

Dear Mom and Dad
28 July T-54

Last night we put a village under siege. Even the local ARVN outpost didn't know what was up till we were in place. Our two companies surrounded the place around midnight. This was to make sure no VC tried to hide his stuff so the police couldn't find it. Needless to say we did scare the village by our midnight invasion. We kept ever one in till noon. I don't know if anything was found or not. This place is where the mines have been found near.

Here is a roll of film. The first few are of the damage done to the APC's. The rest securing the road, pictures of carts and in the village. One track hit a mine clearing road this morning. They are fixing it or towed it in. That leaves the 1st. plt. with only 1 APC for a while. It was in the same area of the others.

We set up in a village today in small groups. I got to know one family. They live in a well built grass hut. It rained while we were here. Believe it or not it doesn't leak at all. The roof is of saw grass which when dry is like very good straw. It's only set back is that it burns too well.

The house had wooden beds. Underneath one is a pit which serves as a bomb shelter [protection against rifle bullets]. 500 lbs. of rice is stored in a bin and other ware in another corner. There is an idol and items of worship on one wall. There are a table and chairs by the door which is closed by placing a screen in it. [pictures here]

I may leave here with little money. If I can find some bargains at the PX in Vung Tau [such as that telephoto zoom lens]

Ron

PS #1 French bread sliced with tomatoes, pickles and onions added, topped off with tuna fish and salad dressing with hot sauce. #1 French bread has a few baked weevils in it.

3 August

Dear Mom and Dad.

Well we spent two days in the boonies supposing acting as a blocking force in the swamp lands east of Sou Da. So we got plenty stuck getting into the rice plains and out in the quicksand strips that marks its edge. So we got in camp late as usual. There were signs all over of VC in the area. C company found a base camp. They got the four guards in it and stayed there for a hectic night. All night long they reconed by fire. 3-22 got mortared not far from us.

It took all afternoon to reach the road to get back to Sou Da. We had S&D all morning. The Dau Tieng to Tay Ninh road is flooded in some places due to overloaded culverts. The same creeks were bone dry a few months ago.

Well. The squad leader left to go home. So I am now squad leader. I doubt if I'll get E5 rank since I have only 48 days but I am ranking men in the squad now. It will get me out of some of the extra detail. We got a placement last night too. 30 of the long timers came in yesterday.

Just got done eating a submarine sandwich Vietnamese style. They peddle almost anything. The sandwiches are made of French bread with pickle, tomatoes and onions. Also, soy sauce and hot sauce. We add the tuna fish salad or other rare ingredients.

Well we should not have any mission for four to six weeks or tell everyone is rotated {I hope} So no more going in the boonies. Yet we have patrols every night. But there is time to write and do something besides rush.

A PX run was made into Tay Ninh for guys to stock up on stuff. I got a flock of mail one day. I also got the tape about the riots. I guess it is just a lot of hoods looking for an excuse to raise hell.

Well that is all I can think of for now.

Ron

PS 48 days left [picture here]

[care package writing paper] 6 August T-46
Dear Mom and Dad.

Well I sure had a harassing day yesterday. It started off after we set up in position. Well I misplaced my wallet and thought I had my pocket picked. We had two definite suspects. We searched them, their bike and the entire area around. The captain was on his way down when I discovered I had misplaced it in another pocket, although I couldn't see how I missed. Oh well almost started something.

However, the afternoon was different. A new replacement in my squad, down in my position was cleaning his supposedly safe weapon when it fired and shot two of his fingers off. Normally none of us ever chamber a round unless we are on patrol at night or in a S&D in heavy jungle. Why he loaded his after cleaning it only he knows. One guy was getting a haircut. He and the Vietnamese applied field first aid while I called for the track on the radio. It came down and the wounded man was taken to Sou Da to be dusted off. Of course the Captain was mad it happened and did not like fullback informing him about it. At the same time he found out from our platoon leader, That's cause I called it in after the guy was on his way. He will probably get sent home if he doesn't get a court marital too.

Well Sweeney is back with us. With only 63 days left, his post call came. If there was less then 60 he would have stayed in the US.

A new PX opened up in Dau Tieng. It is a big one from what I hear and has a lot of stuff. Only trouble it is still plagued by an extremely long line as the old one was.

Hasn't rained for few days now. The flood has gone down a lot and the roads are all dust. The village that we set up guard in once in a while had a big anti VC demonstration. There are signs all over. "VC get lost." We have quite a few friends in the village now. Medcap has been doing a lot in there too.

Nothing else new. Just washed some clothes in the ditch.

There is a possibility of a drop, that is, we get a port call about eight to 10 days in advance of when we leave. Guys are getting a six to 10-day drop, that is, they are leaving earlier then expected.

Snelenburger sure got a bad deal. He got mad at a E6 Webber, who is acting first Sergeant because he was getting so many details from him. Well that sorry SOB goes and bitches to the Sergeant Major about it and the S.M. tells the Lt. Coronel who happens to like to harass people anyhow. So, as a result, Selenburger got extended till the 21st of Sept. against his will. He should be out here sometime. I'll ask him just what happened.

Ron

10 August T-41 or less
Dear Mom and Dad.

Well, I went on my last night ambush and last patrol yesterday. I have become 76 Xray. In other words I got an easy job over in headquarters. For the rest of the tour. The job is in the resupply of the battalion. We have a big 557 APC with just five of us. [Tomorrow 4] I guess 4 is the regular crew. 1 officer 3 enlisted. A 557 is a command type track and is like a mobile house. 2 people sleep on the tables, one on a bench, one on the floor. I got my hammock strung from the ceiling. No more line.

Oh yes, the last patrol was a goodie. A company scaled the hill on the north end of the Black Virgin. It was a 1000ft climb up a massive pile of boulders covered with tangled vines and thick jungle growth. It is also very steep like the big hill is. But the view is tremendous. No signs that the VC had been in the area. I didn't take the camera. As I had no plastic to put it in and it did rain hard in the afternoon.

Oh yes 4th div. and 25th Div. exchanged 3rd brigades. So we are now part of the 25th Div.

My address change H.Q. Co. 2-22 inf. 3rd brg. 25th Div. 96268 San Francisco
Well it is a lot easier doing this job. Today the company is out mountain climbing again. One of the companies got five Vietnamese AWOL's. We move every day a short ways.

Tonight we will rate showers as we are by a creek. They are siting up a portable shower complete with hot water.

11 August

Well, when port call comes in, I'll be the first to know. All requests come through us.

Film. Most were taken in the village showing how the people live. Also, two shots of some kids on a water buffalo.

So, will close for now. No more daytime patrols, night ambushes etc. or other harassments.

Ron

PS, Snellenburger will get home early but still got a bad deal. He got busted to E1 and fined. Due to the nature of this thing he should have appealed the thing. From what I find out the deal was he doesn't like Webber at all. He would not shake his hand and said some nasty words to him before he left to catch a plane to Saigon. That shows what rats some guys can sure be. Of course Webber's popularity hit a new low. As fas as I know Shelly did not hit him. So how can one get busted calling an unliked E6 an SOB before he goes home?

12th August T-39

Dear Mom and Dad,

While I save a bundle here, I may still leave Vietnam broke or low on money. I think we do get the travel pay to get home in Oakland. I will try to pick up a telephoto lens for the camera. Don't forget to bring it out. The one I have here is getting pretty feeble from the rough conditions it is subjected to. It will have to go to the repair shop. I'll be the first one to find out port call in my new job.

Only there will be about three days after that date I report in and I board that big bird for the 23-hour flight to Oakland. Since I will get a drop from the 21st of maybe the 15th or sooner be prepared for a sudden trip.

Don't forget some of my clothes as I will be short on civ. type. Wouldn't surprise me none if all my stuff gets ruined by now in Dau Tieng. The pea brain back there tore all tents down again and piled all the gear up in one tent which blew down letting a lot of stuff get wet.

You should get that package soon with the other goodies.

Have you heard in the paper about all the illegal items being mailed home? It is surprising how such unusual and stupidly dangerously packed many are. The big stink is being raised on the live items though that are mailed. I know of guys that have sent home claymore, C4, grenades, flares, even a few stolen M16 broken down and sent. Of course woe if they get caught.

I got two pieces of Wild colored silk about 1x2 meters in size each. I hope it is enough for a shirt per piece. After jewing down the price I bought the stuff. It is of heavy quality and is in brilliant colors. One is a very pretty purplish brown. The other is a shiny light blue.

A good thing I'm out of the line. That company is on all day walking spree again. They quit the mountain because of lack of VC. C company may try to scale Nui Ba Den itself.

Well so long for now, I'll notify you ASAP when I get my orders.

Ron [picture here]

PS, The battery is new. It was taken out to test the cameras before sale. Written 2am while on radio watch.

PS [on the envelope] I have a safe place to keep slides. I put them in the plastic in the photo album. 4 to a page. I can show them without worry of fingerprints.

14 August T-37 or less
Dear Mom and Dad.

Got a letter last night asking how I get back. Well to the best of my knowledge it is this way. After processing out we get on that 23-hour flight to Oakland, California. From there is about eight hours of processing and then we are free.

The VC are playing with the dikes in the abandoned rice fields. They have succeeded in flooding out the Tay Ninh, Dau Tieng road in the paddies area where the road is not too good. This made the road into quicksand. They had to close it down to all traffic. The engineers are going to have a bad time now. It is going to take gravel and lots of it to make a more solid roadbed. [pictures here]

I have pictures of this area just before flooding out, Even then the water is ready to run over with only inches from it. One picture is of the creek between the plantation. The road bed is solid here yet it has flooded from over loaded culverts.

Well, B company had the honors of sealing Nui Ba Den. So far they have found nothing. Well, they are replacing APC's. We also got three for replacing lost ones. However, we got someone else's turn ins. They are not worth a damn. They are in such rotten shape. Everyone is mad we got stuck with them.

Business here is same as usual. So it won't be long till I get my departure date.
Ron

Dear Mom and dad
19th August T- 32days

Boy am I getting short. Well I'm doing the same stuff here unloading choppers, loading nets and writing down request for supplies. Other than that there is nothing else to do here. The rest of the company are securing the road and laterite pits for the engineers. The Dau Tieng road I found out was flooded out at Dau Tieng by flooding of the Saigon river. I bet that put a few hooches under too. The road is reopened now.

There is no VC activity here lately. One outpost got hit way south of here. Other than their claim of 3,000 in an area near here there has been little action.

The weather has been partly cloudy and cool except before it rained when it then gets hot.

Question, I heard that Mike Parks brother got killed over here months ago. Do you know anything about this? I never heard till today about this and then from Ken Brady.

About now Selenburger should be home. But then he will still be in the army busted to E2 unless it gets appealed. The charge is disrespect to an acting 1st Sergeant. Nobody had respect for that dud.

I don't know if I mention it or not. The eight slides from the new camera sure came out excellent. I hope I can pick up that telephoto lens for it over here.

Well that is all I can think of for now.

Ron]picture here]

19 August 1am [army issue paper]

Dear Mom and Dad.

Well wait till night guard and suddenly plenty to write about. Well we got put on alert tonight. I hate to think of us packing up, as we would have to throw all those cargo nets in our PC. An MP jeep on patrol outside got zapped by VC at the road junction outside the gate. 2 KIA's So that is all that is new in our section of war Zone C.

As for Richard not getting glasses right away that is the army sloppy service for you. If he had bitched about it enough they would have made him a pair in one day. Now he will still have to wait a month for those duds to get off their dead ass and make them{ excuse my language] took 3 months for one of our guys to get extra ones. He raised the roof and got a pair made right away. That's a #1 profile for a person with bad eyes and no glasses. I'd let the congressmen know about that deal.

You know they say there is quick replacement of clothes, boots, if you turn in set for PX. Ha! Some guys only have the clothes on their back. This is due to the easy loose laundry service. Example, 5 bags blown off the chinook one day. It doesn't get replaced either. New guys are getting issued used jungle fatigues and boots. The supply has been unable to get lots of things for months at a time. The poor scout dog is out of dog food for weeks at a time. *They get sick if fed C-Rats.*

Our maintenance and the Battalion CO are raising the roof. Most of the APC's have tracks and sprockets in such bad shape that some break every day. In theory that makes half the battalion PC dead lined. Maybe with the general of the 25th aware of this, we might start getting those repair parts and new track blocks [some tracks sound like clanking chains from dead tracks sections being so numerous and worn sprocket wheels the size of thumbs. [example. One APC broke a track while moving. When sprockets are that thin, they get stripped easy or throw the track on sharp turns in reverse. So much for that.

Well, will close as that is all for now.

Ron

24th August Would you believe T-27
Dear Mom and Dad.

Got two letters today from home. In answering a part in that letter, my EST date is unknown in that it could be any where form the 9th till the 21st of Sept. The government is supposed to supply transportation pay home.

Glad to hear Bob got home OK. Did Snellenburger make it yet?

Things here are same as usual. The battalion is securing the road for the engineers. The weather is the same as usual, nice most of the day and rain in the evening. The 2-22 and 2-72 of course have changed over and are on S&D missions. They are in a bad area as usual. The supply choppers are often shot at. Yesterday the pilot got hit in the leg. While flying extraction form there.

There has been a mess up in Battalion. While they manage to get everyone out early, they forget to get replacements in early. As a result some units are short handed.

Well I hope this gets balanced out soon. So the rest of us can go early too.

Ron

27 August

Dear Mom and Dad,

Here is another roll of film. It is all odds and ends pictures mostly of the mountain and adverse weather, also of around here and two of a scout dog.

Well things in this business are same as usual. The only way to get clothes around here is to let them get so torn that they can be spotted from the air. Seems though the supply sergeants are too lazy to go pick-up new fatigues from 54. If a guy gets mad enough at base camp he can go down to 54 and get the stuff. Otherwise, he may never get it.

I saw the most ridiculous thing done yesterday. The Major does not like Australian bush hats. So the kid he caught wearing one, he makes dig a 6x6. He also made him fill it in with the hat in it. What is this place coming to when one can be ordered to destroy his own personal property? True, he can be punished for wearing it but can he be ordered to destroy it?

Several guys including officers took pictures when the Major wasn't looking.

Well, a lot of guys started profiling today. Seems though the line company start search and destroy missions even as short handed as they are. Also, a few went in for good, Going home.

It sure has been windy today. It started to blow hard last night. We have to watch our trash fires. Otherwise, they quickly become grass fires. The sawgrass is funny. Even when green it burns quite well.

Well getting short. Will close.

Ron

T-24 PS I accidentally broke my regular civ. glasses. One of the glasses got cracked. The stuff is definitely regular glass as it breaks into sharp fragments. Too late to try to get any as I still have the army pair and sunglasses.

31 August T-21

Dear Mom and Dad,

Well I knew they couldn't stay on an easy job for long. So they are now on a 12-day search and destroy mission. The company found few bunkers and trails. No other troubles. The chopper got shot at again near 2-12 location.

Well I have taken the last roll of film over here unless I can get an instamatic for a short while. The camera finally gave up in this harsh climate. The diaphragm or the shudder that controls the amount of light fell apart after one of the lens jumped out of a track. None of us amateurs could fix it or even get the thing apart at that place to fix it. It sure has picked up a lot of sand even though I have tried to keep it as protected as possible, Which is why the shutter release wouldn't always work. Got that working properly but will have to get it repaired at home.

Well. A few of the guys have port calls for the 6th and 8th. I haven't heard anything definite yet. Some say it is going by alphabetical order. Any day now I should get my port call date.

From what I hear most of Dad Tieng is really built nice. All companies now have wooden buildings to sleep in except 2-22 which still has tents. Also, the berm is being extended 500 meters more.

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

Ron

3rd Sept. Would you believe T-11 and a wake up.
Dear Mom and Dad.

Well I got into Dau Tieng for the day yesterday. I tracked down my port call. It is on the 15th that I catch the "Freedom bird." It goes to Oakland. Some other ones go to the east coast.

The new PX is sure nice however everything is pretty well bought up. They did have the zoom lens a week ago. It sold for \$47.00. Of course by the time I get in the lens is sold out. So the last chance will be down in the final processing unit at Saigon. They have a huge PX on the base with a large variety of camera equipment. I could probably pick up several attachments as well.

The Water Buffalo and company clerk came out to the field last night to see how things were working out. So what happens? The roving night road patrol of two tracks got ambushed. The lead track took an RPG into the gas tank. It was burned out. The rescue forces of A company after they arrived came under heavy contact so the rest of us headed for them. Our lead element ran into some VC on the road 300 meter out of our camp as a result one got any sleep last night. We had to call in emergency supply. The chopper which brought in 300 illuminations rounds was escorted by 2 gunships and landed by flares. Earlier the gunships fired a lot of stuff at suspected VC oppositions. 2 companies were out all night searching the surrounding bush land for VC.

6 persons got wounded mostly from burns. The scout dog was along and he was burned up inside. The track looks like the pictures of the other two that I took. I think I'll get into base camp for good soon.

Ron

PS Last night before we moved and all this happened a strange thing happened. A swarm of bee like flies covered our antenna. And top of our track and only our track. Then they disappeared many of them dying. [pictures here]

Dear Mom and Dad
T-9 5 Sept. AM

Here we go again. The new Alpha CO just about went out of his mind yesterday afternoon. A company trapped a company size unit of VC against the slopes of Nui Ba Den. This resulted in a vicious 5-hour fight to contain and destroy the VC.

We fired everything possible into the area. They fired everything back. The VC used rifle grenades, did a lot of sniping and even used RPG's Our mortars fired up all their ammo. The artillery fired 1700 rounds in half hour, Then had to stop for lack of more ammo. It took a long time to get an emergency resupply chopper.

As I say it was a vicious fight, The whole area of wood patch at the base of the Mt. and part way up was bombed out. Still, there were VC in force. A platoon of tanks fired up a load of ammo. Also, 40 mm dusters came in to support. There was a total of 36 wounded in A company also two killed. 5 of the wounded had less than 15 days to go. Many wounded had arms and legs torn open. One lost his hand in an RPG explosion. So furious was the 50 cal return fire that five of them were burned up in the fight. We ordered 15,000 rounds of 50 alone for A Co.

It was till midnight before we got settled down here. The battle started at one p.m.. 7 more days and I'm rushing for base camp. Just too much going on around here.

Ron [pictures here]

PS

Dear Mom and Dad
8 Sept.

Well we made base camp for a few days. Then they go out on a 3-day mission. If I can get a replacement here then I'll stay in camp.

The mountain was pounded by 21 air strikes. Then another sweep attempted. The VC were still there, only two guys suffered minor wounds. The battle of the 4th found A Co. caught in the open on foot which resulted in many casualties. Air strikes and 155 hit all day. The next CS gas was dropped also. 3 more died of wounds from the 4th battle. Guys lost hands and legs from RPG's and rifle grenades.

I got a whole slug of mail. Seems though they were messing with it. The date ranged from 21 to 1 Sept. 6 letter.

I got four tapes of the three days of the battle. One tape has nothing but solid firing of 50, 60, 81 mortars 40mm etc. on. One tape while it was on a truck hit a mine about 100 ft. from me. Too bad the camera is busted. I missed out on a mess of good shots.

I got hold of a new type of battery. They are black alkaline and quite expensive. They last much longer then even the red ones.

Well seven days short.

Ron

PS Didn't get to the mail in time probably when you get this I'll be leaving Dau Tieng. [Last letter]

No more letters were sent.

I transferred to Dau Tieng where I was temporarily assigned to a tent. I repaired the camera which had dropped a pin out of the aperture control. It was a major teardown by flashlight and small tools.

I was sent to Tan San Nuit to catch the "Freedom Bird" home. A long flight that left at 1:30 P.M. on Thursday, stopped over for refueling in Okinawa, and flew to the air base in Oakland landing at 1:30 P.M. on that same Thursday.