battery plus other gear.

We went further along the clearing. Recon tracks were to our right front. The end of the clearing near. Suddenly a small rocket hit a recon track. It was not an antitank round so did no damage. The VC also tossed rifle grenades. Recon opened up for a while and chased them away. We went in to sweep the area. We came on along line of foxholes. It was in dense woods and bamboo. I was in the point with a machine gunner (Sakasis), a grenadier and rifle man ahead. A well placed VC sniper round hit the grenadier (Root) in the head killing him instantly. You never seen us scramble so fast for foxholes and return fire. The machine gunner got so shook up he started to cry. *"They killed him! They killed him!"* I also had to toss my cleaning rod to the point man who's M-16 jammed on some Remington Arms rounds. The rest of us were naturally scared. The three of us on point held our place while the rest made a sweep. It didn't go far before they made contact. There, they held while the dead man was hauled out. Mortars were called in on the VC. Two rounds came on top of us by accident. 3 guys got wounded by this. (Facing South, 1 round 20 meters 11 o'clock, 1 round 20 meter 2 o'clock and 1 round 20 meters 4 o'clock from my position)

As usual the dud LT is eager to get the VC *John Wayne style*. He ordered everyone on line to sweep. Our temporary company commander gets by him and they are all on line sweeping forward. *The gung ho lieutenant said "Sargent, tell your men to move out! BLAM!* Even though I'm quite far from those two, the VC set a bomb off in front of them and it hurts the ears. One guy I know was behind the LT. He said the Louie was flung against him. The guy did not get hurt even though his helmet had black marks all over it and the Louie was killed. So there goes the dud Lt., they got too close together and the VC got them plus wounded quite a few guys. The medic was killed there too. The VC fled leaving a large amount of gear including some recoilless rifle, more grenades, bombs, ammo, weapons, clothes, documents.

Brave Company swept the area mounted. They found five claymores, 20 crew served weapons, rifles, 100 grenades etc. The VC fled.

March 21. everyone has the nerves. Yesterday noon we left to head north 1500 meters. We had tanks attached to us in point. Good thing, they ran into a VC base camp. The VC fired recoilless, antitank rockets, anti-aircraft recoilless, The tanks fired canisters back. 3 tracks were hit but not damages too bad. The rest of us laid down a base of fire while the dead and wounded were taken out. Then we pulled out a few minutes later. Air strikes hit the area. Later Charlie Co. swept the area mounted on APC guns blazing and got some VC including some VC automatic weapons.

It is impossible to get them all on foot just by shooting alone. They can really get dug in. The brush is heavy and they know the terrain. War is hell. I'm glad I go R&R in five days.

Nesbit got wounded again *from the three short mortar rounds*. Only a piece of shrapnel in his arm. It didn't look too bad as he went in to have the metal removed. Some other guys got cut up quite bad though. I was in a foxhole when *the short rounds* hit 20 ft. to my right, front and right rear. The scrap metal flew 2 ft. over my head.

This morning we had a mad minute. This is when everyone test fires weapons. Well, we weren't told in time. The tank fired canisters, everyone thought it was VC recoilless or mortars and ran for cover and fired back. That doesn't help the nerves any. Neither did close artillery afterwards. So, I don't know what is going to happen today. 2 more days I'm flying out of this mad house and back to base camp to prepare for a most welcomed R&R.

Will close.

Ron

PS To find my location today on National Map. Draw a line from Khe Dal to Bau Cham. Our location is halfway between. This is the worst VC area I've ever seen. Here are pictures of weeks of 10 to 28 Feb. by the bridge site.

*The Battle of Sou Tre took place later that same morning. We went to the rescue of the fire base which was nearly overrun by the 272<sup>nd</sup> NVA.*

*"This is Flexible Six. Tell your men to dismount and sweep the line." This is Fullback Six, Negative out." We swept the line mounted, kicked NVA ass, suffered no casualties, and rewrote the rules of engagement for the combat use of armored personnel carriers.*

23 March Dear Mom and Dad,

How did you know the money wouldn't arrive in time by mail? That was quite a surprise sending it by way of Red Cross. I also got a full advance pay of \$110. so that puts me all set for the next week of fun in Tiapai.

Well I got involved in what is the biggest battle in the history of this war. It even beats the marine slaughter of VC when they drove them into the sea. It is by far the biggest VC attack ever and probably the biggest kill in one day. There is now over 600 confirmed kills. 900 unofficial. It's the biggest capture of weapons ever. Had the VC not attacked 77 aty and 3-22 nd., they would have accomplished their mission, about tomorrow, of wiping Dan Tieng off the map. They're hardly anybody at base camp. The perimeters is held by profilers.

That Coronal Garth must be out of his mind. There are no men for a reactionary force yet he sends out ambush patrols far as 2 miles. There is no reactionary force if this place gets hit. For all those VC had of what they hid, in what was planned, one would have no base camp. And no supply. The propaganda effect would have been tremendous to the other side.

Junction City is done. But Coronal Garth pushes us on for glory. He isn't going to stop until our equipment wears out. Many platoons are half {strength}. 1st plt has only 2 APC yet not enough men for two squads to man them.

They are not sending anybody out because of lack of people here. It's a bad situation. The entertainers shun this place because it is not a secure camp. It is known as a camp in the boonies. Battalion Commander LT Coronal Julian is pissed off at some of Garth's orders. When he gets mad, you know things are really bad, If the VC ever over run this place I hope I'm not here when it happens. Some of the stay at camp jokers don't believe it could happen. It almost did, Those VC that attacked LZ-Gold were hard core NVA regulars, of the best equipped NVA has. They were not thin like the local VC. They were well built.

It sure is hot here, no longer cold at night. It did hit 110 degrees in the shade up in that hell hole. Those guys are living like animals again. Only enough water to drink, no more ice sodas, beer and sometimes no hot chow but C rations three times a day. I sure picked the good time for R&R.

Ron

PS The chopper flew over Tay Ninh. I went there, then from there to here by Huey. It is cold at 3000 ft. in the morning.

PS It might happen yet, they say approx. 1500 VC are scattered about heading this way. They only had us on 100% alert all night. All were on the berm.

24 March Dear Mom and Dad,

Tomorrow morning, I leave base camp Alpha to depart to Tiapai. Here is a short tape about the last four days of Hell. I hope the other tapes didn't scare you. The VC are getting bad near base camp. They have spotted up to 40 on the ambush patrol, because the patrols are so small and no reactionary force available, they let them go.

So see you from Tiapai.

Ron

PS Nesbit is OK. He no longer has to go out to the field with us. He stays at camp till the end of his tour.

26 March Dear Mom and Dad,

I thought I get a letter out before I catch the plane. I am in Camp Alpha. I spent the night and most of yesterday here. They have a club here with slot machines. Some of them are one arm bandits. However I saw some give up some sizeable jackpots

There are troops from all over the country. There are also Australians and Philippines. I'll have to record an Australian talking. You'd never believe they had such an accent.

So far it is amazing. I slept on a mattress last night under sheets. I even watched Television. I was able to buy things from the PX that I couldn't get at Dau Tieng.

So I'll close now and write again from Tiapai.

Ron



27 March 67 27,28,29,30,31.

Dear Mom and Dad.

Well here I am in China. I'm having a nice time. I'm spending money like mad. I have two rolls of film to sent home.

I had breakfast at the Dragon club located at the R&R center. I had bacon, eggs, toast, Juice etc. It was low cost too. This morning I took a long taxi ride to a park in the mountains. I took a lot of pictures up in the park. It was beautiful there and well kept. The main source of transportation is the taxi. They are real crazy drivers. The cab is a small car with a top speed of 160 k.p.h.. That is probably Kilometers. They are constantly honking their horn and dodging people. None of us are allowed to drive anything not even a bike.

This afternoon I went and seen the movie. The Blue Max. A WW1 warplane story. The picture was in English with Chinese writing dubbed in. tonight I go to the NCO club so ends one day in Tiapai.

28 Last night I went to the NCO club. They showed some movies. I had some ice cream. Later I played the one arm bandit. I won a \$2.00 jackpot which I soon lost again. Went to bed at 10:30 after trying Chinese food with chopsticks. Once you learn how to use them they work OK.

Today I went to the Palace Museum. This is a small place so it didn't take long to see everything. It had lots of old relics from the mainland of China. The articles are about the reign of the rulers of China and date back to 1200 BC. There are diaries of the kings. There are ivory carvings and all kinds of carvings in Jade. Some are very delicate. They don't allow cameras inside, other wise, I would have taken some pictures of the objects.

The money is funny too 100NT= \$2.50. So it is hard to figure out prices. The hotel room is \$6.00 a night. It is a very good one with excellent service. Some are more some are \$3.00 of course. The three dollar ones are the dumps.

I bought an expensive camera today. And also bought a wide angle and telephoto lens. It is the Petri 7. The features are speed from time as long as you hold it to one second to 1-500 seconds. It has lens opening from {drawings here} and also focus from 3 ft. to too best of all is a built in exposure meter that works with the lens opening and speed to make it easy to determine the setting one wants with light available. There is an adjustment with the light meter to set it for film speed as well. It has a focus finder in the view finder to determine range at short distances. There is also an 8-second timer built in. The film advance one frame with one push of the advance lever like the Instamatic. The shutter clicks only once. And all this for would you believe \$33.75? The extra lenses were \$14. I also got 35 mm slide film for it. I can take a picture inside a room without flash if I have a steady support. I wished I bought it sooner.

Ron

April 1. Dear Mom and Dad,

The back of the pictures explain the mystery of the letters of yesterday. I'm still at camp Alpha waiting a 6 a.m. plane tomorrow to Dau Tieng. They say we can't take a helicopter hop back. I bet that is Garth's doing. So we will wait for the Big Liaison representative to arrive and get us back. Otherwise, I could be back already along with a dozen other fellows.

Did you know out of last week 2100 dead VC that over 1,097 occurred in Junction City alone? Here is a Newsweek article to tell of it.

Ron

Dear Mom and Dad April 2

I got paid today. However, I won't be paid at the end of the month. Got back here by mail plane. There has been 11 more wounded since I left. 2 APC's were hit by RPG armor piercing grenades but not knocked out.

This place is as bad as usual. The trucks still go out at night. The only reactionary force for the ambush patrol is made up of clerks and maintenance personnel is a few armored VYR which is a crane mounted on tracks.

I don't know what Garth got a silver star for? The 77 Art. Battalion CO. earned his. He was out there toting shells when he was no longer able to keep contact with Brigade. *Garth was up in his private helicopter during the entire battle.*

So I hear Brady went AWOL. I hoped he enjoyed his brief stay at home. He is back and out to the field again.

Here is another roll of 35 mm film. The camera is nice. 2 pictures are no good. They were accidentally taken out of focus. One is a late evening time exposure. You can keep them all there.

When you get those combat pictures send some so I can see how they turned out. I have some to send home soon. I sent a PPP on the 23 and got it back today. That was fast.

Will close now.

Ron

PS I did get the tape music.

3 April Dear Mom and Dad.

I was listening to the news last night. I hear big Red One got 500 VC in the area 2-22 is operating. There was one more firefight when I was gone and 2 APC's hit by RPG rockets as a result 11 injured but that has been all.

They are still short of water out there so they are really grubby. They still haven't camped near a creek. They will be out until the 8th or the 15th at the latest.

Well, being on the end of the supply line is still having its effects on shortages of supplies. Even with most of the men gone from camp the PX is still short of everything. To make matters worse the VC are mining the road to Tay Ninh. A mine sweeping team of 10 men went out alone. They got hit and suffered heavy casualties before help arrived.

Finally, the engineers stopped working at night. I don't know how long that will be in effect. Still, we have the big holes in our one fence at night. When the rains come, many of these bunkers will be flooded. 3 have collapsed so far because of the trench dug by the wall. This one I'm in has a high water mark of 3 ft. I can hear the termites chewing up the log roof day and night. CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH

I got a dental appointment for the 5th. So that will keep me out of the hell for a while. Well that is all the news.

Here are some pictures of Junction City. 1 and 2 the last 3 taken on the 19th when five guys were killed. I had the camera out there but no time to use it.

Ron

PS Definitely rotation date and STO no later than Sept. 23, most likely sooner.

Dear Mom and Dad 4 April

You mentioned possibly seeing me on TV helping recover VC. Some of our men did help in recovering bodies. I was 50 gunner that day up in the 50 cal turret in the track. So I would have to see it to tell you if I was at that spot or not. We had a photographer take movies of us for the Big Picture and Vietnam special report. This, I guess, they have already shown on TV. One of the guys was recognized by his parents as he drove the APC through the heavy brush. There is also the track "Hell's Angels" shown. I also heard a picture of a bunch of APC's getting stuck were shown.

Well, I heard 3-22 were involved in another big battle yesterday. 2-22 only spent a few hours there. I haven't heard anything about it since. Weapons platoon of our company are happy. They captured a wounded VC. The VC left when the tracks came.

I have the 24-hour bunker guard. That is OK. As there is a lot of details to do. I'll get my teeth fixed before I go out again.

There are a few armored vehicles coming back now. So we have a better reactionary force. But still there are few in camp. There are 2 PX's now. Both are very short in items for sale. Cigarettes are rationed out as one carton per customer. Of course batteries are hard to come by. I bought a few sets at 5cents each at Tiapai.

April 5<sup>th</sup>. I got my teeth filled that were bad. It took only 45 minutes for two teeth in the back. So I have a numb mouth form that for a while.

Well, I might have to send my new camera home for repairs. The light meter quit working. It is probably dampness, if not, I'll send it home. This makes it a bit harder to take pictures with it now. I had a fast film but took it out and put a regular one in as I know where to set the camera for that. Since it winds back on the spool, I can use it again and count through the pictures I already took on it.

Oh, by the way, I did get \$250. I spent it all too. I'll mail the camera home after I take pictures of the guys when they come in from the field. I'll sent the guarantee slip and instruction booklet. Also a roll of color film so you can take pictures to send me. There is a good chance I'm going to transfer out of 3rd brg. If so, then when that happens, I'll tell you when to send the camera back here.

Got a letter saying you got the combat pictures.

Will close.

Ron

PS Since I am going to be in Vietnam till Sept., there is a good chance I can get out of the line company as I have already put in eight months of combat. Therefore, the next five should be non combat work.

Dear Mom and Dad  
No date Envelope dated April 3

This is going to be a complaint letter. So if you want to write the congressman go ahead. A lot of guys already have.

I heard some more about the latest mission I got off of. It is all bad news. They have had up to 10 casualties a day out there. Of the 14 days out they have been hit on nine. The 1st sergeant's is scared to send out the replacements and of course us {Veterans} want nothing of it.

This next thing I heard I thought was a rumor but then before I came in I heard the CO discussing it to the acting Co. It seems though we were being punished by Coronal Garth He cut off our hot chow for three days because we were not arriving at our destinations on time. How could we if we got hit by recoilless and anti tank rockets every day? Our company was down to 87 men one day before we got replacements.

Here is another thing. It was an hour and a half after the battle between 77 art. 3-22 and the VC started before we left for the rescue. Lt. Coronal Julian wanted to have us go when it started. Coronal Garth would not let us go. Finally after much pleading by Lt. Col. Julian, Cor. Garth finally gave the go ahead. Fortunately an advance element of 172 plt of A. Co. plus several tanks that was breaking trail for the mission of the day were five minutes away when the call for help was given to them. They were the first to engage the VC. When the rest of us arrived the VC were on the run. We then set up a perimeter for the night and helped in policing up VC and equipt.

The guys have shaved only once since they left on the mission. The reason, water shortage and no streams nearby. They are not sending enough water. They are even talking about sending out iodine to purify water for drinking.

I'm not sure if I want to go back to that Hell. They have seven more days out there. Then there is a mission in the Triangle till May. That will be the last mech. mission. Then What? By that time the APC's will be all shot and need major overhauling. It is rumored we will leg it them. Our base camp still isn't settled on final tent sites. We are still shifting tents and sandbags.

Here is one that might scare one. I certainly don't like it. Yet they do it. I've never seen anything so stupid in my life. There are no men left for reactionary force yet they still send out ambush patrols. There are barely enough to man the berm. The patrols have spotted up to 30 VC almost every night. If they get hit there is no rescue available. I heard they finally cut this out now.

Even more STUPID There have been 100% alerts all night. When I was in camp this was well enforced. Yet what happens? The engineers drive their dump trucks out of camp to the sand pit and back into camp. The sand pit is 200 meters out and left and into VC country. They go in and out all night. I'm surprised the VC road agents haven't hijacked a dump truck and driven it back, lights on, with a load of *well armed* VC in the back. On a moonless night they could easily drive in unnoticed and raise hell with 3 brg HQ and the supply. Further more, the trucks often traveled alone. Even during 100% Red alert they go in and out like they are back home. Base camp is so dangerous it's unbelievable. The VC that hit 3-22 and 77 art. were on their way to wipe Dau Tieng off the map. And they still might do it yet. If they break the berm which they could with a mass attack at night or infiltrate by way of dump truck it would be all over. I just can't believe security is so bad at base camp. Hanoi Hanna knows our every move. She knows more then we do.

Did you know and E6 in 3rd brg. or below regardless of age can be court marshaled at any time any place for having in possession hard liquor? Only camp that does it here. Our PX was out of writing paper and envelopes for two months.

I guess I could go on and on. Garths punishing us by cutting hot chow, The needless water shortages and the engineer trucks in and out at night are definitely true. I saw them DAMN trucks go in and out during the RED ALERT.

Dear Mom and Dad No date Postmark 9 April

I got the tape you made about the news report. The guys say it is very interesting. I am sending a tape home. You might throw it away as it is yowling Vietnamese music.

I see the two dogs are around yet.

The guys came in last night. They really Tied 1 ON last night. That's the name of the club. Even through there were a lot of drunks about it was fairly quiet. I don't know how long we will stay in camp.

Did they ever mention how many weapons were captured on the 21st? I got the list. They captured 1900 grenades, 50 RPG-2 rocket launchers + 500 rockets anti tank, 2057 recoilless and 75 recoilless 40AK-47 which is a new AK that is the equal to an M16. Plus all kinds of machine guns, carbines and much more modern weapons. Many of them new. Also, 20 tons of equipment.

I made berm guard last night. It is OK as I had 24 hour bunker so I won't have to do details in the day. I stay down here

I hope to transfer to a non combat job by the end of the month. If so, I'll probably have a complete address change. I hope it is out of the brigade. So far the earlier transfers have been out to the 93 MPS. Well will close for now.

Ron